

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104463
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	336313
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs C Clancy
Headteacher	Miss Moira Kenneway
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who observed 11 lessons and saw eight teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at national assessment data and the school's own assessments, relevant policies, reports, the minutes of governors meetings, and documentation related to the safeguarding of pupils. One hundred and two questionnaires returned by parents and carers were scrutinised as well as a sample of pupils' questionnaires.

- the standards and quality of pupils' writing throughout the school
- whether the consistency of good teaching has improved since the last inspection
- the quality of the curriculum especially for pupils in Key Stage 1.

Information about the school

Almost all pupils in this smaller than average sized school are White British. A very high proportion is known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is nearly twice the national average. The school has gained the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards in recognition of its work to promote healthy lifestyles. A breakfast club is also provided.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Some aspects of its work are outstanding, such as the care, guidance and support, which help pupils to overcome many challenges and achieve well. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy and their behaviour is exemplary, but skills they need to ensure their success in the workplace are not as well developed. Leaders' commitment and drive for improvement have enabled the school to build well on its strengths and further develop key areas of its work.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start and make good progress from generally well below average skills for their age when they enter Nursery. Their progress in personal, social and emotional development is rapid and prepares them extremely well for their future learning. Good progress continues in Key Stages 1 and 2 because of consistently good, and at times, outstanding teaching, combined with much improved management and use of assessment by teachers: they are becoming more confident about judging the levels of pupils' work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well provided for and make good progress under the skilled guidance and support of teachers and teaching assistants.

Standards in mathematics are above average at the end of Year 6. Indeed, that represents outstanding achievement in that subject given pupils' earlier starting points. Standards in science are average and the school has worked hard to raise standards in English. Pupils' current work shows that a concentrated, whole school, focus to improve writing is beginning to pay dividends and that standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average. The school recognises, nevertheless, that more needs to be done to raise both the standard of writing and the quality of its presentation. Pupils enjoy a rich curriculum which provides a great deal of enjoyment. Testimony to their eagerness for learning is the very commendable improvement in their attendance over the past year.

Leaders and managers at every level are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities with regard to raising standards and maintaining the quality of provision. Realistic academic targets are set, based on accurate assessment of pupils' abilities. Governors oversee the school's progress well overall and demonstrate outstanding commitment towards providing equality of opportunity for all pupils and ensuring that they are safeguarded. Since the last inspection, staffing appointments have strengthened leadership roles and the overall quality of teaching and learning. The quality of care has had a very positive impact on pupils' behaviour and attendance. As a consequence, standards are improving and parents are overwhelmingly supportive of what the school does. Leaders' robust monitoring and evaluation provide an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and amply demonstrate its good capacity for sustained

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improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing by:
- -fully embedding teachers' use of assessment to plan pupils' progress and to challenge them further
- -making better use of opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their writing across a range of subjects
- -improving the quality of pupils' handwriting.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' highly positive attitudes and hard work make sure they get the best out of their lessons. They enjoy opportunities to work with partners or in groups and rise to the challenges which teachers provide, especially when solving problems in mathematics lessons. While most enjoy writing, because they are prepared well and it usually has real purpose, too little importance is given to handwriting quality, so presentation is too often immature and untidy. There is good pace to learning and teachers build well on what has gone before. Increasingly, subjects are linked so pupils can, for example, use information and communication technology (ICT) skills to improve knowledge and understanding of geography. This makes learning more meaningful to pupils, and more successful.

Progress has improved as teachers have become more familiar with new assessment strategies. It is checked regularly and any necessary adjustments to targets or provision are carried out swiftly. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have well planned support to address their particular needs. There is some outstanding practice in the provision of one-to-one support for the most vulnerable pupils. Their learning and progress overall is good and, for some, it is excellent. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average. English standards have not kept pace with other subjects in the past and are now a focus for improvement throughout the school. Current school assessments and writing in pupils' books shows that more are on track to reach expected standards for their age but there is still work to be done in this subject to raise standards further.

Pupils are invariably polite and well mannered. They are very thoughtful in their behaviour and responses to others and show both concern and determination, especially when fund-raising to support particular local charities. They contribute well to the day-to-day running of the school, through the school council and various playground duties, to see that no harm comes to pupils. Interest in the wider community has led to consultation with the local authority and parents about parking and keeping the environment clean. Pupils are fully 'in tune' with the need to maintain healthy lifestyles. Their thriving allotment, well supported travel plan and sporting achievements justify their Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is deeply rooted in the school's values and clearly demonstrates

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their all-round positive attitudes to school. Their improved attendance is a credit to their own and the school's commitment to improvement.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan lessons well, taking into account pupils' varying abilities, to ensure all are suitably challenged. Lessons are filled with activities to engage pupils in learning. For example, pupils discuss their learning with partners, complete timed 'mini tasks' or use mini whiteboards to help them prepare for the main task. Good questioning, which requires pupils to think about what they learn, not only keeps them on their toes but also improves their speaking and listening skills. Teachers use electronic whiteboards confidently to provide clear visual support and add pace and interest to lessons.

Teaching assistants are crucial members of the teaching team and boost pupils' learning significantly when working with groups and individuals. Teachers use assessments well to support learning. Whole school systems for checking pupils' progress are very good. Day-to-day marking is usually rigorous and helpful to pupils, particularly in English books, but its quality is not yet fully consistent across all subjects and in all classes.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The curriculum is planned well around the needs and interests of pupils and enables them to achieve well. There is good focus on literacy, numeracy and ICT. Although those skills are increasingly woven into topic work to make learning more meaningful and enjoyable, writing across the curriculum is not a strong enough feature of planning. French and pupils' work with other schools and community groups add an important cultural dimension to the curriculum. During the inspection some pupils learned the skills of film making as part of a multi-arts project involving several local schools. Others worked with personnel from the recently opened local health centre to design an array of coloured lighting to be used in the new building. Pupils' experiences are enriched well by a good range of after school clubs, visitors and visits to places of interest, including some which are residential.

Support for all pupils, especially the most vulnerable, is exceptionally well targeted and enables them to thrive as school community members and as learners. All staff are very sensitive to pupils' particular pastoral and emotional needs. Tireless work to raise attendance levels has brought about enormous success and the excellent guidance and trust placed in pupils have resulted in their outstanding behaviour. The school has won the confidence of parents who unanimously agree that their children are safe in school. Parents are very well informed about their children's progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's strong determination to provide the best for pupils has driven the school forward. Senior leaders consistently model good practice and communicate high expectations to all staff. Effective monitoring and evaluation have raised expectations and instilled a collective drive for further improvement. Astute appointments by governors and professional training and support for staff have helped to secure good teaching and learning throughout the school. Equality of opportunity is central to the school's ethos and drives its work. All pupils are nurtured, whatever their particular needs, to ensure that they have the opportunity to achieve their personal best. All forms of discrimination are strongly opposed. Pupils respect the rights of others and progress equally well in a harmonious and supportive school community.

Safeguarding procedures are continuously checked and updated to minimise risk and reflect changing needs. Clear and comprehensive procedures, which fully meet requirements, are fully shared among governors and staff so that all are acutely aware

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of their responsibilities. Risk assessments are of high quality and systematic safety checks are robust. Pupils too are aware of the role they must play and work collaboratively with other agencies to learn how to avoid harm. The school attaches much importance to the promotion of community cohesion. Good planning, based on an analysis of its place and role in the community, has helped the school to forge strong links with local community groups. Exchanges of information with a school in Australia and an orphanage in Bethlehem provide insight into global communities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall, children's knowledge and skills are well below those typically seen when they enter Nursery. Good leadership and well managed provision for their leaning and development ensure their good progress throughout nursery and Reception classes. Generally, children are working within, but have not fully reached, the Early Learning Goals when they transfer to Year 1.

Progress in personal, social and emotional development is very good. Children develop excellent relationships and behave very well. They play safely and respect others' needs whether sharing the painting of a model, for example, or having an intimate conversation in the 'telephone kiosk'. Tidying up tasks are carried out with confidence and enjoyment. Staff fully understand how children learn best. Children receive high quality support and encouragement during their well planned activities. There are many opportunities for children to follow their interests in activities which they choose for themselves and teachers are always on hand to stimulate imagination and encourage language development through exciting play.

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Observations of children's daily progress are recorded and used effectively by staff to plan next steps for learning. Provision for children's welfare and safety is outstanding. The learning environment, indoors and outside, is well equipped and stimulating. Staff give paramount importance to children's well-being and develop very positive relationships with parents and carers from their first contact with the school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A large number of parents' and carers' returned questionnaires. The overwhelming majority expressed entirely positive views about the school. Parents typically commented on how happy their children are in school and the good support they receive from members of staff. A very small number of parents and carers expressed concerns about aspects of behaviour management. Inspectors found that pupils are exceptionally well supported and that behavioural issues are very well managed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Aidan's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 101 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 185 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	61	32	32	5	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	77	76	21	21	1	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	62	61	37	37	0	0	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	60	59	34	34	5	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	63	62	36	36	0	0	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	57	56	40	40	2	2	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	64	63	32	32	2	2	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	54	53	41	41	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	62	61	34	34	3	3	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	58	57	40	40	1	1	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	46	46	53	52	0	0	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	69	68	30	30	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	65	64	33	33	1	1	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



Dear Pupils

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave me and the other inspectors when we came to inspect your school recently. We were all highly impressed with your outstanding politeness and good manners and the honest and friendly conversations we had with you about your school. You told us how much you enjoy school and how proud you are to be there. We can see why. One of the reasons, you said, was that your lessons are fun. We agree with you on that too. We were most impressed with the way your attendance at school has improved. Well done for that! It is very important, so do keep it up.

St Aidan's is a good school. The grown-ups in school could not take better care of you. Your teachers work very hard and teach you well and there are lots of enjoyable things for you to do outside of lesson time. You work hard and make good progress. The standard you reach in mathematics is above average but you need to reach a higher standard in writing. Many of you also need to make your work neater by improving your handwriting.

Your parents, teachers and school governors love your school just as much as you do and, like you I am sure, want it to be even better. To help that to happen I have asked your teachers to help you to become better writers. First, by making sure you always know exactly the next steps you should take to improve and second, by giving you more opportunities to practise your writing in all the subjects. Finally, do not forget about your handwriting!

Best wishes and very good luck to all of you

Yours sincerely

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