

St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110841
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	337586
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Broadbent
Headteacher	Mr Joseph McCrossan
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2007
School address	Lensfield Road Cambridge CB2 1LS
Telephone number	01223 712148
Fax number	01223 461286
Email address	head@stalbans.cambs.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2010
Inspection number	337586

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons and observed eight teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff, parents and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a selection of documentation, including planning, evidence of monitoring such as lesson observations, and analysis of pupils' work and other assessment information. Inspectors scrutinised inspection questionnaires returned by 60 parents and carers, 15 staff and 97 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively teachers use assessment information to plan work that challenges all pupils, especially the more able
- the extent to which marking and target-setting have developed since the last inspection in helping pupils to improve
- what pupils understand about other cultures and traditions in the United Kingdom.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school, located in the city centre, that draws pupils from two local parishes. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Others come from a diverse range of minority ethnic backgrounds, and most speak English fluently. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has the Activemark award.

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

St Alban's is a good school that serves all its pupils well. Aspects of its work are outstanding, including the extent to which pupils feel safe and adopt healthy lifestyles, the care, guidance and support the school provides, and its links with parents and carers. Pupils make good progress to attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Standards in science have risen sharply since the last inspection. A focus on music and the performing arts gives pupils a wide range of experience that boosts their confidence and enjoyment of school. Parents value the school's family atmosphere and are very committed to the school's ethos. A typical comment ran, 'My children really enjoy going to St Alban's. Their teachers show great care for them and they really cherish being part of the school community.'

Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well from their starting points. They join Reception with a wide range of skills and abilities that are often a little above what is usually found, especially in their speaking and listening. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn and make lessons interesting by using a variety of methods. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used particularly well to engage pupils. Marking and target-setting have improved considerably since the last inspection, so that pupils know their next steps in learning and have something to aim for. Teachers make good use of day-to-day assessment to plan suitable tasks that provide an appropriate level of challenge. However, they are not always familiar with pupils' progress in earlier years, or whether they are on track to meet end of key stage targets. The good curriculum includes all pupils and is relevant to their needs. Outstanding enrichment, through visits, visitors and clubs, makes a significant contribution to pupils' good personal development.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and are actively involved in promoting safety at school through carrying out risk assessments. They take plenty of exercise, and many have opted to eat the school's healthy lunches. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good as they uphold the school's Christian values. They have a good understanding of musical and artistic features of other cultures, but too little experience of the full range of cultures and traditions that make up the United Kingdom.

Leaders and managers work well together to go that extra mile to ensure pupils have all the help they need. They monitor the work of the school effectively and have a good understanding of what it does well and how it can improve further. Their tracking of the progress made by individual pupils is thorough, but they have less experience of identifying patterns and trends in the performance of groups of pupils over time. This has led to some inconsistencies in the rate of progress not being analysed sufficiently to

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

understand what may have caused them. The governing body provides strong leadership and holds leaders and managers to account well. The rapid progress since the last inspection shows the school's good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the use of tracking information by:
 - analysing patterns and trends in pupils' performance over time
 - ensuring teachers use their knowledge of pupils' prior performance to plan work that enables them to achieve long-term goals.
- Develop pupils' understanding of the United Kingdom's diverse cultures by providing pupils with more direct experience of cultures and traditions different from their own.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils say they enjoy school, and this is reflected in improving attendance that is now above average. They work together well in teams and undertake independent research, as when Year 6 pupils used laptop computers to find out about the island of St Lucia. Pupils were very keen to contribute their ideas at the end of the lesson. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are generally above average, although last year standards in writing were average. The school has focused on improving writing, with plenty of opportunities for pupils to write at length in a range of genres. Year 1 pupils settled to their task of writing a fairy tale with concentration, using a previously prepared story plan to assist them. Pupils participate in the performing arts with great enthusiasm, such as when Year 4 composed their own pieces using untuned instruments. They all take part in performances linked to their curriculum topic. For example, Year 3 and 4 presented a lively rendition of the musical Joseph as part of their work on the Ancient Egyptians. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they are well-supported by an effective team of teaching assistants.

The majority of pupils take part in after-school activity clubs, choosing from a wide range that includes Irish dancing and multi-skills. The award of the Activemark recognises their commitment to keeping fit. They have a particularly good understanding of how to keep healthy, with many walking or cycling to school. Pupils undertake a variety of tasks as personal assistants to the headteacher, and contribute to the school as buddies to the younger children and team captains. Their behaviour is good, with most pupils showing very positive attitudes to learning. Occasionally, if the pace of learning slows, pupils can become a little restless in lessons. The school council is active in developing play areas and raising funds for charity. Pupils have some links with the wider community through the church and their musical presentations, but do not get involved enough in the city. They leave the school with well-developed basic skills and the confidence and personal qualities they need to succeed at secondary school.

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

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	2
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	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching emphasises well the development of pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Very good relationships between adults and pupils mean that pupils are keen to learn and respond enthusiastically to challenge. Teachers mostly plan work that matches pupils' particular skills and abilities, although sometimes the more able are not challenged enough. Lessons generally have a good pace and involve pupils well. One pupil said, 'I learn a lot every day.' Year 2 pupils enjoyed investigating 'quad monsters' by arranging four squares in different permutations to see how many different ones they could create. They then discussed how they could extend the activity. Pupils are beginning to evaluate how well they are doing, particularly in Years 5 and 6, and the day-to-day guidance they receive is good. Teachers are not always fully aware of how pupils have performed in the past, or what progress they are expected to make based on their attainment at the end of Year 2. This means that while pupils may do well in a particular year group, it is sometimes not clear whether they are on track to reach their full potential.

There are outstanding elements to the curriculum, particularly in the performing arts.

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

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

The choir and orchestra give accomplished performances, both in school and in the wider community, and the school works with other local schools to promote music. Links across subjects are good, with plenty of opportunity for pupils to write at length in topic work, such as describing the experiences of an evacuee. Exciting visits enhance the curriculum further, as when Year 6 went to Duxford to find out more about wartime Britain. The school is trialling a creative skills-based curriculum in one year group, which is having a positive impact. This work is at an early stage. The school provides extremely well for pupils who may be vulnerable, offering excellent pastoral support and making very effective use of outside agencies. It provides well for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they make good progress in their learning. Different clubs and interventions are geared to meet the full range of pupils' needs, and this gives them the confidence to enter fully into school life.

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 embeds ambition outstandingly well, having a high profile around the school, and setting out clearly his vision for improvement. His cooperative approach encourages staff to reflect on their practice and collaborate successfully. Intensive work by leaders and managers on developing science, religious education, ICT and the performing arts has resulted in good gains in each of these subjects. The governing body plays an innovative role, hosting 'vision evenings' to which parents, staff and pupils are invited so that they can suggest areas for improvement. The governing body also works closely with school councillors to find out about their work and to gather their views on the impact of school initiatives.

Strategic plans reflect the searching self-evaluation the senior management team, including the deputy headteacher and the inclusion coordinator, undertake through regular monitoring of the school's work. Leaders are beginning to hold staff more to account for the progress of pupils, and are using tracking information to measure how individuals are doing. However, they do not have sufficient regard for the bigger picture of trends and patterns in performance over time to understand why there have been some variations in the rate of pupils' progress in certain year groups or subjects. The school works highly effectively with parents, canvassing their views on a regular basis and using new technology to communicate with them.

The school adopts very positive approaches to inclusion, ensuring that pupils can access

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

all aspects of the curriculum. It promotes equality of opportunity well, with good pupil achievement overall, although the rate of progress is not always consistent. All safeguarding requirements are met, with only minor weaknesses in the recording of health and safety checks. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of their local community, and the school reaches out well to all sections of it. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory because links at a national and international level are less developed, and pupils have limited direct experience of the diversity of cultures in the United Kingdom that are different from their own.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The energy and enthusiasm staff generate in the Reception class inspire children to make good progress, as they readily engage in a wide range of stimulating and relevant tasks. Children mostly reach or exceed the early learning goals expected for their age as they enter Year 1. This is the result of their positive experiences, where good teaching combines with an imaginative curriculum. Children enjoyed operating the class 'airport' as they checked in their friends laden down with baggage and saw that their tickets were in order. The cry went up, 'We're going on holiday!', blissfully free of volcanic interruption. Good leadership and management ensure that a strong team works well, with detailed assessments of pupils' progress. Much useful information is gathered about how children are doing, but this is not collated in an accessible form, such as a 'learning journey' for children or parents to consult. The outdoor area, though of modest scale, is used well to cover all areas of learning.

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

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

All parents and carers who returned questionnaires agreed that the school keeps their children safe, is led and managed well, and prepares children well for the future. A very small number expressed concerns about whether their child was making enough progress or whether the school was meeting their particular needs. The inspection team found that pupils make good progress and that their needs are met well, particularly in terms of pastoral care. However, some variations were identified in the rate of progress pupils make over time.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Alban'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 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 213 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	63	21	35	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	72	17	28	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	35	58	21	35	4	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	55	18	30	7	12	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	40	67	13	22	3	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	48	26	43	5	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	55	26	43	1	2	0	0
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)	30	50	24	40	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	60	13	22	8	13	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	55	23	38	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	40	27	45	5	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	47	78	12	20	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	77	9	15	3	5	0	0

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.



17 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Alban's Catholic Primary School, Cambridge, CB2 1LS

We enjoyed visiting your school, which we found gives you a good education. Here are some of the things it does well.

You have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and help staff check the safety of your school building and grounds.

You take plenty of exercise and know all about making healthy choices.

You make good progress and reach standards that are above average.

There are plenty of trips and clubs for you to enjoy.

The teaching is good, as lessons are interesting and fun.

Teachers have high expectations of what you can do and achieve.

The school cares for you extremely well, especially if you are finding things difficult.

There are excellent links with parents and carers.

The school is led and managed well.

The school keeps a careful eye on how well you are doing. We have asked your teachers, leaders and managers to use the information they gather in an even smarter way to find out more about your rate of progress since Year 2 and whether you are on track to do as well as you possibly can by the end of Year 6. All of you can help by letting your teachers know how you think you are getting on with your learning. We also would like you to find out more about the different cultures and traditions represented in the United Kingdom by meeting pupils from different backgrounds to your own.

Thank you once again for your help. We send our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.