

St Alban's RC Primary School

Westbourne Avenue, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE6 4HQ

Inspection dates

7–8 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children start school with skills that are below those typically expected for their age and make good progress.
- Pupils continue to make good and sometimes outstanding progress as they move through the school and, by the time pupils reach the end of Key Stage 2, reach standards that are above average.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium and those who speak English as an additional language make accelerated progress due to high-quality intervention and support.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good and sometimes better progress due to high-quality intervention and support.
- Teaching is good overall and some is outstanding due to the school's commitment to improving teaching.
- Pupils behave well and have a very good understanding of how to keep safe.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the school's Christian values and the good range of opportunities woven through the different subjects of the curriculum.
- Senior leaders and governors share the headteacher's relentless drive to raise standards. These actions have resulted in improvements in teaching and achievement since the last inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although pupils reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, too few reach the higher levels in mathematics. Pupils of higher ability could be doing better.
- Teaching is not yet consistently outstanding across the school. In some lessons pupils are unsure of what they are expected to learn.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons or parts of lessons, of which three were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors also observed a number of groups of pupils working with teaching assistants and listened to some pupils read.
- Inspectors had meetings with staff, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors took account of 15 responses from the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They also took account of the school's own questionnaires to parents.
- They observed the school's work and took into account the work in pupils' books, the school's own data on pupils' current progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence about the school's wider achievements including its website and displays.

Inspection team

Margaret Armstrong, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Dominic Brown

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school in which the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well below average.
- The school has an above average number of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum standards for schools.
- The school runs its own breakfast club and offers a number of learning opportunities for families.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils exceeding the level expected for their age in mathematics at the end of Year 6 by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use information gathered from assessments to pitch learning at appropriate levels, particularly for the more-able pupils
 - giving pupils more problems to solve which have more than one solution
 - moving pupils on more quickly when they have made progress in lessons
 - giving pupils clearer indications of how to improve their work through feedback in lessons and marking.
- Improve all teaching so that it is consistently outstanding by:
 - using existing outstanding teaching as a model to improve teaching
 - making sure that pupils know exactly what they are learning and what they need to achieve by the end of each lesson
 - checking the quality of teaching, either in lessons or by looking at pupils' books, with a sharper focus on pupils' progress and how well they are learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Nursery with skills which are below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and achieve well. The recently introduced initiatives, which include the increased range of opportunities to learn outdoors and the higher staffing levels, are helping to improve the rate at which learning takes place. As a result a higher proportion of children start Year 1 with broadly average skills for their age.
- Pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress as they move through the school so that by the time they reach the end of Key Stage 2 standards are above average. An increasing number of pupils exceed the level expected for their age in reading and writing. However, in mathematics not enough reach the higher level because the more-able pupils are not always given hard enough work. They do not have enough opportunities to practise their mathematics skills when solving problems.
- The school is highly effective at teaching reading and pupils achieve very well. Pupils thoroughly enjoy reading at school and many do so at home too. Regular and systematic teaching of letter and sounds is having a very positive impact on pupils' ability to read new words.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are particularly well catered for. They make good and sometimes better progress as they move through the school. This is because the school is effective in developing their language skills.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do as well as other pupils because of the good support they are given in lessons.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium make good and sometimes better progress. Teachers are skilful at meeting their needs in most lessons.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good overall with an increasing proportion that is outstanding. Senior leaders have not yet put this best practice to good use to promote more consistently outstanding teaching across the school.
- In the best lessons, teachers explain new ideas very clearly and question pupils carefully to deepen their understanding. When this happens pupils make rapid progress. This was seen in an outstanding lesson in Year 6 when pupils were learning new skills in using inverted commas to improve their writing. The teacher had excellent ways of helping pupils to remember grammatical features through the use of 'Smart Rules' and constantly checked that pupils understood what was expected of them. These teaching methods are not consistently applied across the school to ensure pupils make outstanding progress.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning as teachers provide an exciting curriculum that takes pupils out of school to ensure they have a better understanding of the world around them. These visits and teachers' well-planned activities have ensured that pupils' literacy skills have improved steadily across the school.
- The teaching of sounds that letters make (phonics) is very thorough and has had a very positive impact on pupils' skills in reading. Consequently, pupils use their skills very well and thoroughly enjoy reading.
- Across the school the teaching of mathematics does not always meet pupils' needs as activities are not always sufficiently challenging, particularly for the most able. On occasions, where pupils have a sound understanding of the work, teachers do not move them on to the next step in their learning quickly enough.
- Some teachers mark work in a way that helps pupils do better next time, but not all. This is particularly the case in mathematics where some teachers' comments have little effect on improving pupils' work.
- Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to all lessons. They are also skilful when

supporting pupils through intervention programmes and, as a result, have been successful in helping to ensure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school provides a caring, supportive environment where pupils behave well and show respect for themselves, each other and adults.
- Teachers are skilful at developing pupils' interest in lessons and, as a result, most pupils are keen to get on with their work. They listen attentively and try to do their best.
- Pupils work and play well together and there are few incidents that require adult intervention at play times. Pupils are proud of their school and talk confidently about the 'strong friendships' they make.
- Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and feel very safe because they are supported well by adults. Older pupils have a very good understanding of the risks of the internet and there is a wide range of age-appropriate activities to help pupils learn how to keep themselves safe.
- Bullying is very rare as pupils relate well to each other. Pupils say they are confident that when they have a disagreement, adults will help them sort it out amicably.
- Pupils are particularly polite and well mannered to all adults in the school, including visitors. Pupils also behave well around the school and when they go out of school on visits.
- School leaders have worked hard to improve attendance and there has been steady improvement. The sensitive support provided by the parent support adviser has helped to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent and encourage punctuality.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a real strength of this school. Through the school's 'Mission Statement' pupils are encouraged to respect the rights of others and to show empathy for other faiths and cultures. Strong links with other schools locally and globally further extend pupils' understanding of culture and societies.

The leadership and management are good

- The strong, determined leadership of the headteacher has been instrumental in driving forward improvements across the school since the last inspection. He is well supported by a capable team of teachers and support staff.
- The school's procedures to check on pupils' progress and performance are effective and the school has an accurate view of what is working well and which aspects need attention. Success can be seen in writing, which has significantly improved because teachers give pupils more opportunities to develop their writing skills in other subjects.
- There is an established system in place to support teachers and develop skills, which is reflected through their performance management linked to school priorities and professional development. Consequently, teachers are held more to account for the progress pupils in their class make.
- Systems to check the quality of teaching are good with only small variation between lessons. However, an insufficient focus on checking pupils' progress in lessons and work in books has meant outstanding teaching has not yet been secured. Nevertheless, good quality training focuses on teachers' and the school's needs and is improving teaching all the time.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. It enriches their vocabulary and has developed their literacy skills well. However, the curriculum does not provide pupils, particularly the most able, with sufficient opportunities to practise their mathematics skills in tasks when solving problems. The curriculum provides a wide range of exciting activities through visits, visitors and residential visits. For example, pupils talked confidently about the contribution they make to the school's brass band and how this has helped them develop their skills in music.
- The school provides good support to pupils whose circumstances might put them at risk.

Safeguarding meets requirements.

- The school works with a range of partners to support pupils in their learning. The local authority provides good support to the school and has helped the school evaluate its own performance accurately.
- The school has been successful in establishing strong relationships with parents. Responses to Parent View and the school's most recent questionnaire indicate that the vast majority of parents believe that care for their children and the quality of teaching is good or better.
- The school's ability to carry on making improvements is good.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know what is happening in school and hold the school to account in positive ways and shape its long term plans. They manage the school's spending wisely and their rigorous checking of the use of extra funding has ensured the pupil premium is used well to support learning. Members of the governing body have a good understanding of achievement and progress data which they use to question the school about outcomes for pupils. Governors actively promote equality of opportunity well and this is reflected in the good progress most pupils make and the happy and caring atmosphere.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	108515
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	403066

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	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Conaty
Headteacher	Mike Donnelly
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2007
Telephone number	0191 262 5552
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	admin@stalbans.newcastle.sch.uk

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