

# St Aidan and St Oswald's RC School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105721
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oldham
<b>Inspection number</b>	308932
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Stephen Wall

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	369
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr J Kinsella
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr D Harrison
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 July 2004
<b>School address</b>	Roman Road Royton Oldham Lancashire OL2 5PQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 6522558
<b>Fax number</b>	0161 6338671

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school serving an urban area of broadly average social and economic circumstances. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage, although the number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is growing. There are average numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but the proportion with a statement of special educational need is average. The school gained Investors in People status in 2007. It also holds the Healthy Schools, Financial Management Standard in Schools Award and Platinum Tooth Awards.

In recent years there has been a high level of disruption to staffing caused by very serious illnesses. The absences included, among others, very lengthy spells for the headteacher and deputy headteacher, especially in the 2006/7 school year. In September 2007, a new deputy headteacher was appointed. An executive headteacher was temporarily in post from October 2007 until February 2008 at which time the substantive headteacher's health had improved sufficiently for him to return.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school in which pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. So, too, are the care, guidance and support it provides. It gives good value for money. The school has successfully weathered a storm of severe staffing difficulties and is recovering strongly. Parents value the education it provides, although some, understandably, express concern at the disruption caused by the unavoidable staff absences. 'My children love going to school. I am very pleased how well cared for they are. I am pleased with the progress they are making,' are typical comments. Despite the difficulties it has faced, the school has made outstanding progress in tackling the issues identified at the last inspection, especially in improving the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management. Many procedures have been put in place to improve the overall effectiveness of the school, such as improving the tracking of pupils' progress and literacy skills. It will take time for their full impact to be felt but their early impact is indicative of good capacity for further improvement.

Pupils enjoy school immensely. Happy, smiling faces are the norm. Vibrant displays of pupils' work celebrate their achievements and promote the importance of respect for others. Pupils behave exceptionally well. They work and play together happily and harmoniously. They value highly the very wide range of enrichment activities available to them. These make a very significant contribution to pupils' high levels of enjoyment, as well as helping them to become healthy and interesting individuals. Pupils say how well the school cares for them. 'There is always someone I can go to if I've got a problem. I know they will listen and help sort it out,' was one pupil's succinct summary. Relationships are very strong and at the heart of the school's work. Pupils are respectful to each other and adults. They are welcoming, polite and interested in visitors. Above all, they develop into confident and well balanced young people.

Good teaching and a broad curriculum enable pupils to make good progress. From broadly average starting points, pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 1 to attain broadly average levels of attainment. Standards have been declining because of staffing disruption to Year 2 classes and because Early Years classes have become more challenging. The school's sharp focus on tackling levels of literacy has reversed the downward trend in reading and writing, but standards and achievement in mathematics are not as high as they should be. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2. Standards are above average, although the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in the national Key Stage 2 tests in English and mathematics is not as high as it should be. Test results dipped in 2007 because of disruption to teaching and because the Year 6 cohort contained an unusually high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Present standards have recovered and achievement is good.

Leadership and management at all levels are good. Very able middle managers held the school together during the periods of severe disruption. The local authority was also highly supportive in arranging the temporary appointment of an experienced acting headteacher. Even in his absence, the headteacher's clear vision for the school has given it a real sense of purpose and has promoted highly effective teamwork. There is now a sharp focus on improving standards and achievement further.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The quality of education provided for children in the Foundation Stage is good. They enter Reception from a variety of pre-school provision with skill levels broadly in line with, or more recently, below those typical for their age. Children make good progress to attain broadly average standards. Progress is especially strong in reading and writing because of teachers' sharp focus on these areas. Children settle quickly into school routines, feel safe, grow in confidence and behave well. They work well together. Teaching and the curriculum provide a good balance between teaching children new skills and encouraging them to explore and learn independently within all areas of learning. However, the temporary lack of outdoor provision, owing to on-site construction work limits the school's ability to encourage children's physical activity and exploration of the world around them. Some teaching is too teacher led. When this is the case, children's attention wanders and the rate of their learning decreases. The Foundation Stage leader provides good leadership and management. Resources are used effectively to support learning.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in the national Key Stage 2 tests in English and mathematics.
- Raise standards at the end of Key Stage 1, especially in mathematics.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

By the end of Year 2, pupils make satisfactory progress to attain standards which are broadly average, although the trend has been downward for the last two years. This is due partly to the changing profile of attainment on entry and partly to disruption to staffing. In Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress and attain above average standards by the end of Year 6 because teaching is consistently good. In comparison to previous years, standards dipped from above average to broadly average in 2007 because of severe staffing difficulties and an especially challenging cohort. Evidence presented by the school and observations of pupils' work show that standards have recovered and are set to be at least in line with those prior to 2007. Despite missing demanding targets in 2007, the school has a history of consistently meeting its Key Stage 2 targets and is set to reach them this year. All groups of children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make similar rates of progress as they move up through the school.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Strong links with the church, wonderfully creative and spiritual assemblies and many opportunities to reflect on inequality and global responsibility inspire pupils to respect others and consider their own roles in society and the wider world. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. The attendance of the overwhelming majority of pupils is well above average. Over half have full attendance records, for example. However, attendance remains stubbornly around the national average because of a small number of pupils whose attendance is consistently poor, despite the rigorous efforts of the school to tackle this. The active school council has used its budget allocation

thoughtfully to bring about improvements to playground facilities. Pupils enjoy raising very large sums for local and international charities. Pupils know how important healthy lifestyles are. They know what foods are best for them and many say that their whole families now eat more healthily as a result. Their levels of self-confidence and command of basic skills mean pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers prepare their lessons well to include a range of activities to keep pupils motivated and interested. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to set tasks and ask questions which make the pupils think for themselves. These encourage them to become independent and inquisitive learners. More effective checking on pupils' progress is enabling teachers to match tasks more closely to their needs. However, the focus on meeting the needs of higher-attaining pupils is not sharp enough. Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to add variety and interest to lessons. Teaching is conducted at a good, lively pace in most lessons. However, occasionally, teachers talk too much. As a consequence, pupils' concentration wanes causing the rate of their learning to slow. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they make progress at a similar rate to other pupils. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. Their comments are consistently helpful in telling pupils how to improve their work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of the taught curriculum is good. It is broad and meets the needs of most pupils, although higher-attaining pupils are not consistently challenged enough. Provision for literacy is strong and has led to rising standards. The school is now turning its attention to numeracy as part of its drive to raise standards further. Pupils' levels of competence in ICT are good. Effective provision in these basic skills is preparing pupils effectively for the future. The highly effective programme of personal, social and health education means pupils show good levels of self-confidence, respect for others and an outstanding awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles. Pupils and parents appreciate the very wide range of enrichment activities the school offers. Participation rates are high. As well as sporting activities, there are frequent educational trips out. The musical life of the school is vibrant and supports a brass band of renown. These activities make a significant contribution to pupils' positive attitudes and enjoyment of school.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

This is an exceptionally caring school. As a result, all pupils, and especially those identified as vulnerable, feel safe and grow as confident learners. Policies and procedures for the safety and protection of pupils are in place and reviewed regularly. The school involves parents and carers effectively in caring strategies for pupils. Highly effective links have been forged with a wide range of external agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Helpful marking and impressive guidance from teachers enable pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their work. Very

effective systems have been developed for checking up on pupils' progress. These are enabling the early identification of underachievement and the timely introduction of strategies to tackle it. The monitoring of the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly thorough and this is contributing to the good progress they make. Pupils are extremely well prepared for their transition to secondary school and as a result, quickly settle in to their new surroundings.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has been instrumental in providing the school with a clear vision for the future and a greater sense of purpose focusing on standards and pupils' achievement. This enabled other very able senior leaders and managers to continue the work of developing the school in the absence of the headteacher and/or former deputy headteacher for lengthy periods of time. There is a strong sense of team spirit and of staff working effectively together. Many initiatives have been put in place to improve the school's overall effectiveness. Procedures for self-evaluation are thorough. They include the opinions of a wide range of stake holders such as parents and pupils. As a result, the school has a good understanding of what it does well and where it could improve. Its priorities are clearly identified in the high quality school improvement plan. Performance management, not in place at the time of the last inspection, is now used as an effective tool to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and set demanding targets. Governors support the school well. They are not afraid of asking pertinent questions to hold senior leaders to account.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. What you told us helped us make our judgements about your school.

You will be pleased to hear that you go to a good school. We think your teachers and the other adults working with you take excellent care of you. We were very impressed with how well you behave and with how polite and welcoming you are. It was good to see that you enjoy school so much, although a few of you need to attend more regularly to make the most of the opportunities the school is giving you. Your teachers provide you with interesting lessons and this means you make good progress. The school offers you a very wide range of extra opportunities at lunchtimes and after school. It was good to see so many of you joining in and enjoying them.

In order to make your school even better we think it needs to:

- make sure that more of you succeed in getting the higher levels in English and mathematics tests at the end of Year 6
- make sure that standards at the end of Year 2 rise, especially in mathematics.

Several of your teachers have been ill in recent years. This has meant some of you have had several different teachers during the year. However, we know you have played your part in helping the school to come successfully through a difficult time by being positive and understanding. With your continued hard work your school is now set to go from strength to strength.