

St Andrew's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104099
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	323964
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Field

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Hill
Headteacher	Kath Price
School address	Windrush Close Solihull B92 8QL
Telephone number	01217435675
Fax number	01217426645
Email address	office@st-andrews.solihull.sch.uk

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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, parents and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's plans, its self-evaluation, its tracking data and the minutes of the governing body. They considered the responses in 58 questionnaires that had been returned by parents and carers.

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

- the progress made by higher attaining pupils in mathematics and science, and how well the school tracks their achievement
- how much challenge there is in the tasks teachers set for pupils capable of reaching high standards
- the effectiveness of school leaders in monitoring and evaluating teaching, learning and progress in order to build for improvement in pupils' outcomes
- the key factors underpinning pupils' positive personal development and well-being.

Information about the school

St Andrew's is an average-size primary school which serves the local parish of St Thomas More and takes pupils from a wide area. The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language. Seven per cent are from minority ethnic communities. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is smaller than the national average. Few families are eligible for free school meals. The school has been accredited with the Activemark, Healthy School Award, Artsmark and Investors in People.

The school makes Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children in Nursery and Reception classes. The before and after school club and the wrap around care provision are not managed by the school and are inspected separately.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school that serves its community well. Pupils behave responsibly and show high levels of respect for one another and their teachers. The very caring ethos and close attention paid to the welfare of pupils results in them feeling safe and confident to take full advantage of the good-quality learning experiences. The school's relationship with parents is very positive and currently there is twice as much demand as places available. The senior management team, under the strong guidance of the highly regarded headteacher, is moving forward at a good pace and working to rectify assessed shortcomings through well-targeted actions.

A number of improvements have been seen since the school's last inspection.

- Achievement in English has gone from strength to strength with attainment consistently above average at the end of both key stages.
- The introduction of structured programmes to teach letter sounds means that pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 learn effectively to read and write.
- Achievement in science and mathematics is back on track following a mixed picture over the last three years, with current attainment exceeding the levels expected for 11-year-olds.
- There is an upward trend in attendance figures due to the use of aspirational targets and the rigorous systems established to encourage pupils to come to school.
- Leaders have extended their work to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision, and self-evaluation is now a robust and accurate process.

Good teaching across the school enables pupils to enjoy learning successfully in a stimulating, productive environment and despite rather cramped accommodation. A useful start has been made in teachers' use of assessment to inform their planning and they show good accuracy in levelling work. Staff recognise that there is still some way to go to make the fullest use of assessment data to ensure that the tasks they set in mathematics lessons provide maximum challenge for all pupils, and in particular the high-flying mathematicians.

The governing body supports the school well and plays a key role in promoting safeguarding and links with parents. They have yet to fully and systematically evaluate the school. The satisfactory capacity to improve highlighted by the last

inspection is now good, as reflected in the positive track record of improvement, leaders' strong and effective drive to raise achievement, the robust procedures in place to track progress and the good accountability of subject leaders for improving the outcomes for all pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching in mathematics and make even better use of assessment by promoting more widely the features that result in pupils' consistently good or better progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers specifically plan for and extend the learning of the highest attainers at a consistently good pace throughout lessons
 - using open-ended questioning techniques to extend pupils' understanding
 - referring to targets in lessons and in the marking of work so that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve.
- Tighten the procedures for assessing children's learning and development across the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Enable governors to widen their role in challenging the work of the school by monitoring and evaluating its work more robustly and building on their individual skills and expertise.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy their learning. They say it is 'fun and interesting' and that's why their attendance is so good. Pupils build confident key skills and benefit from a 'rounded education' right from the moment they start in Nursery. Pupils show very positive attitudes, good behaviour and a strong desire to give of their best. Relationships are happy and harmonious and support the calm and purposeful atmosphere observed by inspectors in all classes.

Attainment and achievement are consistently very positive at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. The daily attention paid to enabling pupils to practise letter sounds and build new words is having a very positive impact on extending their language and literacy skills. Pupils in Year 2 enjoy writing creatively about the characters in stories they have read and compose extended inserts for their diaries about the activities they have been involved in over the weekend.

Following a mixed picture in achievement at the end of Key Stage 2 over the last three years, current attainment in English, science and mathematics exceeds the standard expected for 11-year-olds and reflects good achievement from pupils' different starting points. Work in pupils' books shows good progress being made in mathematics. Some of the techniques used to sustain the high standards in English, for example on-going assessment, are now being used more effectively to support the improving picture in mathematics. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, higher attainers were observed to make rapid progress in solving multi-step problems and really enjoyed the challenge of the task. Pupils worked speedily and accurately within the time limit set and accomplished a good amount. They acted confidently in the

role of teacher to mark other pupils' papers, highlighting misconceptions, correcting errors and setting a helpful next-step target. Pupils identified clear learning gains in their ability to solve problems and to spot often-made mistakes. They also extended their self- and peer-assessment skills and in so doing had a very good picture of how to improve their work. The school recognises that such good practice is not yet a consistent feature in all mathematics lessons.

Pupils who have learning difficulties benefit from personalised programmes of study that involve specific targets supported by a blend of in-class and small group or one-to-one support. This highly effective approach helps them to make good progress, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Occasionally, these pupils work in areas of the school such as in cloakrooms that are not conducive to promoting the high quality expected in classrooms and this requires review.

Close attention is paid to helping pupils develop a strong moral code, high levels of social responsibility and a respect and appreciation of different cultures. The spiritual dimension of school life is very strong with pupils writing prayers and taking time for personal reflection in the school's sanctuary or on the residential retreat to Alton Castle. Pupils know how to keep healthy and safe. Many participate in the wide range of sports on offer and know how important it is to eat healthily. The school council, eco warriors and prefects undertake their roles diligently and make sure that the pupils' voice is heard loudly and clearly. Their good involvement in the life and development of their community will serve them well as they take their place in society as responsible future citizens.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

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

How effective is the provision?

The majority of the teaching seen during the inspection was good, occasionally outstanding and none inadequate. The very best teaching is in Nursery and Year 6 and here learning accelerates. Lessons typically feature well-planned activities that in the very best examples ensure that all pupils learn as much as they can, and build skills at a brisk pace. The use of 'must, should, could' objectives is useful in highlighting what pupils of different attainment levels can aim for in all subjects. However, not all teachers are explicit in sharing their expectations for high-level attainment in mathematics lessons until group work and this is a missed opportunity to promote better progress in the earlier part of lessons for this group of learners. Effective questioning styles are used to allow pupils to explain their ideas but this is not always as good as it could be in mathematics, particularly to extend high attaining pupils' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Teachers enjoy very warm relationships with pupils and manage behaviour very positively. This results in a settled, happy and productive learning environment.

All teachers confidently carry out termly assessments of pupils' work enabling them to track pupils' progress accurately. They are becoming effective in assessing how well pupils make progress in lessons but sometimes there are missed opportunities to do this. Teachers use their assessments to set challenging targets for each pupil, but these are not always emphasised in lessons or referred to in the marking of work, particularly in mathematics, and although pupils know their targets, they do not always know when they have been achieved or how to move up a level.

Pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum that is enhanced well through local partnerships. For example, links with neighbourhood schools support gifted and talented pupils in working together on bespoke challenges. Through a well-planned intervention programme, pupils who experience difficulties are enabled to learn with confidence and achieve well. Art and music are very strong in the school with a high proportion of pupils learning to play instruments and involved in extra-curricular activities such as the choir. The physical education element of the curriculum is well promoted with the football team doing brilliantly to win the league. The Inspire mathematics workshops were extremely well attended and have resulted in parents saying how much better informed they are to help their children with homework. Plans include extending creative experiences and global education.

Pupils are well supported as the staff know everyone as an individual and are responsive to personal needs. Parents view this aspect of the school's work very positively and flag the caring ethos as supporting families too. At 96%, attendance is well above the national average due to the school's highly effective work to improve attendance and punctuality. The school's strong emphasis on promoting pupils' emotional well-being results in them feeling safe, secure and well looked after. In the words of Year 6 pupils; 'we are a big team'; 'one happy family who enjoy being together'; 'St Andrew's is a really good place to be'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Since her appointment two years ago, the headteacher has embarked on a mission to take the school from satisfactory to good. This has been accomplished by setting a precise path for improvement based on accurate and constructive self-evaluation and embedding initiatives which have begun to make a positive difference to pupils' achievements. In this way, the school promotes equality for all pupils and also makes sure there is no discrimination on any grounds.

Subject leaders have developed their roles well since the last inspection and assume full accountability for the standards reached in the subjects for which they are responsible. Together with the headteacher, they monitor pupils' work and observe lessons on a regular basis and use this information to feed back into whole-school improvement planning and individual professional development. Sensible use is made of the performance management system to assist in improving the progress pupils make. The use of challenging targets, close tracking of progress and better consistency in teaching are key features in helping school leaders to ensure pupils achieve as well as they can. There is, however, room for improvement in how data are used to consistently ensure that the highest attaining mathematicians in every year do as well as those in Year 6.

The governing body fulfils all legal requirements and gives good attention to the welfare of pupils and staff with all safeguarding arrangements found to be effective at the time of the inspection. Governors ensure that the school promotes community cohesion effectively, which means pupils are well prepared to work with other people, regardless of faith, culture or ethnicity. They seek the views of stakeholders regularly and work well in partnership with parents and others to broaden the range of opportunities open to pupils and build good community links. Changes in the composition of the governing body give rise to enhanced opportunities to tap into new governors' personal expertise to help prioritise improvement, set challenging targets and fully evaluate the school's overall effectiveness.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities	3

met	
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 community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of education in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since the time of the previous inspection and is now good. Effective leadership has moved provision forward and managed the induction of new staff well. Children receive a positive start in the Nursery, learn and develop well and reach above average standards by the time they transfer to Year 1. Progress is particularly strong in communication and language development because of the daily focus on letters and sounds that is supporting their good reading and writing skills. All children have access to a safe and secure outdoor play area that hosts a range of exciting and stimulating activities. During the time of the inspection, the outdoor theme was the seaside. The children immersed themselves in imaginative play, taking passport photographs, going deep-sea diving, fishing from the full-size row boat, sunbathing and building sandcastles on the beach. Adults worked skilfully to promote purposeful talk with their well-directed questions ensuring the children gained maximum benefit from the experience. Occasionally, staff intervene too readily rather than allowing children the opportunity to choose the activity for themselves.

Generally, good attention is paid to the children's welfare, although not everyone wore hats to provide shade and more attention could be paid to water safety rules. Observation of children's development is on-going with learning profiles in place that provide a helpful overview of how well children are moving towards their goals. Current assessment procedures have inherent shortcomings which have just been recognised by the local authority. They will be working with the school to make the necessary changes to ensure that equal weighting is given to progress made in both years.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents hold positive views about the school. One parent's comments sum up the many, 'This is a good school with a caring approach, problems are dealt with quickly and children are happy and well motivated as a result.' A small but significant number of parents identified that they would like more information about their child's progress and the school is keen to move forward on this.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Andrew's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, they are asked to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 58 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 238 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	16	1	1

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
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.



25 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Andrew's Catholic Primary School, Solihull, B92 8QL

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we came to inspect your school. It was great to chat to you about the things you like best about school. We were pleased to see how the school has improved since its last inspection. You are doing better in your studies and reaching higher standards but also continuing to develop as really good people to know. It is clear that you go to a good school. Here are some of the things we found out that we thought you might like to share.

- You are happy and keen to come to school. You behave well and are kind to each other and help out when anyone has a worry.
- Teachers help you to learn successfully and so you do well at school.
- Everybody cares about you and so you feel safe and well looked after.
- You know how to keep healthy and safe. It's great that you enjoy sport and know how important a balanced diet is, though it would be good to see all lunchboxes containing healthy food!
- The headteacher and her team are working hard to make the school even better and one where you all reach your personal best.

There are three things that I have asked them to work on to help with this.

- Make sure that everyone makes as much progress as they can in mathematics, especially the high-flying mathematicians in all classes.
- Put in place a system for checking on how well children are doing in Nursery and Reception.
- Ask governors to visit school more often to see what you are doing and to check that St Andrew's is going from strength to strength.

I am sure that you will help them by always working hard and aiming really high. Good luck to the sports team and I hope the choirs enjoy their visits to Symphony Hall and the Town Hall. I hope everyone ends the term confidently and has a very happy summer.

Good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Field
Lead inspector

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