

# St Alban's Catholic Primary School

Lensfield Road, Cambridge, CB2 1EN

**Inspection dates** 25–26 November 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Extremely strong leadership is instrumental in the school's success. All leaders and managers, including governors, refuse to accept second best. They have worked together to improve both the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection.
- The school continues to improve very quickly because leaders are very clear about the main priorities. They plan developments very carefully, only taking on initiatives that will be beneficial to pupils' learning.
- Leaders make very thorough use of information on pupils' progress to check that they are all doing well enough. Additional support is given immediately to any pupils who are in danger of falling behind so that they catch up very quickly.
- Governors provide high levels of challenge to other leaders. They share the headteacher's determination to provide the best possible education to pupils.
- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. They make excellent progress across the school and attainment is consistently above average by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils who receive extra support through additional government funding make exceptionally rapid progress and attain at least as well as others by the end of Year 6.
- Outstanding provision in the Reception class ensures that children get off to a very good start to their education. Adults plan work that helps children to develop new skills extremely quickly.
- Across the school, teachers meet the needs of pupils highly effectively. They make work fun and exciting, and help pupils to develop an exceptionally strong love of learning.
- There is a delightful atmosphere in school. Pupils feel very safe and behave exceptionally well. They very keenly take responsibility and work very hard.
- Pupils show great concern for the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. They are tolerant and respectful of others.
- Pupils greatly enjoy school because learning is enriched by an exciting array of activities both in and out of lessons. They are especially positive about music and computing, both of which are taught exceptionally well by specialist staff.
- Parents support the school extremely well. They are keen for their children to do well and play an important part in the school's success by helping with work at home.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons, five of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made some shorter visits to lessons to check on particular aspects of teaching and the pupils' progress.
- Discussions were held with pupils, members of the governing body, members of staff and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 46 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, (Parent View). The inspectors also read letters from parents and talked to some parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and heard some pupils read. They looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress, planning and monitoring documents and the school development plan. They also scrutinised records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding and health and safety.
- The inspectors analysed 21 questionnaires from staff.

## Inspection team

Mike Capper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Nick Templeton

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is an average sized primary school.
- Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with nearly 30 home languages represented in the school. Around one in four of pupils speak English as an additional language. Very few of these pupils are in the early stage of learning English. The most common home languages for these pupils are Italian and Portuguese.
- Children are taught full-time in the Reception class.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is around one in ten. This proportion is below average when compared with all schools nationally.
- Around one in ten pupils is supported by the pupil premium. This is lower than the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided to give extra support to pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher is an LLE (Local Leader in Education) and supports other schools in the local authority.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers give pupils enough regular opportunities to learn new skills in science, so that progress is as consistently strong in science as it is in English and mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are outstanding

- Staff and governors all provide outstanding leadership to colleagues. The headteacher and his staff want only the best for pupils and they work relentlessly to achieve this. Together, they have created an extremely positive culture where teaching and behaviour can flourish and pupils can develop a love of learning. Team work across the school is strong and this ensures that policies are applied consistently well across the school.
- There is outstanding leadership of teaching. Teachers are monitored regularly by members of the leadership team and are given very clear guidance about how to improve. Training is used extremely well to improve teaching and to help future leaders to develop their skills.
- Leaders are very knowledgeable about how well pupils are doing. The progress of different groups is checked very carefully, but pupils are also seen as individuals. The very thorough checking of data on each pupil's progress means that the school can respond very quickly to any potential dips in achievement and give the help needed to help them catch up.
- Middle leaders, such as teachers in charge of subjects, play a key role in school improvement. They contribute well to development planning because they are very knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses within their subject. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is also of high quality.
- Leaders work closely with the local authority, which has provided suitable 'light touch' support to the school. There are strong partnerships with other schools and the university. Through his role as an LLE, the headteacher plays an important role in improving the wider education system by, for example, supporting other schools within the local authority.
- Leaders diligently promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination well so that all pupils can flourish both socially and academically. Funding available through the pupil premium is used extremely effectively to help eligible pupils take a full part in school life. They benefit, where appropriate, from additional help from adults. The impact of this is evident in the outstanding achievement of these pupils, but the school places an equally strong focus on using funding to provide them with opportunities they might not otherwise have in areas such as music, art and sport.
- The topics and subjects taught are rich and inspiring and provide pupils with many memorable experiences. There is an excellent focus on teaching basic skills in English and mathematics. The school recognises that provision in science, while good overall, is not as strong. This is because not all teachers plan enough opportunities for pupils to develop new skills on a regular basis. With support from a governor, leaders have already started to tackle this.
- Leaders greatly value creativity, and pupils benefit from wonderful opportunities to learn to play a musical instrument or to take part in performances, both in and out of school. Visits and clubs also contribute immensely to pupils' enjoyment of school. As one said, 'There is always something fun to look forward to.'
- Good use is made of the extra funding available to promote physical education and sporting opportunities. High quality specialist teaching leads to pupils making good and frequently exceptional progress. This helps also to develop other teachers' knowledge and skills. The school has seen increased participation in a wider range of clubs and sporting activities, with pupils now able to learn new sports such as Gaelic football. The school takes part in a range of competitions with other schools with a great deal of success.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. All leaders, including governors, are excellent role models in the way that they treat each other and the pupils. Diversity is celebrated. This was demonstrated by the school's success in achieving the EQuality Award just before the inspection. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about religions and faiths other than their own. They develop very good tolerance and respect for others and are prepared very well for life in multicultural Britain.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Leaders and governors give a high priority to

the safeguarding of pupils in their care.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is highly effective and has played a key part in continued school improvement since the previous inspection. Governors are very well trained and have an excellent knowledge of all aspects of the school's work. They make very good use of data on pupils' attainment and progress to check the success of provision. This means that have a very clear picture of how well the school is performing in comparison with others, as well as what still needs improving. Teaching is checked carefully and governors know how it is being improved. Governors ensure that performance management is used to reward successful teaching and to set targets for further improvement. Governors ensure that all spending is sharply focused on how it will improve provision for pupils. They monitor closely additional funding for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that it is used to improve both their social and academic development. Governors ensure the school's links with parents are very effective and that any concerns and opinions are carefully listened to and acted on.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The pupils' exemplary behaviour and very positive attitudes towards learning are key factors in their outstanding achievement. Pupils are keen to succeed and they work exceptionally hard in lessons. They clearly like school a lot. As one commented, 'We all feel part of a big family.' Their thirst for knowledge is seen in the way that many voluntarily stay in at lunchtime to work on computers, finishing off computing projects or completing other work.
- Pupils are proud of their work. Their above average rates of attendance show how much they enjoy school. They show great respect for the school building and do not drop litter. They say that their teachers provide work which challenges them but that they get help quickly if they are finding something difficult. This means that they willingly try new things without fear of failure.
- Pupils' respond extremely well to the school's very high expectations of their behaviour and social development. They keenly take responsibility through the school council or by being the headteacher's 'personal assistants' at lunchtime. Pupils in Year 6 lead assemblies and do so extremely well, reflecting the high levels of confidence and self-esteem that they have developed by the time they move to secondary school.
- Playtimes and lunchtimes are calm and harmonious. Pupils from different backgrounds play together very happily. Older pupils enjoy helping younger pupils, especially by being 'reading buddies' for children in the Reception class.

#### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school, and parents confirm this view. The school provides a very good range of activities to help pupils learn to stay safe. They are taught how to safely use computers and the internet and are very knowledgeable about the potential dangers of social network sites.
- Pupils say there is no bullying but they are confident that, if it occurred, it would be dealt with effectively. As one pupil commented, 'There is always someone to talk to if we have a worry.' Pupils have a clear understanding of different types of bullying including how name-calling can hurt others. School records confirm that such incidents are extremely rare and are tackled very quickly when they do occur.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching meets pupils' needs exceptionally well, right from their start in the Reception class. This

promotes pupils' very positive attitudes towards learning. Teachers plan work that inspires and motivates pupils extremely well. Throughout the school, pupils talk positively about how they enjoy lessons, especially computing and music where teachers' subject specialisms are used especially well.

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan lessons which are interesting and well-suited to the needs of pupils with different abilities. The most able are challenged well and very quickly improve their skills. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are given work that is very closely matched to their individual needs.
- Teachers manage behaviour extremely well and ensure that time is not wasted in lessons. Equipment and other resources, including computers are readily available to help support pupils' learning. For example, pupils in Year 6 were more easily able to understand transformation matrices because they could be seen on an interactive whiteboard.
- Across the school, pupils' books show that writing and mathematics are taught extremely successfully, with skills improving very quickly. Reading is taught equally well. The high priority given to the teaching of phonics (learning about letters and the sounds they represent) ensures that pupils read very confidently. Teachers expect nothing but the best from pupils. They question pupils closely about what they know and then adapt work quickly if it is too hard or too easy.
- Teaching assistants work well with teachers and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Their support ensures that pupils identified as needing extra help, including the small number who are in the early stages of learning English, make the same excellent progress as their classmates.
- Parents are very positive about the quality of teaching. They support teachers well by ensuring that homework is completed on time. Homework is enjoyable and is appreciated by most pupils because they are able to choose for themselves what level of challenge they would like. Most go for the hardest 'Gold Star' homework, reflecting their keenness to improve.

### The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils achieve exceptionally well across the school and attainment is above average at the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils' attainment has continued to rise since the previous inspection, and results in national tests, at the end of Year 6 in 2014, were the best ever. Pupils in the current Year 6 are already working at similar levels.
- The school very successfully promotes equality of opportunity by ensuring that all pupils do equally well. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, phonics is taught extremely well. In Year 1, pupils already have good phonics knowledge and they use this well to work out unknown words when they are reading. Attainment in national phonics screening checks at the end of Year 1 in 2014 was broadly average. Girls attained especially well. While boys' attainment was lower they had made the same good or better progress from their lower starting points.
- The achievement of the most able pupils is outstanding. They are given high levels of challenge in lessons and improve skills very quickly. Many pupils in Year 6 are already working at least two years ahead of their chronological age in English and mathematics. They solve complex mathematical problems with confidence, write well and read widely and for a range of purposes.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make excellent progress, with most reaching at least the expected Level 4 by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. They are given high quality support which is very well matched to their needs, ensuring that gaps in their knowledge are closed very quickly.
- Pupils who are supported through additional government funding make excellent progress across the school, doing much better than all pupils nationally. In national tests, at the end of Year 6 in 2014, they were working at a higher level than their classmates, being around a term ahead in reading, writing and mathematics. They were outperforming all pupils nationally by around four terms in reading, writing and

mathematics, reflecting the school's highly successful approach to improving their attainment. This is achieved through high quality support both in and out of lessons that is very well focused on individual needs.

- Pupils from different ethnic groups, such as those from Italian or Portuguese backgrounds, attain at least as well as others by the end of Year 6. Those who speak English as an additional language make excellent progress in improving their speaking skills and understanding, so they can make outstanding progress overall.
- Pupils' improve their computing skills very quickly and their attainment is exceptionally high. Pupils benefit from high quality specialist teaching. By Year 2, pupils already talk confidently about algorithms and how they are used in computing. In Year 6, pupils program machines to follow instructions and use their skills extremely well to support learning in a range of subjects.
- There are very few areas of weakness, but progress in science is not as consistently strong across the school as for other subjects. Although most pupils reach the expected level for their age by the end of Year 6, with many working beyond this, there are some missed opportunities to improve skills more quickly because science work is not always planned regularly enough in every class.

### The early years provision

**is outstanding**

- The early years' provision is outstanding. When children start school in the Reception class, most are working at a typical level of development for their age. They make excellent progress to reach attainment that is above average, so they are extremely well prepared to start Year 1. By then, children write short sentences and read simple texts confidently. They have already developed a love of books. They add and subtract small numbers accurately and recognise 2- and 3-dimensional shapes.
- Children behave very sensibly, and they feel very safe. They are very happy at school and concentrate well when working. This means that they are successfully prepared for their move to Year 1.
- Teaching challenges children extremely well. The skills of the most able improve very rapidly because work is successfully adapted to their needs. Disabled children and those with special educational needs settle quickly and are given very high quality support to improve their social and academic skills. Throughout the day, there is a successful focus on language development so that pupils with English as an additional language makes rapid progress in improving their skills and understanding of English.
- Members of staff work together well to ensure that the small outdoor area is used to very good effect. They plan activities that give children many opportunities to practise and reinforce basic skills by, for example, counting the objects hidden in the sand tray or writing about owls.
- Early years provision is very well led and managed. Systems for checking that all children are making enough progress are very thorough. 'Learning journals' give a very clear picture of children's progress over time. Leaders fully involve parents in their child's education. They are welcomed into class and are given helpful information each day on what their child will be learning so that they can help at home.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110841
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	448418

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

<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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	213
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mark Broadbent
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joseph McCrossan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 May 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01223 712148
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