

St Alban's RC Primary School

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

Inspection dates

21–22 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has effectively developed wider school leadership that is leading to improving teaching, standards and progress.
- Teachers have responded well to the new national curriculum by securing good progress for the majority of pupils. In Year 6 in 2016, pupils made progress in writing and mathematics at key stage 2 that was significantly above that seen nationally.
- Thorough planning and effective teaching enable pupils to make good progress at key stage 1. The proportions of pupils reaching expected standards are in line with those seen nationally.
- Teachers and adults are committed to the well-being and wider personal development of pupils. The school has a clear community ethos.
- Teachers promote positive behaviour through good learning routines, strong relationships and the provision of purposeful activities at lunchtimes and after school.
- Effective leadership and improving teaching have resulted in sustained improvement in the quality of teaching and children's outcomes in early years.
- The school works effectively in partnership with others, including the local authority, to check on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Governors are committed to the school's ethos. They use performance information to check pupils' progress. Some aspects of their monitoring roles are not defined tightly.
- The headteacher has used performance management to develop professional responsibilities and wider contributions to the school, although some of the measures to check on performance are not sharp enough.
- Despite some improvements, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities remain more likely to be absent than their peers.
- The most able pupils do not make consistently strong progress as they are not consistently challenged in all subjects.
- Pupils develop appropriate subject knowledge in subjects such as science, geography and history, but they do not develop their skills in these subjects in sufficient depth.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the curriculum provides regular opportunities for pupils to work at greater depth in all subjects, particularly the most able
 - developing more coherent opportunities for professional development to ensure a consistent focus on key areas for improvement
 - strengthening performance management targets to enable leaders and governors to more effectively hold teachers to account for pupils' outcomes
 - refining the monitoring responsibilities of governors so that they provide consistent support and challenge across all areas of the school's work.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - building upon recent improvements in reading to develop pupils' reading and understanding skills
 - improving the quality of writing for boys and disadvantaged pupils
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to develop key subject skills in subjects such as science and history.
- Accelerate the impact of actions to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities by:
 - closely tracking the attendance of individuals and key groups of pupils
 - working closely with families to support improvements in attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has led the school with energy and purpose and built a wider leadership team that has strengthened leadership across the key stages. This has contributed to significant improvements in the teaching of mathematics and in early years provision.
- Senior leaders have developed new systems to track pupils' progress across the school. Leaders review pupils' progress at termly review meetings. As a result, teachers are able to address underachievement and plan interventions to support pupils to make better progress.
- Leaders have a clear awareness of school priorities and areas for improvement. They work with partners to share good practice and moderate standards, although some aspects of professional development are not aligned closely enough to key priorities.
- Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's overall strengths and areas for improvement is largely accurate. They have worked with their school achievement partner and the local authority to check on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the progress that pupils make. All of pupils' work at key stage 1 was externally moderated in 2017 and standards found to be accurate.
- The headteacher and his leadership team carry out regular monitoring of the quality of teaching and the standard of work in pupils' books. These reviews provide candid feedback that is used to support improvement.
- Performance management arrangements are generally effective and improving. The headteacher has used systems to hold staff to account and to ensure that staff contribute to wider school life. He is now refining targets for autumn 2017 to make sure that they are more measureable in order to support leaders and governors in strengthening accountability and driving further progress.
- School leaders' use of pupil premium funding has led to improved provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils over time. Funding provides additional support in lessons and support for pupils' welfare. Leaders have also used funding to promote wider involvement in school life by subsidising clubs, trips and before- and after-school clubs. These actions have supported pupils in making good progress in most areas, although their overall attainment remains lower than that of their peers.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' awareness of the Catholic faith is complemented by insight into other faiths such as Islam and Judaism. Pupils do experience breadth in the curriculum through the study of appropriate content in science, geography and history, although they do not develop subject-specific skills in sufficient detail. In addition to active lunchtimes and sport, pupils have access to more reflective activities such as reading and sewing, with the regular support of a homework club. The vast majority of pupils spoken to had taken part in some form of extra-curricular activity to build their confidence and self-esteem.

- Funding from the government to promote sport and increase physical activity is being used successfully to enable pupils to benefit from the expertise of a specialist physical education coach. Pupils have access to a range of sports, including football, netball and skipping. Money has supported the growth of competitive sports. The girls' football team has developed from a small group of six pupils to a full team with its own kit and sponsor that now competes in a local league. Pupils' participation in competitive sport has increased, with pupils regularly participating in football and basketball competitions. This funding has also contributed to the training of the lunchtime supervisory team on the active playground initiative from September 2017.
- The school receives effective support from a school achievement partner who provides a termly review of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. The school has commissioned new support this year to boost capacity for improvement, and the headteacher is working with another headteacher to strengthen the school improvement plan.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed to the ethos of the school. They now receive more regular and more accessible information on pupils' progress that supports them in holding leaders to account, although some monitoring roles are less fully defined. They have a good awareness of strengths and areas for improvement.
- Governors have responsibilities for particular aspects of the school's work and provide reports of their records of visits. A governor with responsibility for children eligible for pupil premium funding closely tracks their progress and checks on the impact of additional funding.
- Governors take their responsibilities for performance management seriously and link pay progression to the wider performance of teachers and their contributions to the school. Pay progression is not an automatic process and governors support the headteacher in raising expectations of performance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that training is up to date for staff and for members of the governing body. The school has a pastoral support adviser who works closely with children and families to provide additional support.
- Leaders work with external consultants to carry out an annual audit of safeguarding practice that is signed off by the governing body. The single central record of vetting checks on the suitability of adults working at the school is appropriately maintained. The headteacher is trained in safer recruitment, although some aspects of the recruitment process are not fully standardised.
- All the pupils spoken to said that they feel safe and happy. The majority of parents agree. Pupils feel well supported by adults on site. They said that bullying was rare and were confident that adults on site would address any concerns that may arise. Last year, leaders held an e-safety evening for parents as part of a parents' evening to raise their awareness of the actions they can take to help their children to stay safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The impact of teaching on pupils' learning typically promotes good progress for the large majority of pupils and develops positive attitudes to learning. Teachers and teaching assistants work well with pupils to support progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have developed pupils' reading abilities with increasing success in recent years, with consistent improvement in the proportion reaching the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- Teachers provide pupils with numerous opportunities to read aloud in order to develop their fluency. Pupils regularly read to their teachers and other adults on site. Pupils use a range of taught strategies to break down unfamiliar words. As a result of these approaches, pupils are becoming more confident and capable readers.
- New initiatives in whole-class reading are developing pupils' reading stamina and their understanding of vocabulary. However, these approaches are not effectively implemented across all classes and this can slow progress for the most able readers. Too few opportunities are provided for pupils to work in greater depth.
- Teachers use a range of strategies to consolidate pupils' skills and address their misconceptions in mathematics. Pupils regularly use practical methods to explore mathematical ideas, such as tasks to develop their understanding of number bonds. Increasing opportunities are being provided for pupils to apply their mathematical reasoning. As a result, pupils make good progress in mathematics.
- Pupils are given opportunities to develop their writing skills in a range of styles. Good teaching supported improvements in pupils' outcomes in English grammar, punctuation and spelling in Year 6 in 2017. However, progress is weaker for disadvantaged pupils and boys. Actions to improve their accuracy and writing techniques have had less impact.
- Teachers set homework on a regular basis that supports pupils' learning. A number of pupils use the after-school club to complete homework activities.
- Teaching in early years is a strength as planning effectively meets children's needs and teachers provide a range of engaging and purposeful activities that support good and consistently improving progress for children.
- Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils well and plan and intervene accordingly. Recent actions to diagnose needs and monitor progress are leading to improving provision and progress for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- New tracking systems to regularly assess what pupils know and can do are enabling leaders and teachers to track pupils' progress over the year. As a result, teachers pinpoint and address any underachievement more swiftly. Teachers provide feedback to their pupils in line with the school's policy.
- Teaching does not consistently challenge the most able pupils. While teachers are seeking to build increasing challenge into the curriculum, opportunities for pupils to work at greater depth are still sometimes overlooked.

- Teaching helps pupils to develop appropriate subject knowledge in subjects such as science, history and geography. However, the range of curriculum coverage is not sufficiently broad and pupils do not develop their skills in these subjects in sufficient depth.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The school has a clear community ethos and adults show a strong interest in pupils' well-being. The school's ethos promotes moral understanding and an awareness of the needs of others.
- Pupils are happy and confident. They were keen to discuss their learning and experience of school life with inspectors. Pupils show a confidence in reading that is developed by opportunities to read with a variety of staff, from the caretaker to catering staff.
- Pupils' physical well-being is promoted through regular access to a range of sporting activities, including football and basketball. New arrangements at break- and lunchtimes provide pupils with access to a wide range of sporting equipment and activities that promote healthy activity. The school employs a specialist physical education teacher to provide pupils with regular access to sporting activities.
- Pupils are able to discuss personal safety and the actions that the school has taken to help them keep safe. They demonstrate a good awareness of how to keep safe online and how to avoid the danger on the roads. Pupils show a good understanding of both how to avoid and report any instances of online bullying.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Teachers encourage clear routines in lessons and support pupils in making transitions between tasks. Teaching assistants provide support for pupils in managing behaviour. Pupils respond to teachers' directions swiftly and move about the building responsibly. Incidents of low-level disruption are rare. Fixed-term exclusion is extremely rare, despite a brief spike in 2017 for specific incidents.
- Leaders have introduced new strategies to promote positive behaviours. The 'good to be green' scheme has proved successful, with increasing proportions of pupils accessing the rewards on offer for displaying positive behaviour. Pupils are attentive and appreciative in their weekly reward assemblies.

- Overall, attendance is in line with that seen nationally. School leaders and the school's pastoral assistant work closely with parents to support and challenge those groups of pupils who have higher rates of absence. There are signs that this strategy is beginning to have impact. Heightened monitoring and intervention led to a reduction in absence and persistent absence between autumn 2016 and spring 2017 by a third. However, these improvements have not been fully sustained. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are still absent more often than their peers.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Current pupils are making good progress in English and mathematics. Books show evidence that pupils take pride in their work and build upon feedback to respond to mathematical problems and improve the quality of their writing.
- At key stage 2 in 2016, pupils made very good progress in writing and mathematics and broadly average progress in reading. Unvalidated outcomes for 2017 show that progress remains largely positive, but less significantly so. In 2016, overall attainment was above that seen nationally in writing and mathematics but below in reading. Unvalidated outcomes for 2017 show that the proportions achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly in line with the national figure, although the proportion achieving this in all three subjects and achieving a higher standard is lower.
- At key stage 1 in 2016, the vast majority of pupils made good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in these subjects was in line with that seen nationally, although a smaller proportion achieved greater depth in reading and writing. Pupils demonstrated further improvement in 2017 in the majority of areas, although the proportions achieving greater depth remain below the national figure.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has risen consistently over the last three years to be in line with that seen nationally.
- Outcomes in early years have shown a consistent improvement over a three-year period with the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception ever closer to that seen nationally.
- Effective teaching and better quality support are helping pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress and catch up with their peers. In Year 6 in 2016, these pupils made progress that was in line with or above that of all pupils nationally, particularly in mathematics.

- In Year 6 in 2016, disadvantaged pupils made much better progress than other pupils nationally in writing and mathematics and broadly average progress in reading. Unvalidated outcomes for Year 6 in 2017 show that disadvantaged pupils made better progress than their peers nationally in reading and particularly in mathematics, but weaker progress in writing. Some differences in the rates of progress between disadvantaged pupils and others have diminished. However, the picture is inconsistent and some key differences in attainment remain. For current pupils, disadvantaged pupils are making good progress at key stage 2 but slower progress at key stage 1.
- Current progress of the most able pupils is variable between subjects and year groups. Work sometimes lacks challenge and, as a result, not all pupils are reaching their full potential.

Early years provision

Good

- As a result of thorough planning and effective leadership, outcomes in early years have improved continuously over a three-year period such that they are now in line with those seen nationally. A stronger focus upon children's learning complements nurturing activities and, as a result, children make good and improving progress.
- The early years leader uses her position as a member of the leadership team to raise the profile of early years and drive improvement. The new shared space between Nursery and Reception has created opportunities for more coherent planning that is supporting improving progress.
- Teaching provides an effective balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities. Children develop clear routines as teachers manage their learning well. In 'choosing time', Reception children show confidence in moving to activities such as music, mathematics and role play and use learning materials appropriately. Nursery children often watch and mirror the learning and play of older children to develop their sense of play. This leads to confident and calm children who are eager and ready to learn.
- Teachers and teaching assistants develop children's reading skills from an early age. They model sounds effectively and use rhyme to help children reinforce key sounds. Children confidently progress from sounding letters to tracing them in the air before writing them in their books and extending them to write words.
- Children engage with stories from an early age and teachers use pictures to help children to sequence stories. Teachers enable children to lead sessions by assigning reading parts and using drama and role play to bring stories to life. Teachers engage children with a wide range of activities and encourage children to work with bands and hooks to hone their fine motor skills.
- Children's learning journals reveal clear evidence of progress and access to a wide range of purposeful learning activities. Initial assessment is followed by regular monitoring of children's progress. Teachers use these assessments to plan further support, such as recent actions to address gaps in children's physical development. The work in class folders shows that leaders provide children with broad curriculum coverage and access to a wide range of learning activities, including science, the human body, fitness and the weather.

- Although the outdoor area was undergoing building work at the time of the inspection, children’s learning journals show that outside areas are typically used inventively to support learning. Children have many opportunities to explore the indoor and outdoor environments in order to develop their own interests and curiosity.
- Teachers monitor children’s progress closely and record this accurately. Ongoing observations of learning are supported by more formal periodic assessments. These records confirm that children make good progress from their starting points.
- Safeguarding practices in early years are effective. There are no breaches in statutory welfare requirements. Children are supported and cared for and teachers and teaching assistants are attentive to their needs.

School details

Unique reference number	108515
Local authority	Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Inspection number	10036456

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Michael Conarty
Headteacher	Martin Smith
Telephone number	0191 2625552
Website	www.stalbans.newcastle.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stalbins.newcastle.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 November 2012

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about governors' terms of office or the impact of the physical education and sport premium on its website.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, known to be eligible for free school meals, is average, although this varies between key stage 1 and key stage 2, with much higher proportions in key stage 2.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school runs its own breakfast club and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a wide range of lessons, covering all classes. The headteacher and senior leaders accompanied the lead inspector on a number of these observations.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and the wider leadership team. The lead inspector met five members of the governing body. The lead inspector met the school improvement partner and also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. He also talked to a group of pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, lunchtimes and playtimes.
- Inspectors talked to parents on arrival to the school on the second day of the inspection and the lead inspector met parents and carers.
- Inspectors examined the quality of work in a wide range of books. They discussed pupils' work and their learning with them in lessons.
- Inspectors looked at the school's work and considered documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, curriculum plans and information relating to pupils' achievement and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account 53 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 18 free-text responses from parents.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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