



St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

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Monday 22nd July 2013

Dear Parents & Carers

The report of the Ofsted inspection of our school carried out on 2nd to 3rd July 2013 has now been published, so I am able to comment on what it said.

The full inspection report from Ofsted is attached, as required by the Education Act 2005. The report is also on the website of the school. I encourage you to read it.

Background

Ofsted introduced a new school inspection framework in January 2012. This raised expectations and focused strongly on the importance of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning.

Ofsted look at four areas of a school when inspecting it. These areas are: Achievement of Pupils, Quality of Teaching, Behaviour & Safety of Pupils, and Leadership & Management.

The new grades are "outstanding", "good", "requires improvement" and "inadequate".

Parents rightly want a good standard of education for their children. So from September 2012, Ofsted said that only a "good" or better judgement will be good enough. All the governors and the staff at St Augustine's agree. Indeed our aspiration/vision for our school is to be "outstanding"; we have only the highest expectations for our children.

The grades for St Augustine's

- Achievement of Pupils - Requires Improvement
- Quality of Teaching - Requires Improvement
- Behaviour and Safety of Pupils - Good
- Leadership & Management - Requires Improvement

Given the grades in these four areas, our Overall Effectiveness was "requires improvement".

Ofsted emphasise that a school that "requires Improvement" is not failing or "inadequate". This designation is a signal that these schools must improve to a "good" standard within a reasonable period of time, usually twenty-four months.

Naturally, the governors and staff are disappointed by these grades, but not surprised, because we were aware of our situation and had taken action to improve the school.

What has already been done to improve standards

Over the last nine months there has been a tremendous amount of work to improve the four areas in the school looked at by Ofsted. Included in this work has been a critical self-evaluation on how we felt Ofsted would grade us; our view had been “requires improvement”. So we have a realistic understanding of the school.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff and governors for all that they have done during this time. I am so encouraged by the excellent dedication and commitment of the staff to continue to improve the education and welfare of your children at St Augustine’s. I believe that we are very fortunate, because there is much excellence to celebrate.

Crucially, we have looked at how staff and governors can raise the standards at St Augustine’s for the benefit of all our children; the emphasis on the children, not Ofsted.

I am pleased to say that progress has been made, particularly over the last six months, following the appointment of Mrs Jackie Warren. This has included making necessary changes to improve the way that we do things. But more has to be done.

The report does give us areas to improve. These coincide with the areas, which we had already identified and have been working on. As reported in the school newsletter of 12th July, the latest results for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 show a significant step in the right direction and a reversal of the downward trend, which the inspectors noted in their report. We have also seen, in our own work, a marked rise in the quality of teaching graded as “good”, showing that staff are working very hard for the benefit of your children.

Strengths

I am encouraged that in their report Ofsted recognised our progress and noted the many things that the school already does really well. It listed the strengths of the school as:

- This school has been improving since September 2012 and at a greater pace since the arrival of the new headteacher. Pupils are beginning to make good progress, especially boys and those who speak English as an additional language.
- The governing body and staff support the headteacher’s clear vision to move the school forward.
- Pupils’ behaviour is good. They say they feel safe and their parents and carers agree with them.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage benefit from outstanding provision, which prepares them extremely well for the move to Year 1.

Catholic Ethos

Let me reassure you that the excellent Catholic ethos of the school, which is central to all that we do, will not be diluted as standards are improved to achieve an Ofsted grade of “good” or better.

What needs to be done to achieve a “good” grade

Governors met on 10th July to discuss the draft Ofsted report and steps have already been taken on amending our current action plan to an Ofsted specific action plan. This plan, which is being drawn up with the headteacher and staff, will address the areas mentioned by Ofsted as needing improvement. It will take

St Augustine's from its current grade to "good" within twenty-four months at the latest, and then continue to improve the school to "outstanding", which is our vision.

The governors will be sharing much of this Ofsted action plan with you in due course, when it has been agreed.

We will shortly be assigned one of Her Majesty's Inspectors [HMI], who will come into the school regularly to monitor our progress against the Ofsted action plan, and to support the school in achieving "good". Once the inspector is content that the changes have sufficiently improved the school and that they are robust and sustainable, a planned Ofsted inspection will be organised, usually within twenty-four months. This is our opportunity to demonstrate our excellent response at St Augustine's to the Ofsted inspection so that we achieve the grade of "good", which our children deserve. As I wrote earlier, only a grade of "good" or better is good enough for our children at St Augustine's.

Open meetings to discuss Ofsted report and way forward

The governors, including the headteacher, would like to give you the opportunity to meet with us to discuss the report further. We have arranged two open meeting opportunities for this. Given that term ends on the 24th July, these have been scheduled for September.

30th September, 9.45am – 10.45am

30th September, 7.00pm – 8.00pm

I understand that these times may not be suitable for everyone or that you may have private/confidential concerns. Governors are therefore available for a private meeting at a mutually convenient time, if requested.

We look forward to meeting with you to discuss the stimulating time our school is now entering.

Please do contact me at the email address of mark.dennison@btinternet.com to discuss any concerns or indeed any celebrations, about which you want me to know.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the school newsletter of 5th July, the inspectors made a special comment about the children's excellent behaviour and polite and honest responses; that is a credit to you, as well as the staff.

I would like to repeat the thanks in the newsletter about the support and loyalty of parents and carers during the Ofsted inspection; it meant a great deal to all the hard-working staff [and governors] at the time.

I have mentioned staff and governors during this letter, but the school also needs the support of you, the parents and carers of our children at St Augustine's.

I am convinced that with all of us in the school community [staff, parents, carers, clergy, governors and of course our children] working closely together, a significant contribution will be made and so St Augustine's Catholic Primary School will improve to "good" and then "outstanding". This is our vision and it is what our children deserve.

Yours sincerely

Mark Dennison

Mark Dennison
Chair of Governors