

# St Bartholomew's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104815
<b>Local authority</b>	St. Helens
<b>Inspection number</b>	377131
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Martin Pye

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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	319
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John O'Donnell
<b>Executive Headteacher</b>	Honoria Arnold
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 March 2007
<b>School address</b>	School Lane Rainhill Prescot L35 6NN
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Martin Pye  
Clarice Nelson-Rowe  
Philip Martin

Additional inspector  
Additional inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 16 lessons taught by twelve teachers, observed various group activities and listened to pupils reading. Inspectors also attended two school assemblies, observed break times and held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, pupils, and parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at: the school development plan, policies, assessment data, school and local authority monitoring and safeguarding information, lesson plans and pupils' work. The team analysed 150 questionnaires completed by parents and carers together with questionnaires from staff and pupils.

## Information about the school

St. Bartholomew's is larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and only a few speak English as an additional language.

The school exceeds the government's current floor standards. There is an on-site breakfast- and after school club, managed by the governing body, with capacity for up to 60 children. The school has gained a number of awards including: Investors in People status, Information and Communication Technology quality mark and Healthy Schools status.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate**  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a good school. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive in their views and describe St Bartholomew's as a place where pupils are 'known and nurtured.'
- Pupils' good achievement, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs means that, by the end of Key Stage 2, pupils attain above average standards in English and mathematics. However, the pace of pupils' progress in mathematics, across Key Stage 1, has slowed in recent years.
- Teaching is good overall with some outstanding practice seen in Reception and Key Stage 2 classes. Teachers set clear learning objectives and have high expectations. In the best lessons, skilful teacher questioning, carefully-tailored tasks and opportunities for pupils to work together and share ideas, help them to develop high levels of independence in their learning. As a result, time is used very well and progress, for all groups of pupils, is good.
- Strong and trusting relationships help to create a calm and purposeful working atmosphere where there is an enthusiasm for learning and a respect for all. Adults are excellent role models and encourage and praise pupils at every opportunity. As a result, pupils' behaviour, and attitudes towards each other and to their education, are outstanding. Pupils are given exceptional support for their personal growth and are well-prepared for the next stage of their education and for future life.
- Strong leadership, over time, means that the school has continued to innovate and improve. Leaders have developed an exciting curriculum, engage well with parents and carers, and provide a high standard of care to all in the school community. The role of middle leaders, in monitoring the quality of teaching in order to share effective practice across the school, is still at an early stage of development.

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
  - making sure that teachers' questioning in lessons is always sharply focused on assessing pupils' understanding so that teaching is adjusted to meet the needs of all groups in all lessons
  - making sure that tasks in lessons are always carefully tailored to build successfully on pupils' prior learning
  - involving middle leaders in the monitoring of teaching and learning in order to assist the sharing of good practice across the school.
  
- Improve the rate of pupils' progress in mathematics, across Key Stage 1, so that, by the end of Year 2, attainment is more in line with the above average standards in reading and writing.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Pupils enter school with skills that are broadly typical for their age. They get off to an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make rapid progress in all areas of learning. This is because they have lots of opportunities to investigate, explore and make choices, and receive plenty of support, praise and encouragement from adults.

As pupils move through Key Stage 1 they continue to make strong gains in reading and writing so that standards of attainment by the end of Year 2 are above average. Progress in mathematics is slower, with standards of attainment at the end of Year 2 being broadly average. Nevertheless, the careful tracking of pupils' progress and the precise targeting of support for all abilities means that by the time pupils reach the end of Year 6, attainment in writing, reading and mathematics is above average. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve equally well and any gaps between groups - the achievement of boys and girls in mathematics, for example - are closing fast.

In lessons, pupils are keen to learn and apply themselves well, making good use of the time available to them. Evidence from observations, and the scrutiny of work, show that pupils make the best progress when teachers' planning and questioning is sharply focused on the next steps in learning. This allows pupils to reflect on what they have already learnt and apply existing skills in order to extend their knowledge and understanding. In lessons where progress is slower, teachers miss some opportunities to invite pupils to share and discuss their own ideas, and tasks do not always build carefully on prior learning.

Across the school, all teachers pay good attention to the development of reading skills and the enjoyment of books. Group reading and sessions that teach about letters and the sounds they make are well-organised. Pupils receive clear guidance and support, and respond with enthusiasm and confidence. Pupils take a lead in

assemblies, and other whole-school activities and celebrations, demonstrating an interest in each other and well-developed speaking and listening skills.

The many comments made by parents and carers to inspectors during the inspection, and on questionnaires, show that they feel a strong partnership with the school. Almost all say that they are happy with the progress their child is making. They say that school staff nurture their children's talents and help them to become confident and successful learners. Inspection findings endorse this view.

### **Quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching overall is good and, during this inspection, some outstanding teaching, notably in Reception and some Key Stage 2 classes, was seen. Parents and carers are of the same view that teaching is good in the school. Teachers have high expectations, know their pupils well and have detailed information about the progress they are making. Consequently, most lessons are well-planned to meet the needs of all groups of pupils. In one very effective mathematics lesson, for example, skilful questioning by the teacher prompted pupils to consider the relationship between the length of fingers and arms. This simple, but imaginative and well-chosen practical activity required pupils to apply a range of skills as they worked together to discuss and test their ideas and record their findings. As a result, this investigative task helped pupils to build on their existing skills and they made good progress.

In a few lessons, teachers are not completely clear about the next steps in learning for some groups of pupils. This is because teacher questioning does not check current understanding in sufficient depth, or planned activities are not tailored precisely enough to meet learning needs. Where this occurs, although the pupils readily engage in the activities, a small number is not guided through the small steps in learning which help them to build upon their current skills and knowledge. At other times, too much teacher talk reduces the time available for pupils to share ideas and practise skills.

All work is marked regularly. Pupils can explain how feedback from teachers helps them to know how well they are doing and what they need to do next in order to improve their work. Pupils are proud of their achievements and talk with enthusiasm about the creative curriculum and how it provides them with opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects. These varied and exciting themes successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their enjoyment of school. One pupil cheerfully described such work as a chance to, 'learn so many new things in such a fun and interesting way.'

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is demonstrated by their above average and punctual attendance and the very good levels of interest and engagement in their learning. Excellent relationships between adults and pupils are evident in all lessons and around school. Pupils say that they

feel safe in school and are very confident that adults will help them with any problems that may arise. Parents and carers report this very good conduct and positive attitude to be typical of pupils and praise school staff for their helpful actions to support pupils' well-being.

Pupils talk maturely about what constitutes bullying and state that it is not tolerated at St. Bartholomew's and rarely occurs. The school's logs to monitor any poor behaviour or racist incidents also indicate that such occurrences are extremely rare. Pupils have a very good understanding of the consistently-applied reward systems and are clearly motivated by the many awards; there was visible excitement in the weekly achievement assembly as the house-point scores were announced.

All in the school community recognise and celebrate each other's talents and use their own abilities to support others. This strong attention to the uniqueness and worth of each individual means that pupils willingly take on responsibility and are keen to do their best; working hard in lessons, helping in practical ways and offering pastoral support to younger pupils. Pupils have a well-developed sense of right and wrong and get along well with each other. All are courteous and respectful. The daily opportunities for pupils to pause and wonder and to reflect on their experiences make a significant contribution to their spiritual, moral and social development.

## **Leadership and management**

The school is led and managed well. Strong and clear-sighted leadership, over time, has created a learning culture where there are high expectations that all will be valued and supported. School leaders and members of the governing body have a clear vision for future school improvement and, through accurate self-evaluation, strategic forward planning, and judicious use of available resources, are committed to becoming an outstanding school. As part of the plan to realise this ambition, the school has paid good attention to the recommendations made during the last inspection and, over the last three years, above average attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been maintained. In addition, pastoral and academic support for pupils has been strengthened through the very effective work of the learning mentor and the improved tracking of pupils' progress.

Faced with an interim period between the retirement of the previous headteacher and the appointment of a permanent successor, the governing body has recruited an executive headteacher who is already implementing plans that build further on the school's achievements.

The school provides a good curriculum which is enhanced by a range of well-attended after-school activities including cheer-leading and a 'funky feet' dance class. There is a strong emphasis on all pupils enjoying their learning. A creative approach to curriculum planning forges meaningful links between subjects, creating topics that are often enriched by special projects and trips, which capture pupils' imagination and make them keen to learn more. Older pupils benefit from a visit to a residential activity centre and all pupils' cultural development is assisted by the teaching of Spanish and the imaginative attention given to music and the arts. While pupils'

awareness of the diversity of Britain and the wider world is limited, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development overall, is good. The strong commitment to promoting equality of opportunity can be seen clearly in the good achievement of all groups and the inclusive nature of all school activities. Pupils are kept safe at school because all staff pay proper attention to safeguarding and other statutory procedures. Good communication between home and school is assisted by the school's 'open door' policy. Parents and carers speak highly of the school's attention to every child's needs. Inspectors agree that this high level of academic and pastoral support for every individual means that all pupils are kept free from discrimination and make good progress.

While senior leaders have a good understanding of the quality of provision, the role of middle managers in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across the school is not yet fully developed. This means that opportunities to share, and build upon, good practice are missed. Nevertheless, long-term strategic planning demonstrates clear direction and ambition and there is good capacity to take the next steps in improvement.



## Glossary

### 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.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add up exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



30 January 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Bartholomew's Catholic Primary School, Prescot, L35 6NN**

Thank you for your welcome when I inspected your school with two other inspectors. We very much enjoyed our visit. Thank you for telling us about your work and all the other things you do at school.

During our visit, we were impressed by your excellent behaviour and the way that you celebrate each other's talents and look after each other. We also noticed that many exciting activities and events happen at your school. You are taught and looked after well and this means you enjoy lessons and feel safe. Your attendance is excellent. You make good progress in your work, grow in confidence and take many opportunities to get involved in school life and accept responsibilities.

Your headteacher and staff know how well your school is doing and how to improve it in the future. It is a good school and, with your help, it can become even better.

We noticed that, in Key Stage 1 classes, you make faster progress in reading and writing than you do in mathematics. We have asked your teachers to make sure that they ask you questions and give you work that will help you to make faster progress in mathematics lessons.

We have also asked your headteacher to make sure that other teachers in the school share ideas and ways of teaching that will help to improve your learning.

All of you can help by continuing to behave so well in school and by always doing your best in every lesson.

Thank you again and my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Pye  
Lead Inspector

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