

# St Benedict's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123840
<b>Local Authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	359526
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 January 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joyce Cox

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>	166
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jon Stratford
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tony Nicholas
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 June 2008
<b>School address</b>	Charlton Lane Midsomer Norton Somerset BA3 4BD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01761 418594
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<b>Email address</b>	office@st-benedicts-pri.somerset.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspection team observed eight teachers and visited 11 lessons. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, assessment information, teachers' planning, pupils' work and safeguarding procedures. They also analysed questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 12 staff and 102 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The sustainability of pupils' improved attainment and achievement in Year 2 and Year 6 assessments.
- How successfully staff use assessment information to meet the various learning needs of all pupils in mixed-aged classes.
- The extent and impact of senior and subject leaders' involvement in whole-school improvement.

## Information about the school

This smaller-than-average-sized primary school serves a wide catchment area. Pupils come from several rural villages and towns in Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset. The school serves eight Catholic parishes in the area. Approximately 50% of the pupils are from Catholic families. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Reception class.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. Pupils are mainly of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average.

Pupil numbers have fallen since the last inspection and funding has reduced accordingly. Consequently, from September 2010 the school has had six classes instead of seven. There are two mixed-aged classes: Year 1 and the youngest Year 2 pupils are taught in 'Sprite' class and the older Year 2 pupils and Year 3 pupils are taught in 'Unicorn' class.

**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

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

St Benedict's is a good school where pupils behave well and work enthusiastically because they are well taught and lessons are interesting. A group of pupils said they enjoyed school because, 'Our teachers make lessons fun and they tell us how we can do even better work.' The school has come a long way since its previous inspection and now produces good outcomes for all its pupils. One parent, speaking for many, commented, 'I have had excellent support, care and teaching for my child for six years. I cannot recommend this school highly enough.' Although the vast majority of parents and carers are very happy with the school, there are a small minority who have concerns about the mixed-aged classes. Whilst inspectors understand parents' anxieties, they looked closely at teaching and pupils' learning and progress in these classes and found these aspects to be good.

Reception children have a happy and successful start to their school life. Teaching in all classes is nearly always good. Lessons move at a brisk pace and engage pupils in interesting and practical activities. Teaching assistants provide excellent support for pupils who have complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. Precise analysis of assessment information highlights those pupils who need extra support. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has risen significantly since the last inspection, clearly showing the good progress pupils make during their time at the school. In 2010 pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 was above average and school data indicate that the current Year 6 pupils are on course to attain above-average standards in 2011 assessments.

Positive relationships, good classroom management and careful planning for all ages and abilities ensure that work is skilfully matched to the needs of individuals and groups. The opportunities and activities on offer continue to be improved and enriched through a good curriculum with numerous interesting projects and visits. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to school and local community life but are not sufficiently involved in surveys and discussions to inform decisions about their learning, school life and wider communities. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of life for pupils in other parts of the United Kingdom is another development area.

Senior and subject leaders and governors make a significant contribution to school improvement and are instrumental in raising pupils' attainment and achievement. Self-evaluation is accurate and clearly demonstrates the high expectations and challenging targets that are being set for future developments and pupils' achievements. Senior leaders have correctly identified the key areas for improvement. Attainment is rising throughout the school and the considerable improvements to teaching, assessment and curriculum planning mean that the school demonstrates a good capacity to improve further.

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

- Ensure pupils are fully involved in taking actions to improve aspects of their learning, school life and the wider community.
- Devise and implement plans to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of being part of the United Kingdom by:
  - providing increased opportunities to learn about other faiths and cultures ♦
  - establishing links with a school in a contrasting location. ♦

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

All groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve well. Their good academic and personal skills together with their above-average attendance prepare them well for later life and learning. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skill levels that are similar to those expected for their age in most areas of learning apart from their ability to link sounds and letters, and their early reading, writing and calculating skills, which are below. By the time pupils leave the school, their attainment is above average. Staff have worked very hard and successfully to raise pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics. Pupils' attainment is slightly lower in mathematics compared to reading and writing and the school has correctly put measures in place to improve pupils' mathematical problem-solving skills. In lessons, pupils show positive attitudes to learning and good levels of sustained concentration. All pupils work well together and are clearly involved and engaged in their learning. Staff work very hard with the pupils who have specific and sometimes quite complex difficulties and barriers to their learning. These pupils, often amongst the most vulnerable in the school, learn successfully and make equally good progress.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and older pupils are very clear about internet dangers. They are confident they can always ask for help and support if they need it. They comment that most pupils behave well, although some feel that football games can occasionally lead to arguments, but they are adamant that there is no bullying and that most pupils are kind and considerate. Pupils have a good awareness of the need for sleep, exercise, healthy food and drink, and good hygiene. The school council are planning to start a school allotment to grow vegetables and fruit to sell in a healthy tuck shop. Older pupils have a leadership role in the school and help with assemblies and lunchtimes and enjoy being on the school council. However, they are not fully involved in making decisions about their learning, school life and the local community. For example, school councillors conducted a traffic survey but were unclear about what happened after the survey. Many pupils also told us that they would like to use the outdoor classroom and the pond and the wildlife area more. Pupils' relationships with staff and each other are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they think deeply about a wide range of issues, although their knowledge of different faiths and cultures within the United Kingdom is a weak area. They have exchanged e-mails and DVDs with a school near Barcelona and raise money for local and national charities. For example, over ♦400 was raised for a charity to support a group of people with leprosy.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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?

Teachers' planning is detailed and lessons are conducted at a swift pace. Pupils are clear about what they are learning and how well they have tackled and achieved tasks. Marking is of a high calibre and effectively tells pupils how to improve their work. Staff manage pupils' behaviour sensitively and skilfully and create an encouraging and supportive atmosphere in lessons so that pupils are confident to have a go at answering questions and attempting new challenges. Teachers plan lessons to cater for pupils' different ages and abilities. For example, in an outstanding Year 6 literacy lesson all groups of pupils made excellent progress in understanding global environmental issues. This was due to the teacher's high expectations, challenging questions and excellent subject knowledge and her inspirational and lively manner which ensured all pupils were totally engaged and involved.

A key feature of the good curriculum is the way it is planned carefully to meet all pupils' needs. Good use is made of teachers' expertise in subjects such as Spanish and music and effective teaching assistants are deployed well to aid the normal staffing ratio. Exciting activities such as learning about North American Indians resulted in a much-enjoyed end-of-topic celebration with pupils and parents in the Year 2 and 3 class. Year 6 pupils recall many memorable learning experiences such as constructing radio stations to relay information about Tutankhamen as part of their work about Ancient Egypt. The school has recently changed from having a computer suite to using laptops and pupils and inspectors

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agree that pupils could have more chances to use laptops in some classes. A wide range of visits, visitors and clubs considerably enrich pupils' learning experiences. Pupils told inspectors how much they had learnt and enjoyed during a visit to a local farm. The quality of care and guidance across the school is good. Through effective links with other agencies, pupils, parents and carers receive targeted and helpful support. There are many examples of this having a very positive impact on pupils' welfare and achievement, including those who are encountering particularly anxious times in their lives. One parent commented, 'Extra pressure has been put upon teachers and teaching assistants as our child has a serious medical condition. Without their extra help and willingness to support us there would be no peace of mind. Staff are doing a wonderful job and my child is happy and achieving well.'

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leaders provide effective and ambitious leadership. Senior leaders and members of the governing body work in close and efficient partnership to ensure that all aspects of the school's work are carefully monitored. Pupils' progress is kept under close review and teaching and learning are effective. All staff and governors have been clear sighted about what has needed to be the main priorities and strategies in guiding the school forwards. Staff work together well as an effective and ambitious team and are all committed to school improvement and ensuring all their pupils have a good primary education. There is close attention to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination, enabling all pupils to achieve well, whatever their circumstances or difficulties, and breaking down any barriers that might hinder their learning. The system for tracking pupils' academic progress is effective so that any pupil who is not making enough progress is identified quickly and a raft of support is put in place. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is led and managed effectively and consequently achievement for these pupils is good. The staff have worked hard to build effective partnerships and trust with the majority of parents and carers. However, the headteacher and chair of the governing body accept that more regular information could be provided to the small minority of parents who have concerns about the mixed-aged classes. The governing body provide strong leadership and good challenge to the school. For instance, they questioned the school about the dip in attainment in 2009 and ensured effective and successful measures were implemented to remedy the decline. Good policies, strategies and procedures ensure the welfare of all pupils. Safeguarding policies and risk assessments are of a good quality and reviewed regularly to ensure pupils' safety. Community cohesion has been promoted effectively

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within school and this is reflected in the school's inclusive ethos; visitors are made to feel welcome and pupils show good tolerance and understanding of each other's differences. It has been less effective in its promotion of community cohesion at a local level.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly into school because they receive good care in a positive and happy environment. Children enter Reception with a range of skills and abilities and some often have lower-level language and numeracy skills. Children do really well in learning to read and write because of skilful teaching. Staff make learning fun and enjoyable, and really challenge children to think and work together well. Consequently, all children make good progress and most attain the expected levels on entry to Year 1. More able children attain above the expected levels. Journey books are used effectively to record children's progress in the areas of learning. The school is correctly currently devising ways to accurately track children's progress from the time they join the school until they enter Year 1. Current assessments appear to be over generous in some areas. A section of the outdoor learning area is now covered and provides outdoor learning opportunities in all winds and weathers. Reception staff work as an effective team and have a good knowledge and understanding of the personal and learning needs of young children. A well-balanced mix of adult-led and child-selected learning ensures children become increasingly independent. However, there are a few occasions when some child-selected activities are not sufficiently stimulating to accelerate children's learning and adults are not involved enough as play partners to promote purposeful play or extend children's language. A good partnership is quickly formed with parents and carers, who appreciate the hard work and dedication of the Reception staff. One commented, 'My child started in Reception in September 2010. This is not my local school but after inspecting all the schools available this was definitely



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the best. We made a wise decision because all aspects of the school are great and my child is very happy here.'

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	2
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

Over half of the families at the school responded to the questionnaire, which is an above-average number. Virtually all parents and carers feel that their children are kept safe, that their child enjoys school and that the school helps pupils lead a healthy life. Inspectors agree with parents' and carers' positive views. Twenty-four parents and carers who completed the questionnaire felt that the school did not take account of their suggestions and concerns and 22 parents did not feel that the school was led and managed effectively. Inspectors looked very closely at these responses, which appeared to be mostly from parents of children in the mixed-aged classes. Inspectors looked closely at teaching and pupils' learning and progress in these classes and found that teaching was good, as was pupils' learning and progress. However, inspectors discovered that although senior leaders and governors informed parents about the unavoidable mixed-aged classes, they have not provided sufficient on-going information since September 2010 to allay parents' concerns. The headteacher and chair of the governing body accept that more regular information could be provided to the small minority of parents and carers who have concerns about the mixed-aged classes. A small number of parents and carers raised other concerns which were summarised and raised with the school without identifying any individual.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team 95 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 166 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	63	32	34	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	66	69	28	29	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	33	35	49	52	6	6	5	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	38	45	47	9	9	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	47	49	43	45	5	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	42	44	46	7	7	4	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	48	47	49	2	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	36	38	41	43	5	5	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	41	45	47	7	7	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	38	46	48	5	5	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	34	33	35	15	16	9	9
The school is led and managed effectively	30	32	38	40	10	11	12	13
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	55	33	35	7	7	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and 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 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**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.**



21 January 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Benedict's Catholic Primary School, Midsomer Norton BA3 4BD**

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and being so polite and helpful to us. We think you go to a good school and these are the things we found out.

- You make good progress in your work and reach above-average standards.
- Your behaviour is good and you work hard and play happily together.
- You are taught well and your lessons are usually fun and interesting.
- Reception children have a happy and successful start to school life. ♦
- Your headteacher, subject leaders and governors are good leaders.
- You are very well cared for in school.
- You are helped to keep fit and eat healthily.

We have asked the school to do two things to be even better:

- Make sure you are all involved more in improving aspects of your learning, school life and the wider community. ♦
- Help you to learn more about other pupils' lives in the United Kingdom.

You can help by always being kind, attending school regularly and by behaving well.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joyce Cox

Lead inspector

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