

St Brendan's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122044
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	359158
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Joseph Peacock

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	312
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marion Goodman
Headteacher	Teresa Morrison
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and observed 13 teachers. They held meetings with the headteacher, governors and staff, talked to parents and children, and looked at school planning and assessment data. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including minutes of governors' meetings, improvement planning and that relating to safeguarding and children's welfare. They scrutinised 111 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and those returned by staff and pupils.

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

- Does the school have effective strategies to raise attainment in mathematics, particularly for more able pupils and girls?
- Is assessment information accurate and is it being used effectively to raise attainment?
- Are leaders, managers and governors checking how well the school is doing rigorously enough?
- In the Reception classes, are the limitations imposed by the outdoor accommodation having any detrimental impact on children's learning and progress?

Information about the school

The school is larger than the average primary school. It draws pupils from a very wide area. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. In the current academic year, four out of the 12 class teachers have qualified for maternity leave. Building work has just begun to provide new accommodation which will enable all pupils to be in one rather than two separate buildings. The school has gained Healthy School Status.

Privately run child care is provided in a nursery on the same site. This will be inspected and reported on separately.

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

This is a good school. It has an excellent reputation in the local area and there is a high demand for places each year. Its reputation has been built on the outstanding level of care, guidance and support which is provided for all pupils and the excellent partnership that exists with parents. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and feel perfectly safe and secure in the knowledge that staff care and will always look after them. Pupils are proud of their school and their behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school.

Children enter Reception with skills that are mostly below those expected and make good progress in all areas of learning because of the good quality of teaching and learning. However, there are not enough opportunities for children to extend their learning in activities outdoors.

The quality of teaching and learning are good and ensure pupils' achievement is good by the end of Year 6. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and achieve significantly above average standards in English as this subject has been a recent focus for improvement. However, progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 2 in mathematics and attainment is lower, though still above average. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities follows the same pattern as other pupils. Their progress is good but it is not as consistently good in mathematics. The mathematics curriculum is being developed but tasks in some lessons are not challenging enough to ensure pupils learn at a more rapid rate. On occasions, teachers talk for too long and do not give pupils enough time or independence to complete their work.

The care and support for pupils with the greatest needs is outstanding. The school makes excellent use of the expertise from outside agencies and other specialists and these pupils make good and often exceptional progress as a result.

The headteacher and governing body have a clear ambition to make their school outstanding and they demonstrate a good capacity to improve it further. They work very effectively as a team and have a glowing pride in the school. They have a good track record of success in improving identified priorities such as raising attainment in English. The innovative system of creating shadow subject leaders has minimised the disruption caused by long term staff absence. Self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is sharp in many areas but has not given full weight to the lower standards in mathematics compared to other subjects.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and increase the rate of progress in mathematics particularly in Key Stage 2 by;

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- increasing the opportunities for pupils to work independently
- ensuring that tasks are more challenging for all pupils.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, plan more opportunities for children to learn outdoors and consolidate new skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In the overwhelming majority of lessons seen, pupils' achievement was good. All are keen to answer questions and their concentration rarely wavers, even when lesson introductions are long and when they find tasks are easy and quickly completed. They always listen attentively and take great care with the presentation of their work. As a result, completed work in their exercise books is invariably neat and a source of pride for most.

By the end of Year 6, attainment is significantly above average in English and science following a sustained programme to raise standards in these subjects, and most pupils make good progress. However, girls and some more-able pupils have made slower progress than others in mathematics. Staff are in the middle of a concerted effort to raise attainment to match that of English and have implemented a range of strategies to bring about improvement. There is early evidence of an upward trend, reflected in school data and a scrutiny of pupils' work.

Attendance was an issue in the previous inspection and improved dramatically following that inspection. Currently, attendance is average. The distance some pupils travel to school and adverse weather in a three week period at the end of last term has lowered previously above average attendance rates. Pupils enjoy school and know how much they will miss out on if they are absent. They take full advantage of the many opportunities offered to them, for example, learning to play a musical instrument or attending the highly successful sporting activities that the school organises. Teams are county champions in gymnastics, netball and cross country. Most pupils have a good understanding of staying fit and healthy, and an excellent awareness of keeping themselves and others safe. They develop an excellent understanding of responsibility, both to their school and the wider community, notably through strong links with the church. Representatives from each year group enjoy and value their roles as school councillors. Excellent relationships between pupils and with their teachers, very positive attitudes to learning and above average literacy, numeracy and computer skills equip pupils well for their future. Topics, lessons in religious education and assemblies successfully promote learning and give pupils a good understanding about different cultures and faiths. Overall, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ 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?

The vast majority of teaching is good and together with pupils' very positive attitudes and excellent behaviour, learning is effective in most lessons. In one outstanding lesson seen, learning was at a brisk pace and tailored to accurately meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. Pupils were successfully challenged to identify features of story openings and write one by themselves. However, on occasions, some introductions are directed at the whole class, when the content is not applicable to the needs of some groups. This occurred in some mathematics lessons. Consequently, some pupils mark time listening to the teacher when they could be working and learning independently. Pupils' work is carefully marked, and teachers make helpful comments about how the work can be improved upon.

Developing the curriculum has been a continuing priority for all staff and their efforts in the past have resulted in highly effective curricula for English and science that are ensuring high standards. The current focus is aimed at improving the mathematics curriculum and a raft of measures such as computer programmes and individual tuition has been implemented. It is too early to see the full impact of these measures, other than early signs of a rising trend in pupils' performance. The curriculum is also greatly enhanced by visits, visitors, extra-curricular clubs such as dance and the 'Fundamentals' club for the youngest pupils which promotes basic academic and sporting skills.

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Pupils are exceptionally well cared for, guided and supported in a very positive atmosphere that enables them to feel safe and confident. The strong links with the child care provider on site and extremely well organised transition into school for children ensures that they settle quickly and feel happy. Older pupils play their part in the process by setting a good example and looking after younger pupils in a very mature and sensible way. Provision to help the few pupils whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable is outstanding, ensuring that they successfully overcome barriers to learning, improve their behaviour, and play a full part in what the school offers. The school does all it possibly can to promote good attendance and pupils try very hard to gain the variety of reward incentives on offer.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has wisely ensured that senior staff have the training and expertise needed to be effective leaders. Four have the national professional qualification expected for headteachers, for example. Arrangements for all staff to act as shadow subject leaders have paid dividends when teachers have taken maternity leave and a replacement was ready and waiting to take over. Staff are all willingly involved in helping to monitor and evaluate the different aspects of school. Governance is good. The governing body has a wealth of expertise. Governors are well informed and know the school's strengths and where improvements can be made. They gain much of this information through their regular monitoring visits, though some visits are not closely linked to evaluating school priorities, missing opportunities to give staff valuable feedback on the rate of improvement. There are two unfilled posts for parent governors, which add significantly to the workload of governors.

The accurate assessment data and close tracking of pupils' progress each term ensures provision can be targeted to any pupils who are found not to be making the required progress. However, some teachers do not take sufficient account of this data when planning tasks and pupils are sometimes given work which is too easy for them. Tackling discrimination and ensuring equality of opportunity, especially for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are uppermost in the minds of staff. Gaps between many groups have closed, and those in mathematics are currently being addressed. The school has an excellent relationship with parents and carers, who appreciate all that the school is doing for their children. Partnerships with the local church, other schools, sporting coaches and other specialists are a strength and make a major contribution to pupils' learning and their enjoyment of school.

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The school has good arrangements for making sure that the pupils are as safe as possible. The teachers develop the pupils' knowledge of staying safe by using the specialist knowledge of visitors such as the local police and school nurse. Thorough risk assessments are conducted carefully by staff before any visit or activity. The school has detailed action plans to develop community cohesion locally, nationally and internationally. Good links are well established with pupils in a school in Gambia, for example.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two parallel reception classes. The attainment on entry for most is below expectations for children of this age. Nearly all make good progress, especially in gaining basic literacy, numeracy and social skills. This is because of the good quality of teaching and high level of care and support for individual children. They enter Year 1 with skills that are average.

There is a good balance of child initiated and adult led learning with a wide range of activities covering all areas of the curriculum. Children love to practice new writing skills and opportunities for them to write single letters or try short sentences are well planned. Reception staff were clearly involved with the school priority to improve writing and there is strong evidence to show how successfully writing skills have been improved. Children need to be closely supervised to use the outdoor area because the area is part of the playground. This limits the time and range of learning opportunities outdoors but the close adult supervision helps to make learning effective during these sessions.

The two class teachers work well together as leaders of this key stage. They have a good understanding of how young children learn and use assessment data effectively to ensure children's individual learning needs are met.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

About a third of parents and carers returned their questionnaires and almost all clearly hold the school in high regard. Those who responded were unanimous in their agreement with eight of the 13 questions. Comments reinforced parents and carers strong appreciation about how much their children enjoy school. 'He cannot wait to get out of the house, into the car and into school' was a typical comment. Many of those who made additional comments were very pleased with the exceptional level of care and support for their children and singled out the 'wonderful' headteacher for special praise. 'Her infectious enthusiasm permeates the school' was a widely held view. Inspection evidence endorses parents' positive views. A very small minority indicated that they would like more account to be taken of their suggestions and concerns. This was investigated and the evidence was that the staff have an excellent partnership with parents and carers and that any concerns are acted upon quickly and decisively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Brendan's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 111 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 312 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	87	78	23	21	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	99	89	11	10	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	75	68	33	30	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	88	79	22	20	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	94	85	16	14	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	80	72	28	25	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	77	69	31	28	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)	75	68	33	30	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	79	71	29	26	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	79	71	28	25	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	65	59	39	35	3	3	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	87	78	23	21	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	93	84	17	15	0	0	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).

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



10 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Brendan's Catholic Primary School, Corby, NN18 0AZ

My colleagues and I really enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for making us all feel so welcome. In our discussions, it was easy to see how proud you are of your school and how excited you are about the building work which will enable all of you to be together in one school building. At present your school is judged as good but we did see some things which were excellent. Seeing you at work in lessons, and observing you at lunchtime and playtimes convinced us that your behaviour is outstanding! Well done to all of you. It helps everyone to feel really safe and happy at school.

One of the things stopping us judging your school higher is your attainment in mathematics. Not enough of you are achieving high standards and so we are asking your teachers to plan more challenging work and to give you more time to get on with it on your own.

The younger children in Reception always try their best and just about everyone makes good progress before they move into Year 1. Your teachers plan lots of interesting and exciting work for you but most of this is in the classroom. We would like to see you have more time outdoors with even more activities to enjoy.

All of you are exceptionally well cared for and supported by your teachers who work very hard to make sure you enjoy school. We were very impressed with all your sporting achievements and the after-school clubs that so very many of you manage to attend. Not many schools can boast of three county championship teams. We hope that you continue to enjoy school, and that you reach even higher standards, especially in mathematics.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Peacock

Lead inspector

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