

St Benedict's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111323
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	378277
Inspection dates	6–7 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Judith Straw

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	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Debbie McCann
Acting Headteacher	John Gretton
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 11 lessons taught by seven different teachers. They held meetings with parents and carers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at displays, samples of pupils' work, assessment information, the school development plan and a range of policies. They analysed the 41 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as those from pupils and staff.

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

- To what extent do teachers support pupils to make rapid progress in the course of a lesson, particularly in writing and mathematics?
- What is the rate of progress of boys, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and higher-attaining pupils?
- What impact do the school's assessment and monitoring systems have on outcomes for pupils?
- How effectively have middle leaders and the governing body kept the school stable during a period of uncertain senior leadership?

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils from different minority-ethnic backgrounds is average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. An above-average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school holds the Activemark award.

Since January 2011 the school has had six acting headteachers. The school is currently led by an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher. The governing body is in the process of appointing a permanent headteacher for the spring term 2012. The current acting headteacher has stated that he will remain in post until this happens. Three new teachers took up their posts in September 2011.

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

3

Main findings

St Benedict's is a good school which is providing a good quality of education to all its pupils. Despite a period of unsettled leadership, outcomes for pupils have remained good and attainment at the end of Year 6 has risen further so that it is securely above average. Pupils say they feel exceptionally safe in school and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. This is reflected in the calm and happy environment in school, the genuine consideration that pupils show for each other and their eagerness to participate in a wide range of sporting, musical and charity-raising activities.

Children enter Reception with levels of attainment that are broadly as expected for their age. The school provides well for these pupils and, consequently, they make good progress across the Reception year in all areas of learning. Pupils make good progress across the school because they are taught well. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is consistently above average. The school has identified that girls are doing slightly better than boys. Attainment in mathematics is above average, and in the national tests in 2011 over half of the Year 6 pupils achieved the higher Level 5. Attainment was above average in English but pupils did not do as well in writing as in other areas and this is now a whole-school focus. Although good overall, there is some inconsistency in teaching and learning and, in a few lessons, the pace can be too slow and sometimes pupils find work too easy. Pupils say they enjoy their learning and find the curriculum interesting and satisfying. The curriculum develops basic skills well and provides a wide variety of enrichment opportunities such as the recent Spanish day. The school takes good care of all its pupils and they are supported and encouraged to achieve well.

The acting headteacher since January 2011 is providing effective leadership and is working well with the acting deputy headteacher. Together, they are providing clear direction for the future. Speaking for many, one parent noted, 'There is renewed energy and enthusiasm.' The staff have worked hard to ensure the quality of the school's provision but uncertainty over permanent strategic senior leadership has meant that self-evaluation and monitoring have been inconsistent. Members of the governing body have supported the staff during the unsettled period and tried to keep parents and carers informed. Nevertheless, a significant number of parents and carers are critical about the quality of communication between home and school. The governing body is aware of this and is working hard to develop better links with

parents and carers. In view of continuing temporary leadership, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - increasing the pace of learning in lessons
 - developing whole-school strategies to improve writing further with a particular emphasis on boys' writing
 - providing appropriately challenging work for all pupils.

- Strengthen strategic leadership and management by:
 - increasing the rigour of monitoring of all aspects of the school's work, particularly by subject leaders
 - ensuring senior leaders and the governing body work with parents and carers to improve communication
 - appointing a permanent headteacher.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils concentrate, work hard and listen to their teachers. Their good behaviour contributes well to the good progress evident in most lessons. Pupils are equally adept whether they are writing poetry, analysing geometric shapes or developing their Spanish vocabulary. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress because of the effective support they receive. Attainment in mathematics has risen for the third year in succession. Attainment overall has risen in English with boys and girls achieving very well in reading but to a lesser extent in writing, particularly boys. Pupils collaborate well, for instance, when working in pairs or teams solving problems or reviewing each other's work. Pupils are keen to succeed and always respond to teachers' comments in marking their books by completing, correcting or re-writing work.

Pupils are adamant that there is little or no bullying and say that any problems are 'sorted out quickly'. They are aware of the dangers of using the internet and know that sometimes social networking sites can be dangerous and damaging. Pupils are energetic and keen to engage in sporting and musical activities. They understand how to stay healthy and fit and know the importance of a balanced diet. They say that personal, social and health education lessons help them to learn about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. The school plays a prominent part in the local community with pupils often involved in church and parish events. They engage in many fund-raising events for local and international charities. Pupils from different backgrounds work and play together exceptionally well. Year 6 pupils act as buddies to the Reception class children helping to smooth their way into the school routines. Pupils learn about all major world faiths and have an excellent understanding of cultures other than their own; for example, they have a link with a community school in India. Attendance is average and is rising. Pupils' above average attainment,

confidence and interpersonal skills mean that they are well prepared for the next stage of education.

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	2
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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' enthusiasm quickly encourages good relationships so that pupils are keen to learn and behave well. Clear learning objectives ensure that pupils know what they are going to learn and how to recognise success. Most lessons are planned carefully so that there is a good pace, opportunities for pupils to work on their own and in groups, and opportunities to celebrate and share their achievements. Sometimes, however, the pace is slower. Then pupils become less interested in their work and progress is satisfactory, rather than good. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support a range of pupils and so make a valuable contribution to lessons. Occasionally, pupils of a higher ability are not moved on to more challenging work when it is evident they have mastered the main point of the lesson. Marking and assessment are consistently good across the school. They are used well to support learning and agreed approaches ensure that all pupils receive good quality advice on how to improve their work.

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. Good use is made of multi-media resources to make lessons engaging. There is a strong focus on promoting the basic skills as well as opportunities to broaden pupils' horizons with special events such as 'green day', where activities are based around environmental learning, and multicultural arts days. Pupils are keen to play competitive sports and enjoy inter-school competitions and performing in music festivals. They develop their interest in the environment in gardening club and managing the school greenhouse. The school organises many visits, including residential visits for pupils in Years 5 and 6, and invites a wide range of visitors into school. Parents and carers are kept informed about which aspects of the curriculum their children will be studying each term.

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

Pupils and their families are known well and teachers and teaching assistants target extra support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Well-established links with a range of agencies support this work. Pupils are fully aware of who to turn to if they are in difficulties. The school successfully helps pupils at points of transition, into school, between classes and on to high schools at the end of Year 6. The good quality care and support that pupils receive has helped to maintain good and outstanding outcomes in pupils' personal development since the last inspection.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting deputy headteacher (since January 2011) is the longest-serving member of the senior leadership team. Staff comment how she, and the governing body, have worked tirelessly to support them and to ensure the quality of education during a period of unsettled senior leadership. She works very effectively with the acting headteacher and together they are taking the school forward. Parents and carers are very appreciative of the way in which, 'children are put first'. The teaching and support staff have successfully focused their attention on maintaining above average attainment and many spoke of their pride in the school.

The difficulties around securing permanent senior leadership have meant that regular monitoring activities have fallen behind. Subject leaders are not sufficiently involved in whole-school self-evaluation or in monitoring progress in the areas they lead. Nevertheless, the governing body has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is fully aware of the priorities for further improvement. All the issues from the last inspection have been dealt with. Good provision and overall good outcomes for pupils have been maintained.

The school is good at supporting parents and carers to help their children by keeping them informed about the curriculum and the progress their children are making. Many parents and carers feel that other communication during the absence of a permanent headteacher could have been better. Partnerships with other agencies, schools and organisations are good and help to enhance provision for all pupils. The school works well to tackle discrimination and promote equal opportunities and is successfully reducing the gap in achievement between girls and boys in writing. Safeguarding is good and has improved since the last inspection with far stronger security measures now in place. Recommended good practice is routinely followed. Parents and carers are confident that their children are safe. The school itself is a totally cohesive community and has good links with the local area and further afield.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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

From expected starting points for their age, children make good progress in the Reception Year. They make particularly good progress in aspects of numeracy and physical development. As in Key Stage 2, boys tend to make slower progress in writing. Children have access to a stimulating learning environment and a spacious and well-equipped outdoor area. They become confident learners, independent and curious about the world around them. For example, a row of children sat silently, entranced, as they watched birds come to eat the special seed cakes they had made. Relationships with adults are excellent. Questioning is used well to help children extend their learning and thinking. Lessons are well taught with a good balance of directed and child-led activities. There is plenty of choice so that children can pursue their own interests and enthusiasms. Assessment of children’s progress is good. Leadership is good. An experienced leader promotes strong team work and successfully encourages parents and carers to get involved with their children’s learning. Children’s safety and well-being are given a high priority.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	2
Taking into account: 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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire was a little below average for a primary school. Many parents and carers praised the teaching staff whom one described as, ‘resilient and hard-working’. The majority of parents and carers were pleased with the quality of education provided by the school and felt that, ‘the school has a bright future’. Several parents and carers praised the current acting headteacher who they felt was providing welcome stability and leadership.

However, a significant minority of parents and carers expressed disappointment about uncertainty around the leadership of the school, and particularly the lack of communication from the governing body during the period of interim leadership. A small minority felt that standards and behaviour had slipped.

The inspectors endorse the positive views expressed about the staff. They found that the school's data from tracking pupils' progress and Key Stage 2 results in tests indicate that attainment remains above average and has risen further. In discussion with pupils, parents and carers and staff as well as observations, behaviour was judged to be good. The members of the governing body believe they have acted in the best interests of pupils and staff in difficult circumstances and are aware of the need to improve communications with parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Benedict'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 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 174 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	46	18	44	3	7	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	19	46	20	49	1	2	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	27	25	61	5	12	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	24	25	61	5	12	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	15	37	20	49	5	12	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	27	25	61	4	10	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	39	23	56	1	2	1	2
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)	15	37	22	54	3	7	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	32	20	49	7	17	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	22	20	49	3	7	8	20
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	15	22	54	3	7	5	12
The school is led and managed effectively	8	20	12	29	6	15	11	27
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	27	20	49	6	15	1	2

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Benedict's Catholic Primary School, Wilmslow, SK9 3AE

Thank you for making our visit to inspect your school so enjoyable. We would like to thank especially those of you who gave up time to share your views with us at break and lunchtimes. You are very good ambassadors for the school. We enjoyed hearing you sing and play music in assembly on Friday and were very impressed by the number of awards for music and sport which you received.

We have judged St Benedict's to be a good school. These are some of the things that helped us to make our decision.

- You make good progress because you are well taught.
- You behave well in lessons, concentrate and work hard most of the time.
- You look after each other extremely well, making everyone, of whatever background, feel valued.
- You know how to keep healthy and fit and your attendance is improving.
- You told us that you think the school is very safe and secure.
- The school takes good care of you and provides lots of interesting and enjoyable activities.

We always leave schools with some points on how to improve. We have asked your teachers to make sure all lessons move at a fast pace, to set work which is not too hard and not too easy and to help you all to achieve even better results in writing, especially the boys. We have also asked the school leaders to check more regularly on how well the school is improving and to make sure parents and carers are always informed about what is happening in school. You can all play your part by continuing to work hard and behave well, listening to your teachers and attending every day.

We wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw
Lead inspector

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