

St Benet's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	124778
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	380980
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2012
Lead inspector	Nick Butt

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	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clare Valori
Headteacher	Maria Uragallo (Executive headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Nick Butt

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed eight lessons taught by five teachers and a member of the support staff. He spoke with parents and carers in the playground before school and held meetings with pupils, representatives of the governing body including the Chair and members of staff. The inspector took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including self-evaluation documents, strategic plans and other development plans. The inspector scrutinised 56 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and those returned by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

St Benet's is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is above average. An increasing number of pupils join the school outside normal times, especially in Key Stage 2. There are four classes, some of which contain pupils from more than one year group. The school meets the current government floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

From September 2009, St Benet's – together with St Edmund's Catholic Primary, Bungay, a school sited seven miles away – became The Federation of Catholic Schools of the Waveney Valley. This was made a hard federation in September 2010 with a single governing body and an executive headteacher running both schools. The present executive headteacher took up her post in March 2011. There have been several changes of staffing in the past year and a new deputy headteacher was appointed to St Benet's in April 2012.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- St Benet's is a satisfactory school. It has particular strengths in its caring ethos, based on deeply held values, and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is not yet good because pupils' achievement in mathematics falls behind English and not enough teaching is consistently good. Schools whose overall effectiveness is satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory. Children make good progress in the Reception class because of rich, stimulating provision that focuses on their interests. In Years 1 to 6, progress is satisfactory overall, although previous weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics have resulted in some pupils having gaps in their knowledge, especially when applying their numeracy skills in real-life situations.
- Teaching is satisfactory. Relationships are good and pupils are keen to learn. At times, planning does not fully meet the needs of all pupils and they are not sufficiently involved in assessing their own progress in lessons. Marking is regular, but pupils do not always respond to written comments in their books or act upon them.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils show consideration and respect to one another and the older ones support the younger ones. They are enthusiastic in their attitudes to learning. Attendance has improved rapidly and is now above average.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school benefits from its partnership through the federation in leading teaching, managing performance and sharing best practice. A new tracking system is supporting leaders in analysing data, but this work is at an early stage. Subject leaders and the governing body are knowledgeable about the school's performance, although they do not systematically measure the impact of actions for improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve progress and raise attainment in mathematics in Years 1 to 6 by:
 - filling specific gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematics
 - building on work to give pupils plenty of opportunities to use and apply their numeracy skills in real-life situations.

- Ensure all teaching is good or better by:
 - planning tasks that precisely meet the needs of all pupils
 - breaking down learning objectives into key steps for success so that pupils can assess how well they are meeting them in lessons
 - ensuring pupils respond to written comments in their books and act upon them.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - consolidating the use of the new tracking system to analyse the progress of groups and individual pupils
 - developing the monitoring role of subject leaders and the governing body in measuring the impact of actions for improvement.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

When children join the school, there is some variation from year to year in their level of attainment, but generally it is a little below expectations for their age. Children in the Reception class achieve well because activities are planned to meet their specific needs, inspire and motivate them, and build on their own interests and aspirations. For example, children wanted to make 'jet packs' to take them to the planet Venus as part of their outdoor role play and were soon assembling various components into lifelike prototypes.

Pupils' attainment is broadly average when they enter Year 1 and they make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6, so that attainment is average at the end of Year 2 and when they leave in Year 6. Progress in mathematics has not been as strong as in reading and writing because of shortcomings in teaching in the past. The school identified that pupils did not have sufficient opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills in real-life situations. Working with an advanced skills teacher, staff have made changes which are improving pupils' rates of progress in mathematics. They have begun to fill gaps in pupils' knowledge and give them greater experience of solving real-life problems, but the impact of this work is not fully established yet.

The sounds that letters make are taught systematically to the younger pupils so that

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they can sound out difficult words and grow in confidence in their reading and spelling. Attainment in reading is broadly average by the end of Year 2 and when pupils leave the school in Year 6. Older pupils develop a range of more sophisticated skills, which enable them to draw the key points from a story and discuss their favourite authors.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are enthusiastic about taking an active role in lessons. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 enjoyed finding and photographing stems and flowers in the school grounds and then bringing them into class to draw and paint, producing carefully crafted results. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the same progress as their peers because their needs are identified increasingly early and support is targeted to suit them. Some individuals have made good progress this year as a result of well-planned interventions that have boosted their attainment. Different groups of pupils make similar progress, and boys in particular have responded well to the school's moves to accelerate their progress in mathematics. Pupils who join the school outside normal times are particularly well supported and often make good progress.

Parents and carers are generally satisfied with their children's progress, although a few were concerned that changes in staffing may be affecting them. The inspector looked into this and found achievement to be satisfactory overall.

Quality of teaching

Pupils show respect for one another and for adults and work hard in class. They are willing to take on a challenge and try out new ideas. In the best lessons, learning is broken down into clear steps so that pupils know what they have to do. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 worked out how to express a real-life problem as a number sentence and what pitfalls to avoid. They understood that when Mark was 18, Jane was twice his age (and so 36) but when asked what age Jane would be when Mark was 37, many at first opted for 74. They came to see that the number sentence required adding 18 to 37 rather than doubling 37. Pupils found this work challenging but enjoyable. Pupils work well independently, but do not always have opportunities to assess their progress or that of their peers against steps to success in lessons so that they can judge their rate of progress and see what they have to do to improve further.

Most often, work is set at the correct level of challenge for pupils and extends their learning. However, just occasionally, tasks are not suited precisely to the needs of all pupils. Reading is taught satisfactorily so that pupils can build their skills progressively as they move through the year groups. The marking policy is clearly followed in all classes, but there is some unevenness in the extent to which pupils respond to the comments in their books or act upon them when producing subsequent work.

There is appropriate provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to their learning

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and welfare and individual education plans set out clearly the programmes of study they are following. Teaching makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly through church links and for the youngest children. Reception children confidently told the school about a recent visit from an 'alien bug' in assembly and presented models they had made of what it looked like. Their depth of knowledge showed how they had immersed themselves in the topic and their creativity was greatly appreciated by the other pupils, who listened attentively.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most parents and carers say their children are safe at school, and pupils agree with them. Pupils say that behaviour is typically good both inside and outside school. Most parents and carers agree. Pupils' good behaviour was evident when they all joined the local community for a full mass in the adjoining Minster and showed the utmost respect and consideration for the service, sitting quietly and still throughout. They say bullying is rare and are confident that any cases will be sorted out promptly by staff. A few parents and carers expressed concerns about bullying but the inspector found that the school deals well with the few incidents that occur. Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, for example name calling or cyber-bullying.

The school can point to examples where individual pupils have made very good progress in modifying their behaviour, often when joining the school outside normal times. Pupils' behaviour for learning is good as they have good levels of engagement that allow lessons to flow smoothly. The school's very caring ethos creates the climate in which pupils feel valued and that their needs matter. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe. Attendance has improved rapidly as a result of the school's robust approach to reducing term-time holidays and is now above average.

Leadership and management

The new executive headteacher and deputy headteacher have successfully united the two school communities of the federation and staff support their vision for improvement. The new deputy headteacher has joined from the partner school and there are increasingly positive links between staff from the two schools, who share resources and expertise. Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve based on regular monitoring by senior leaders, with clear feedback given to staff and effective use of performance management. Joint professional development is having a positive impact, for example in raising attainment in mathematics. The school has been developing the work of its subject leaders, who are increasingly knowledgeable about their areas of responsibility. However, their monitoring role is at an early stage. The federated governing body supports the school well. Its members increasingly hold leaders and managers to account, and have a good general overview of the school's work. Nevertheless, their monitoring is not specifically targeted on areas for improvement

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so that they can assess the impact of actions to bring about change. The governing body ensures that all safeguarding requirements are met to keep pupils safe.

The school has introduced new systems to track the progress of pupils and these are helping leaders and managers, including the newly appointed assessment coordinator, to analyse the performance of groups and individuals in greater depth than was previously the case. This work is not yet fully established but has identified where particular pupils are at risk of underachieving and has enabled the school to intervene sooner to support them. Equality is at the heart of all the school does and central to its values as a Catholic community. Leaders and managers ensure that all pupils are fully included and that discrimination is not tolerated. The school has tackled the issues from its last inspection and demonstrates capacity for further improvement.

The curriculum makes good use of local places of interest and the school's attractive grounds, and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development satisfactorily. An outstanding curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage inspires and motivates children as they pursue their own interests and independently make use of the wide range of resources available to them both indoors and out. There is increasing collaboration with pupils from the federated school, for example, in a joint residential journey. Parents and carers are generally satisfied with the work of the school. Leaders accept that some of them would like to know more about how their children are doing.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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).

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 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.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



2 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Benet's Catholic Primary School, Beccles, NR34 9PQ

Thank you for making me welcome when I visited your school recently, for sharing your views with me and for returning the questionnaires. St Benet's is a satisfactory school and a caring community. You behave well and I found your behaviour in the Minster particularly good. Children in the Reception class get off to a good start in their education because there is a lot for them to do and staff make their learning very interesting and enjoyable. You make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6 and by the time you leave, your attainment is similar to that of pupils nationally. The executive headteacher and deputy headteacher are working to improve the school and to forge even closer links with St Edmund's in Bungay.

For the school to become even better, I have asked that:

- teachers help you to improve your understanding of mathematics and give you plenty of real-life problems to solve
- teachers break down your learning into steps for success so that you can decide how well you are doing in lessons
- you have time to respond to marking in your books so that you can improve your work
- leaders keep working on their new system to measure your progress so that they know what you are doing well and where you can improve
- subject leaders and governors check the school's work carefully, particularly to see how successful it has been in improving.

You all can help by doing your best at all times and telling your teachers what you enjoy about your learning.

Thank you once again for your help and my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt
Lead Inspector

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