

St Benedict's Catholic Primary School

Church Walk, Atherstone, CV9 1PS

Inspection dates 22–23 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The good quality of education in Reception has been maintained since the previous inspection. Children make good progress because of the consistently good quality of teaching.
- Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics by Year 6. Reading is a strength throughout the school. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in this caring, nurturing school environment.
- Teaching is typically good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers usually plan carefully to meet the learning needs of all groups of pupils. Very occasionally teaching is not as effective as it could be in developing pupils' writing skills in Key Stage 1, or when teachers talk for too long, reducing the time for pupils to work.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and exemplary around school, and pupils feel safe. The system of 'Prayer buddies' where younger pupils are paired with an older pupil is highly effective in developing responsibility and caring relationships. Above-average attendance has been maintained since the previous inspection.
- Leadership and management are good. The staff are working well as a team, inspired by the enthusiastic new headteacher who is ably supported by the assistant headteacher. Regular checks have been introduced to check teachers' performance and pupils' progress.
- The governors have much expertise and ask the senior leaders increasingly searching questions about the pace and level of improvement. This is enhancing the school's good capacity to go on improving.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not achieve as well in writing as they do in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- Not all staff with leadership roles are fully involved in checking on teaching to identify and eliminate weaknesses.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons, of which three were joint observations involving the headteacher and assistant headteacher. Inspectors reported their findings back to the seven teachers observed.
- Meetings were held with the pupils' council, the Chair of the Governing Body and the governor responsible for finance, and the headteacher and other leaders.
- A representative of the local authority was contacted by telephone to discuss the support and advice provided for the school.
- There were 21 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) by the end of the inspection. The inspectors also sought the views of parents and carers as they arrived at school.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents including: the school's own data on pupils' recent and current progress; planning for school improvement; leaders' checking on teaching and pupils' progress; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and safeguarding records.

Inspection team

Joseph Peacock, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Andrew Bailey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are admitted from a wide and diverse area and almost all are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- There are six classes in the school. A fall in numbers has resulted in two mixed-age classes for Years 4, 5 and 6.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has had a period of much change with long-term staff absences over the past two years. A new headteacher started in September 2012.
- Before- and after-school day care called Super Stars is provided each day. This is registered with Ofsted and inspected separately.
- Almost every pupil is educated on the school site. There is off-site, alternative provision for individual pupils in a unit based at another local school for two afternoons each week.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing even further by making sure that in Key Stage 1, teachers:
 - give pupils enough time to make good use of their well-developed reading and spelling skills in writing sessions
 - give them more opportunities to write in their exercise books in literacy sessions and other subjects, rather than using individual whiteboards and worksheets
 - tell pupils orally or through comments in marking how they can further improve their work, and give them time to respond to this guidance.
- Improve the effectiveness of the senior and subject leaders in evaluating the quality of teaching, in order to make all teaching at least good and a higher proportion outstanding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When they join Reception, children's skills and understanding vary from year to year. This year, they are below the levels expected for this age. A warm welcome and consistently good teaching make sure children settle quickly and make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Routines are quickly established and children thrive in the caring and supportive atmosphere. Activities such as learning walks to collect interesting natural items are enjoyable and add to the wide range of activities planned to promote learning. Modern technology is used extensively and there are good opportunities planned for children to write, such as describing the different houses of the 'Three Little Pigs'. Outdoor learning is well planned with a wide range of independent activities and equipment such as wheeled toys to share.
- All children in Reception and beyond benefit from daily sessions to learn letters and their sounds (phonics) and learn to read successfully. They make rapid progress in reading because they all have a good range of strategies to read unfamiliar words, such as sounding out letters or breaking longer words up into readable segments. In Reception, children managed to spell the word 'spikey' when describing a pine cone, for example.
- This strong emphasis on teaching reading skills throughout the school results in consistently good progress and high standards by Year 6. Younger pupils benefit from weekly sessions with an older 'reading buddy' and both take turns to read to one another. Daily reading sessions support any pupils who are below the level expected in reading. Through research when using computers and reading for pleasure, older pupils further develop their reading skills.
- Pupils' progress in writing is slower than in reading and mathematics by Year 2. Long lesson introductions limit the time to write and pupils often use individual whiteboards with big pens or fill in worksheets. This limits the amount of writing they do and the progress they make. In contrast, pupils enjoy the rapid pace of mental mathematics sessions at the start of each mathematics lesson and show confidence with numbers.
- By Year 6, standards are well above average in English. All groups of pupils are making good progress because of the good quality of teaching. The school focus on improving mathematics skills to the same high level of those in English is paying dividends. These effective measures include a review of teaching, more practical sessions and the purchase of new mathematics textbooks.
- The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language are equally as well supported as disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. All make good progress because staff work hard to overcome individual pupils' learning difficulties.
- The specialist skills of staff in the integrated support group unit at a neighbouring school are giving individual pupils the necessary skills to work alongside other pupils. St Benedict's staff successfully build up pupils' confidence, enabling them to make good progress.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to provide targeted support for eligible pupils in lessons. As a result, almost all of these pupils are helped to maintain as good a rate of progress as other pupils. There is no significant gap between their attainment and that of other groups.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching and learning are good and sometimes outstanding in lessons throughout the school. Teachers expect pupils to achieve well and match work closely to the full range of their ability levels. There is a good pace to learning in lessons, helped by pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour. Consequently, all pupils in Key Stage 2 achieve well and are confident to move on to secondary school.
- Some weaknesses remain and a small amount of teaching requires improvement in order to ensure pupils make better progress. Occasionally, lesson introductions are too long and the match of work for different ability levels is not as close as it could be. Activities in Reception such as colouring in pictures or playing with wooden blocks and planks are sometimes not demanding enough to hold children's interest.
- The partnership between teachers and their skilled teaching assistants is a particular strength, helping all groups of pupils to succeed and make good progress over time. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive well-directed help in lessons so they can successfully tackle new learning.
- In the Reception class, staff plan exciting activities for children to enjoy both indoors and outside, giving them a good start to school. Children are encouraged to ring the learning bell if they see any good learning to share with others. This encourages children to recognise and value learning.
- Teachers check and accurately judge pupils' rates of progress. They use the resulting information well to plan relevant tasks for pupils of different abilities. Pupils have targets for improving their learning and progress in the front of their books, and keenly check their own progress. Marking has improved considerably since the previous inspection, although pupils have much clearer guidance on how to improve their work in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills are usually developed well through planned links between work in different subjects. Reception children used computers confidently to practise number skills and Year 3 pupils used their knowledge of historical myths to plan an advertisement for a hero to stop the Minotaur eating people.
- In Key Stage 1, teachers successfully promote pupils' reading and mathematical skills. They are less successful in promoting writing skills, because they do not give pupils enough opportunities to apply their good reading and spelling skills to their writing in literacy sessions or in other subject areas.
- A good range of after-school clubs in sport, dance, computers and music contribute well to pupils' achievement and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Lunchtime games and the pupil voice choir are some of pupils' favourites and are well attended.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour around school is often exemplary as pupils show kindness and consideration for one another and respect for adults. All pupil councillors agreed with the comment that 'everybody likes everybody'.
- In most of the lessons observed, pupils' behaviour was good and often outstanding. A few became bored when teachers talked for too long or tasks were not challenging enough.

- Pupils say that they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire (Parent View) think that their children are happy and feel safe. Pupils' above-average attendance, maintained over time, reflects their enjoyment of school.
- Pupils say that they have no concerns about bullying as it very rarely happens. All have a good understanding of different types of bullying, such as making racist comments and name-calling.
- There have been no permanent or fixed-term exclusions since the last inspection. Older pupils take their role as prayer partners seriously, creating a caring, supportive atmosphere in school.
- Behaviour is consistently well managed and any cases of inappropriate behaviour such as name-calling are dealt with immediately and effectively by staff. 'We trust our teachers. They make us feel safe and important,' was a typical comment from pupils.

The leadership and management are good

- The enthusiastic headteacher has quickly formed a good working partnership with the assistant headteacher, and together they are leading and inspiring staff to improve teaching and learning in order to raise standards.
- A recently revised management structure has given new responsibilities to all staff who have leadership roles. Leaders regularly check on the quality of pupils' completed work and take prompt action if any are falling behind. They are beginning to check the quality of learning in lessons. Any general areas for improvement are being identified and tackled by staff as a whole. Some weaknesses remain in a small minority of lessons.
- Pay and promotion of staff are closely linked to their performance in ensuring pupils' successful learning and progress. Current national standards for teaching are applied in judging teaching quality. This is ensuring that teaching is mostly good and occasionally outstanding.
- Pupils' progress and achievement are closely tracked across the school. For example, the leaders responsible for managing Reception and support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs check pupils' achievement regularly. This ensures prompt action is taken to help any pupils who are falling behind. The school does all it can to ensure all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed, and refuses to accept discrimination of any kind.
- The local authority recognises that this is a good school and provides as much support as the school requests. Periodically it checks the school's performance to ensure that it continues to be successful.
- The subjects studied in and out of school give pupils a wide range of learning experiences. Links to a charity supporting a school in Malawi and 'taster' sessions for all ages on different languages such as Spanish in Year 6, raise pupils' cultural awareness. Religious studies and topics covering world religions give pupils a good understanding of their own and other faiths.
- The school works well with parents and carers, and most who responded to the inspection questionnaire were very positive about their children's experience at school. They join pupils for Mass each week, sample the excellent lunches and are invited into school to learn what is taught in lessons regularly. Those spoken to agreed that pupils are happy, and virtually all said that they would recommend the school to others.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is effective because the impressive range of expertise among governors is used well to help bring about improvement. Financial resources, including pupil premium funding, are particularly well managed. The additional staff in classrooms, funded through the pupil premium, are ensuring that those who are disadvantaged make good progress alongside others. Governors have a good knowledge of aspects such as child protection and safeguarding. All current national requirements relating to safeguarding are met. Two-thirds of the governors have joined the governing body in the past year. All have either attended training sessions or have sessions planned to enable them to be fully involved and effective in evaluating how well the school is tackling its priorities for improvement, and how its performance compares to that of similar schools nationally. Most visit regularly to find out for themselves how effectively the headteacher and staff are working. Each year the performance of the headteacher and all other teachers is checked using information about pupils' progress and standards achieved. Governors' own monitoring visits give them a good grasp on teaching quality. The pay of the headteacher and staff is linked closely to this evaluation process.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	125705
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	403581

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	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bill Cullen
Headteacher	Susan Shannon
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2007
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