

# St Benedict's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Middle School

Moorhouse Lane, Ashington, Northumberland, NE63 9LR]

**Inspection dates** 14–15 November 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Pupils' achievement in mathematics is inadequate. Too many pupils of higher ability and some of lower ability do not make enough progress. This is because teaching in mathematics is inadequate overall. Because of this serious weakness in a key subject, achievement overall is inadequate.
- In other subjects, teaching requires improvement because some teachers do not have an accurate picture of what pupils need to learn next. In these lessons, the level of challenge is either too low or too high, which slows learning for different groups of pupils.
- Leadership and management requires improvement in: checking and assessing the work of the mathematics department in order to improve pupils' achievement; the accuracy and robustness of the school's assessment of the quality of teaching and learning and governors' knowledge of data relating to pupils' progress and attainment.

### The school has the following strengths

- By the end of Year 8, many pupils exceed the levels expected for their age in reading and writing.
- There is a considerable proportion of good teaching in the school, especially where teachers are teaching their specialist subjects.
- The headteacher knows what the school needs to do to improve and has the support of staff for the planned improvements to the assessment of pupils' learning, which is improving the quality of teaching in many lessons.
- In subjects such as religious education and citizenship, pupils develop their thinking skills well and have good opportunities to express their views.
- Pupils' behaviour is good; it creates a safe, harmonious atmosphere in the school. Pupils show good respect for themselves and others. They are generous fundraisers who are eager to help those who are less fortunate.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons, of which four were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Discussions were held with members of the governing body, staff, pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They examined data relating to pupils' progress and safeguarding and other documentation.
- The 20 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 24 responses to the staff questionnaire were taken into account during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jim Hall

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.*

### Information about this school

- The school is of average size for its type. Most pupils are of White British heritage; very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children from service families) is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2011; she is also headteacher of the first school from which St Benedict's receives the majority of its pupils.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching in mathematics in order to rapidly accelerate pupils' progress and raise their achievement by:
  - revising how staff are allocated to teaching groups to reduce the impact of non-specialist teaching
  - assessing the performance of all teachers in the subject to identify where improvements are needed and setting targets for individual staff to improve
  - providing training to improve teachers' subject knowledge, assessment methods and understanding of the levels at which pupils are working
  - insisting that staff have higher expectations of pupils' work and output in lessons
  - expecting staff to mark pupils' work regularly so that they discover errors in pupils' working methods and understanding
  - providing more practical resources and problem-solving activities so that pupils are able to work out things for themselves.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching in other subjects by:
  - improving the accuracy with which teachers assess pupils' learning so that they have the correct expectation of what all groups of pupils can do and especially provide good challenge for the most able
  - ensuring that the needs of the less-able pupils are well understood and that appropriate methods are used to develop their confidence to succeed by providing work that allows them to get on with their work at a good rate and find out things for themselves.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - training and supporting the head of mathematics so that he has a good understanding of how to set and check targets to improve performance in the subject
  - supporting the head of mathematics to manage the work of non-specialist teachers

- improving the rigour of school leaders’ lesson observations by focussing on how well all groups of pupils learn and make progress during lessons rather than on what teachers do
  - ensuring that work in pupils’ books guides judgements of the quality of teaching over time and checking work regularly to ensure pupils make consistently good progress in all their learning
  - developing governors’ understanding of all data about pupils’ performance, including published data, and of the school’s procedures for checking on progress so that the governing body is able to robustly challenge the school over performance in different subjects and that of different groups of pupils.
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## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Progress in mathematics was significantly below the national average in the 2012 tests for Year 6 pupils. Not enough pupils made the progress expected, especially more-able pupils, who did not reach the higher levels in the subject. Teaching does not promote good progress in mathematics because it is sometimes weak and ineffective. A proportion of teaching by those staff who are not mathematics specialists contributes to pupils' inadequate progress over time because they do not pick up on pupils' misunderstanding or errors quickly enough. Progress improves for the majority of pupils in Year 7 and 8 because nearly all teaching is by specialist teachers. However, many pupils have to make up too much lost ground, and so attainment is below the expected level for their age for too many pupils by the end of Year 8.
- Results in English in the 2012 tests were at the national average for both the expected level and the higher level, and all groups of pupils made at least expected progress. Work in books and school data support the school's view that by Year 8, pupils exceed the level expected for their age in this subject. Reading and writing are interwoven well into English and other lessons, such as religious education and citizenship, so that pupils are constantly reinforcing these skills. By Year 6, pupils are confident readers who enjoy reading for pleasure as well as for information.
- Pupils enjoy learning in the majority of their lessons, because they have practical activities, but rarely in mathematics, which help them to learn at their own rate and they are always eager to do well. They make good progress and achieve well in lessons where they have opportunities to work together and learn with and from each other.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are often taught in smaller groups, and are well supported by teaching assistants. Specially tailored programmes, based on accurate knowledge of their needs, help them to make the same progress as other groups of pupils in the school and make up ground in their literacy skills. The progress of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is carefully checked and extra provision, such as one-to-one intensive support, helps those at risk of falling behind in their learning to catch up.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- There is a considerable amount of good teaching across the school but not enough to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress in all subjects. This is why teaching requires improvement.
- Teaching in mathematics is inadequate. Teachers do not accurately assess pupils' learning during lessons through careful questioning; pupils are not well prepared for their tasks and lose time waiting for adult help. There are not enough practical and problem-solving activities to allow pupils to work out things for themselves. Marking in the subject is not regular and robust enough for staff to quickly spot pupils' errors and correct them. There is an over-reliance on end-of-unit tests to give staff information on pupils' grasp of a topic, which do not reveal underlying weaknesses in pupils' mathematical understanding. In the small minority of lessons where teaching in mathematics is good, the teacher knows pupils' learning needs very well, makes clear what they are expected to learn by the end of the lesson and monitors closely how well they are getting on throughout the lesson.
- In other lessons, where teaching requires improvement it is usually because teachers do not have an accurate picture of pupils' previous learning in order to plan work at the right level. In these lessons, some pupils find the work too easy and are soon bored, while other pupils find the work too difficult and do not succeed as well as others. Sometimes teachers talk for too long, so that pupils' attention drifts and they lose interest. Pupils are then slow to get started on tasks, which slows their progress further.
- Effective teaching methods include giving pupils clear targets for what they have to achieve in the lesson. Such lessons promote pupils' independence and place responsibility on them to work

at a brisk pace to reach their targets. Many good lessons develop pupils' cooperative skills, with tasks planned so that pupils work together and learn from each other. This develops pupils' speaking and listening skills well. They are eager to reach the teachers' high expectations, so they share ideas quickly. Good examples of this were seen in many lessons including English, physical education, religious education and humanities.

- Small group teaching and additional support in larger classes enable pupils with disabilities or special educational needs to make similar progress to other groups of pupils in the school, because staff have a good understanding of their needs and how to meet them.
- Not all teachers follow the school's marking policy consistently. Where marking and feedback are good, as in English, there is clear evidence of pupils improving their work as a result.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils, parents and staff agree that behaviour is good. School records support their view that behaviour is good over time and that incidents of bullying are rare. Inspectors observed pupils behaving well in lessons and in the playground. Pupils are polite and considerate and manage their own behaviour very well.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning in nearly all lessons, sometimes even those where the pace is slow. They are keen to learn and please their teachers with their efforts and are keen to receive merit awards for good work.
- The school's strong support for the values of love and care that the school shows in all it does make pupils feel safe in school. It creates a warm, welcoming environment where pupils learn to be kind and tolerant to each other through the good example that adults set for them.
- Pupils are well taught to assess risks both in school and the wider world. They show a good understanding of internet safety. They understand the difference between bullying and occasionally falling out with friends, and say that any bullying is dealt with quickly by adults and is not repeated.
- Pupils have good opportunities to take on responsibility and respond well to these, and to the frequent opportunities to raise funds for others in need. Older students take on many roles to help with the smooth running of the school, such as acting as corridor monitors, librarians, and greeting visitors on parents' evenings.
- Above-average attendance reflects pupils' enjoyment of school.

### **The leadership and management requires improvement**

- The headteacher and senior leaders know the school well. They understand the impact of the shortage of specialist teachers for mathematics and have worked closely with the head of department to develop an appropriate plan of action. However, leadership and management require improvement because of weaknesses in: the rigour of evaluating the quality of teaching, the management of the mathematics department and governors' knowledge of data relating to pupils' achievement.
- Actions taken, such as sharing good practice in teaching are having some impact, but are too recent to have accelerated improvements to pupils' learning, especially in mathematics. Links with the First School show that senior leaders are grasping the problem effectively by devising appropriate plans which draw on a wide range of expertise to improve provision for mathematics.
- The leader of mathematics has had too few opportunities for training and support in how to manage the department since taking up the role three years ago, especially given the amount of non-specialist teaching he has to check and manage. Consequently, systems for checking on the quality of teaching, pupils' progress and planning improvements are under-developed. They are not robust enough, given pupils' inadequate achievement in the subject and the complexity of

the teaching arrangements.

- Senior leaders regularly observe lessons and give teachers advice on how to improve. However, procedures to check on the quality of teaching and learning over time, including checking pupils' work and observing staff teaching outside their specialist subject, are not sufficiently rigorous. Performance management is used to set targets for staff appropriate to their roles and experience and staff understand these are linked to salary progression.
  - Pupils' communication skills are promoted well in all subjects making a good contribution to the development of their literacy skills. The curriculum is adapted well to support the learning of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium, are disabled or have special educational needs, so that equal opportunities are provided for all groups to succeed, except in mathematics. The wide range of clubs at lunchtime and after school is well supported by pupils. These and the broad curriculum make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through developing enquiring minds, tolerance and concern for others.
  - Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet requirements.
  - The local authority has little involvement in the work of the school but brokers support from an external consultant to give advice.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - The governing body is fully supportive of the school and actively involved in monitoring its work. The governing body asks challenging questions and supports senior leaders to improve the school. Governors know about the quality of teaching and how this relates to salary progression through performance management. However, their understanding of data has not been strong enough to allow them to fully challenge the school over pupils' achievement in mathematics, and this is a part of their role that requires improvement. The governors ensure that the school's limited resources, including pupil premium funding, are and targeted to improve outcomes for all pupils.
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## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	122366
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	406089

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	230
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Desmond Duffy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Samantha Leslie
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 March 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01670 813658
<b>Fax number</b>	01670 814840
<b>Email address</b>	admin@st-benedicts.northumberland.sch.uk

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