

St Benedict's Roman Catholic Primary School, Ampleforth

Back Lane, Ampleforth, York, YO62 4DE

Inspection dates 30 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress and they reach high standards by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils read exceptionally well. They read avidly for pleasure and talk about books with enormous enthusiasm.
- Pupils do well in mathematics. They work rapidly and love to be challenged.
- Behaviour is outstanding both in lessons and around the school. Pupils take learning seriously but they also have a lot of fun at break times. They have high aspirations.
- Pupils feel very safe. They are confident that adults will help them if they have any concerns. Their parents agree.
- The school is improving rapidly under dynamic leadership. Parents, pupils and governors are fully involved in helping the school to improve further.
- The leadership of teaching is strong and teachers are given clear guidance as to what to do to ensure their teaching is always effective.
- Governance is first rate. Governors are closely involved in all that the school does. They are highly knowledgeable. They use their expertise extremely well to support the school's keen focus on high achievement within a Christian framework.
- An exceptional strength is pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Teachers use a narrow range of teaching methods and so more-able pupils are not always challenged.
- Standards in writing are not as high as those in reading and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons or parts of lessons taught by five teachers and several teaching assistants.
- The inspection team observed Reception class children learning how letters and sounds link together to form words. They also observed a guided reading session for pupils in Years 1 and 2 during which they heard some pupils read.
- In addition, the inspectors talked to all Year 6 pupils about their learning and their views of the school. Half of the pupils in Year 6 talked about books with an inspector and read and discussed some of their writing.
- The inspection team looked at pupils' English and mathematics books to check the standards of their work and how much progress pupils had made since the start of term.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, staff and the vice-chair of the governing body.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation supplied by the school. This included information relating to safeguarding, the school's evaluations of teaching and its future plans.
- The inspection took account of the 30 parents' views in the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), in several letters from parents and informal meetings with parents who requested them.

Inspection team

Lesley Clark, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Phil Scott

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. A very small minority come from different ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is broadly average.
- A below average proportion of pupils are supported at school action plus. None has a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2011.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to make teaching outstanding teachers should:
 - ensure that they use a range of teaching methods so that they challenge all pupils, especially the more-able
 - adjust the balance between the time that they talk and the time that pupils learn actively
 - give pupils more opportunities to learn through asking questions, setting their own challenges, using their initiative and following through their own ideas
 - ensure that marking gives clear guidance to pupils as to what to do to improve their work
 - give pupils more opportunities to evaluate their own work, especially their writing, and to suggest improvements that they and other pupils might act on.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, reach nationally expected standards in their tests in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6. Typically, over three quarters of pupils do better than this in reading, two thirds in mathematics and just under half do as well as this in writing.
- The school clearly promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well. Pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium do better than all pupils nationally. There are no gaps between their learning and that of other pupils. This is because the funding is used well to give them extra help when they need it.
- Pupils who are supported through school action or at school action plus make good and sometimes outstanding progress. They learn very well because they are given extra help in lessons so they can do similar work to other pupils.
- Reception children start school with skills that vary from below to above those typically expected. They make rapid progress. Outdoor learning is a particular strength. Children learn well because their interests are taken into account when teachers plan activities and much of their learning is active.
- Pupils read exceptionally well. Younger pupils read accurately and fluently, using an index to find the poem they want to read, for instance. Older pupils read voraciously, swapping books and talking animatedly about their favourites. They read widely and discuss books in depth.
- Pupils write accurately and generally use punctuation and paragraphs to good effect. In the best writing, pupils vary the length of sentences and use ambitious vocabulary. In less effective writing, sentences lack variety, the vocabulary is rather plain and opportunities are missed to include metaphors or rhetorical questions, for example. Pupils do not read their own work or each other's work sufficiently critically to see where they might improve it.
- Pupils do well in mathematics. They calculate quickly and accurately and delight in grappling with complex problems. Occasionally, more-able pupils' learning slows when they have to complete tasks that are too easy before tackling the difficult questions that interest them.
- Pupils' achievements overall are not outstanding because there are times when their progress slows. Pupils have limited opportunities to pit their wits against each other or to share ideas because mostly they work on individual tasks set by the teacher.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers are conscientious and very committed to doing the best for their pupils. They have a thoroughly good understanding of the different subjects that they teach. This enables pupils to achieve well.
- Teachers make clear to pupils what they are going to learn. Lessons have a clear structure and pupils know what their teachers expect of them. As a result, they work reasonably hard and make good progress.
- The drawback is that lessons tend to follow a predictable pattern. Sometimes, teachers get carried away by enthusiasm and talk for too long. This restricts the amount of time that pupils have to learn actively and independently.
- Teachers tend to shepherd pupils through their learning, making choices and decisions for them. Consequently, pupils have limited opportunities to learn through asking questions, setting their own challenges, using their initiative and following through their own ideas. This reduces the challenge for more-able pupils in particular.
- Pupils found it hard to suggest how their writing might be improved because they rely too much on their teachers telling them. Sometimes, teachers' marking does not give clear enough guidance as to how to make good work even better.

- An excellent feature is the way that teaching assistants are used to help different groups of pupils to learn. They help pupils to understand the main teaching points and give those who are struggling very good support to help them achieve well.
- Learning resources, such as detailed maps of the local area, are used well to inspire pupils. Similarly, practical resources in mathematics are used well to support those who find learning difficult.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils really enjoy coming to this school because, 'We have a say in things and we don't have a school uniform! We're all pretty nice to each other. Everyone is very friendly.' This sums up the happy atmosphere that enables pupils to work and play together, like a 'big, jumbled-up family!' as Year 6 pupils laughingly described their school. Attendance is above average.
- Behaviour is first rate. Even when pupils find the work a bit too easy, they nonetheless listen politely and readily do whatever is asked of them. This enables them to achieve well.
- Younger pupils take their lead from older ones. Pupils in Year 6 recognise the responsibility of being the oldest, saying, 'People look up to us.'
- Pupils have excellent relationships with each other and with adults who work in school. Their views are taken seriously and acted upon. For example, pupils write the titles of books they want to read on the library board and adults make sure these are bought quickly.
- Pupils are very sure that there is no bullying. They explained that there is occasional 'rough play' but it is always dealt with. 'We know the limits,' they said. There are no recorded incidents of racism or homophobic bullying. Pupils know that it is wrong to use the word 'gay' to tease people. They explained, 'Everyone accepts everyone else, we're all different.'
- Consequently, pupils feel extremely safe. This enables them to become confident young people, unafraid to say what they think. Pupils are highly aware about 'e-safety' rules which help to protect them from harm.
- A notable strength is pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Over a quarter of pupils play musical instruments. Allotments, a wildlife area, outdoor summerhouses and staging, as well as residential visits to capital cities promote pupils' wider education particularly well.
- Close links with the local Abbey mean that pupils are used to having lunch with different adults, including monks. Prayers at the start and end of lunch are said reverently and with conviction. Pupils are kind to each other and respect each other's needs.

The leadership and management are good

- Over the past year, senior leaders have introduced several measures designed to raise achievement and improve teaching quality. Although these are leading to rapid improvements in many areas of the school's work, they have not yet had sufficient time to have full impact.
- The headteacher gives very clear advice to teachers as to how to improve their practice. The right areas for improvement have been identified. They are part of teachers' performance management targets and so teachers are more accountable for the progress their pupils make.
- Performance management has been tightened up. It is used well to raise teachers' aspirations. It is rigorous and closely linked to the school's improvement plan.
- School improvement planning has expanded to take into account the views of parents, pupils and governors. It has clear actions and targets and these are agreed by all. It is a very effective system because everyone has a stake in it. The improvement plan's well-chosen priorities are clear, easy to check and measurable. The impact is seen in pupils' improving achievement and parents' keen support for their children.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well managed. The system has been strengthened recently. Pupils are identified early and the right support is put in place

quickly. Several parents wrote to say how pleased they were with the additional support their children are given and what a difference it is making to their progress.

- Similarly, the curriculum has also been strengthened. Wide-ranging outdoor pursuits, both in and beyond school, are notable features. For instance, pupils in Years 1 and 2 have similar access to outdoor learning facilities as Reception children. This clearly has an impact, leading to pupils' success in local competitive sports, which they describe enthusiastically as, 'So good! We can't believe it!'
 - The local authority gives light touch support to this effective school.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is extremely effective. Governors come into school regularly and keep a close check on pupils' progress. They are very knowledgeable and ask challenging questions. They check carefully that the pupil premium money is spent to the best advantage. The school can demonstrate that the provision it has made for these pupils' learning needs has had an appreciable impact on pupils' progress. High quality questioning, analysis and support are notable features of this governing body.
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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

Unique reference number	121650
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	403475

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	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian O'Shea
Headteacher	Kevin Macklam
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2008
Telephone number	01439 788340
Email address	admin@st-benedicts.n-yorks.sch.uk

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