

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Hob Moor Road, Yardley, Birmingham, B25 8QL

Inspection dates

5–6 December 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.

- All groups of pupils in the school make good progress from their low starting points and achieve well. Attainment by Year 6 is broadly average and rising. Pupils make particularly strong progress in reading.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium and those who have a disability or special educational needs make good and, at times, exceptional progress because of the good-quality support they receive.
- Good teaching is the main reason why pupils make good progress. Teachers expect much of their pupils and most lessons are well planned to make sure that pupils of all abilities are encouraged to work hard and aim high.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school. They have an eager appetite to learn, show consideration for others and cooperate very well when working in groups.
- An excellent atmosphere for learning permeates the school and wonderful examples of pupils' work fill every nook and cranny. Pupils feel extremely safe at school and parents are effusive in their praise of the care the school offers their children.
- The headteacher's strong, positive leadership is the driving force behind the school's success. She expects the best of staff and pupils and, along with all other leaders and governors, gives the school a strong sense of purpose.
- Leaders rigorously check the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils and are alert to any signs of poor performance.
- The well-informed governing body plays an active role in the school. It checks regularly how well the school is doing.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attainment is not better than average because too few pupils reach the higher levels in writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is not better than good because, in some lessons, more-able pupils are not always given work that challenges them to do their best or to find out things for themselves.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons or parts of lessons, amounting to 18 hours in total. All classroom teachers present at the time of the inspection were observed teaching.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and paid short visits to all classrooms with senior staff when numeracy and literacy were being taught and to look at how well disabled pupils and those with special educational needs were learning.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, members of the governing body, and different groups of pupils.
- A telephone conversation was held with an officer from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of the school's work, policy documents and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors took note of the 29 responses to the online Parent View survey, and spoke to groups of parents and carers at the beginning and end of the school day.

Inspection team

Michael Merchant, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Margaret Pawlowski	Additional Inspector
Nicola Southall	Additional Inspector
Gwendoline Onyon	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average-sized primary school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Nursery and three Reception classes.
- Just under a half of all pupils, an above-average proportion, are from a wide range of minority ethnic groups.
- An above-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- A high proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding from the government for pupils looked after by the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, or those with a parent in the armed services).
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average; the proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school does not use any alternative provision (regular learning at places away from the school) for its pupils.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase pupils' achievement by ensuring that an above-average proportion reach the higher levels in writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that effective techniques to improve writing and higher-level mathematical skills are used consistently well in all classes.
- Move teaching from good to outstanding in all year groups by:
 - developing a wider range of teaching techniques to involve pupils in working actively and independently and which gives them more opportunities to make their own decisions and choices
 - provide tasks in all lessons that stretch the higher-ability pupils to achieve their very best.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start school with skills and abilities that are low compared with those typical for their ages. Children do well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress due to inspiring and stimulating teaching.
- All groups of pupils make good progress across the rest of the school, irrespective of their varied ethnic heritages. They reach standards of attainment by Year 6 that are broadly average. However, not enough pupils do better than this. This is because effective ways to encourage pupils to reach the higher levels in their writing and number work, such as developing a mature style and creative flair in their writing and presenting pupils with more opportunities to solve open-ended problems, are not taught consistently well in all classes.
- Pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs receive care and attention of very high quality and are well supported in class. Consequently, these pupils make good progress and some do better.
- Those pupils supported by the pupil premium make progress that is at least similar and, in some cases, faster than that of other pupils in the school. Extra help for these pupils has been bought in by school leaders and they and governors check thoroughly to make sure that this extra support is working – and it is. For instance, in the national tests taken at the end of Year 6 in 2012, the attainment of pupils entitled to the pupil premium was slightly higher than that of other pupils in school.
- Pupils who are in the early stages of learning English make good progress at developing their speaking, writing and reading skills. All teachers regard themselves as teachers of English as an additional language and they, other adults and also fellow pupils, play a strong part in supporting those whose language skills are underdeveloped.
- The school has made big improvements to the way it teaches reading. These have been successful and have resulted in improvements in pupils' ability to learn how to link letters and sounds. Standards in reading are improving year on year. By the end of Year 2, and by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, their reading abilities are in line with those expected for their age and, for some, better. The school has completely eliminated the gap between the reading skills of boys and girls and many of the boys are now eager readers. This was demonstrated by the pupils who read to the inspectors.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good throughout the school and some teaching is outstanding. The school has maintained and built upon the good-quality teaching seen at the last inspection because school leaders give strong attention to improving teaching and learning through well-planned training for staff.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding because some teachers do not always give higher-ability pupils work that is demanding enough, particularly in writing and mathematics. Occasionally, teachers give pupils too much direction. This limits the opportunities for pupils to find things out and to learn for themselves.

- Most lessons are fast paced and lively. Teachers expect a lot out of pupils, both in terms of their work rate and in intellectual demand. Teachers and other adults work very well together in partnerships in classes and plan lessons well together to ensure that pupils are given work that will get the best out of them.
- Pupils respond with eagerness and enthusiasm and soak up learning, especially when they are actively involved in lessons. They relish working in groups and readily cooperate and share ideas, and so learn well from each other.
- An example of teaching which enthused pupils to learn actively was seen in a Year 3 music lesson. Pupils related pulse and beat to a beating heart – from their science lesson – and energetically worked together to produce a musical sequence with suitable 'rests', related to everyday life. The teacher expected a lot of them as learners, gave lively explanations, asked sharp, probing questions and encouraged pupils' curiosity, which enabled all groups to make exceptional progress.
- Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly. Through helpful and constructively written comments they ensure that pupils know precisely what they need to do to improve.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are given well-targeted support both in class and through precise help from staff and from outside the school. Consequently, these pupils make the same good progress as all other pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. As a result, the school is a friendly, happy, harmonious community.
 - The school's core values are at the heart of all its work. Clear routines and high expectations of the children as learners are communicated from the start of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children are very responsive because staff are warm and encouraging.
 - Pupils are exceptionally keen to learn. They listen intently and work hard. This means that they learn quickly and efficiently, without wasting any time. They work very well together in groups and are keen to search out information and solve problems for themselves. At times, some teachers do not take advantage of pupils' readiness to learn and do not give them enough opportunities to learn for themselves.
 - Pupils' great enjoyment of school is shown in their ever-improving attendance, which is above average. Most pupils attend every day and this is a big improvement since the last inspection.
 - Pupils feel extremely safe. They are very sure that there is no bullying. They know about different forms of bullying, such as cyber-bullying. They know that some internet sites are not safe. Equally, they know that adults will help them should they have any concerns. Pupils are also very definite that there is no racism and no discrimination based on race or gender.
 - Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well provided for. Pupils respect each other and the school. Pupils from different social and ethnic backgrounds get along noticeably well together. They offer thoughtful responses when given the opportunity to reflect on spiritual or moral issues during lessons. They show great respect for, and interest in, the views of others.
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The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher shows strong and determined leadership. She has been successful in establishing a shared vision for the school's improvement. She communicates her high standards persuasively to staff so that all have a shared sense of direction and feel part of a successful team.
 - The headteacher and other members of the senior team check the school's performance rigorously. They are quick to recognise and praise the good work of staff and pupils and are alert to situations where people need more advice and guidance. Because staff benefit from supportive feedback, a climate has been created where everyone is trying hard to make the school even better. Consequently, teamwork is strong, staff morale is high and pupils' progress accelerating.
 - The headteacher has ensured that there are secure procedures in place to make sure that teachers are accountable for their performance. Staff are not allowed to be rewarded financially unless they are successful in helping pupils make at least good progress.
 - Equal opportunities are rigorously pursued. No pupil, regardless of background or personal need, is denied access to anything the school has to offer. Leaders ensure that there is no discrimination against any pupil.
 - Members of the leadership team work well together, and their high expectations are reflected throughout the school. All teachers are considered to be leaders and have responsibilities within subject teams. However, there is no hint of complacency and the school appropriately recognises there is scope to further improve teaching and accelerate pupils' progress.
 - The way in which subjects are organised provides well for the needs, interests and aspirations of all pupils. A particular strength is the way in which this large school uses the expertise of its various teachers to teach specialised subjects – such as history, geography and French. This approach has a big impact on pupils' enjoyment of learning as well as preparing them well for secondary education.
 - This effective school has, rightly, received 'light touch' support from the local authority in recent years.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have played an important role in maintaining pupils' good achievement and the good teaching seen at the last inspection. They have supported the school's leaders, while asking searching questions about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. They know where the best teaching is in the school and where it could be better and have an accurate understanding of the school's performance in comparison to similar schools nationally. Governors have contributed to discussions on how the pupil premium funding should be spent, and have checked the impact on the pupils' progress of the extra support and guidance provided for those eligible. They know that the funding is of considerable benefit to these pupils' achievement and to the standards they reach. Governors are also well informed and control the systems for managing staff performance and the way pay rises are decided. They are well trained and meet all their responsibilities well, including national requirements for safeguarding 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

Unique reference number	103460
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	402919

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	730
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anna McLaughlin
Headteacher	Angela Cowings
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 February 2008
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