

St Bernard's RC Primary School, Bolton

Wendover Drive, Ladybridge, Bolton, BL3 4RX

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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 achieve well in English and mathematics. Standards in reading are high and in writing and mathematics they are above average.
- Pupils say they enjoy reading. They read fluently and with understanding.
- Teaching and learning are good across the school and some teaching is outstanding. Teachers plan lessons that capture pupils' interest and help them to learn well.
- The teaching of reading is outstanding.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy being in school and say lessons are fun. They feel very safe, well looked after and have excellent relationships with each other and with adults in the school. Their behaviour is exemplary. They take on responsibilities with enthusiasm, are very keen to learn and are proud of their achievements.
- The headteacher, strongly supported by the senior leadership team and the governing body, provides very clear direction, focused on improving teaching and learning and based upon a thorough and accurate analysis of the school's work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not yet consistently outstanding.
- The quality of pupils' writing is hampered by inaccuracies in spelling and, for some, the quality of their handwriting.
- In some lessons, the progress of the less-able pupils sometimes slows because they are too dependent upon help from teachers to complete tasks.
- The quality of marking is not consistently good across the school; pupils are not always given the guidance they need to improve the quality of their writing, particularly their spelling.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons and made a number of short visits to lessons conducted by teachers and trained assistants, all of which were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and school staff, including middle and senior managers.
- The inspector took account of 38 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and some written comments from parents.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Judith Tolley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Bernard's is a smaller than average-sized Catholic primary school.
- Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than average as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs although this varies from year to year.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expected for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has a number of awards including the Healthy School status.
- Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes in staff and the number of pupils on roll has increased.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing further by improving pupils' accuracy in spelling and the quality of their handwriting.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it becomes outstanding by:
 - improving the quality of marking and feedback so pupils are always given good written guidance in all subjects about how to improve their writing
 - providing the less-able pupils with the support materials they need so that they can complete tasks on their own without extra help from their teacher.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards in English and mathematics are above the national average. Since the previous inspection, standards have risen year on year and continue to rise. The proportion of pupils who make more than the progress expected of them from their starting points compares very favourably with national figures. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language make the same good progress as their peers.
- Although the less-able pupils make expected progress from their starting points, the pace of their learning sometimes slows because the resources provided for them do not always give them the support they need to complete tasks without extra help.
- Most pupils join the school with skill levels that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in developing their communication, reading and personal and social skills. They enter Year 1 confident and enthusiastic learners, ready to access the Key Stage 1 curriculum.
- Most pupils make good, and some outstanding, progress, as they move through the school. By the end of Year 6, their attainment is above the national average in writing and mathematics. Standards in reading are high. They read a variety of texts fluently. They write well for a variety of purposes and audiences but the quality of their writing is hampered by inaccuracies in spelling and, for some pupils, the quality of their handwriting.
- The school's actions to raise standards and accelerate progress in reading and writing have proved successful. The school has recently made changes in subject leadership so that action to raise attainment in mathematics is, as yet, at the early stages of development and it is too early to see its impact. The pupil premium funding is used effectively and gaps between how well different groups are doing have closed. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are helped through a range well-tailored support in and out of class. As a result these pupils successfully take part in activities alongside their classmates and also make good progress from their starting points. The school promotes equality of opportunity well.

The quality of teaching is good

- The overall quality of teaching over time is good and leads to pupils making good progress. The teaching of reading is outstanding and results not only in pupils' outstanding progress but also their sheer excitement and enjoyment in learning to read.
- Teachers present new ideas clearly and activities are very well planned to engage pupils' interest. For instance, Year 5 pupils were completely absorbed by a series of group activities to decide what had happened from a series of visual clues and went on to write their own opening to a story based on what they had discovered. Similarly, Year 1 pupils rapidly worked out how to halve numbers by sharing out baubles between two Christmas trees.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively together and activities are usually well matched to pupils' needs and capabilities. They use questioning very effectively to support and extend pupils' thinking. However, the less-able pupils sometimes lack the resources they need to complete tasks by themselves in the time available so that the pace of their learning slows because they have to wait for an adult to help them.
- Pupils often make the best progress when they are given the opportunity to work with a partner or in small groups to explore ideas and solve problems. In a Year 6 literacy lesson, for instance, pupils worked together enthusiastically to explore the views of the main characters in an incident by conducting interviews before writing a newspaper report about it. These activities promote pupils' enjoyment and their ability to work by themselves.
- The teaching of reading is systematic and consistent across the school. Pupils, even the youngest, are excited about reading and they display sheer enjoyment in learning letters and sounds, in sounding words out to read and then to write them down.

- Teachers check pupils' understanding closely during lessons and adapt their lessons appropriately to correct any misapprehensions or to enable pupils to share their ideas with the rest of the class.
- Marking is regular but the very good guidance pupils receive in their English books about how to improve their writing is not always mirrored in other subjects and, too often, errors in spelling are left unchecked.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Scrutiny of behavioural records and discussions show this is also the case over time. Pupils are kind and considerate to each other and work and play very well together. They take their responsibilities very seriously and are proud of their contribution to the school through, for example, helping younger children to read, as members of the school council, playground buddies and as house captains.
- There are no disruptions to lessons and pupils respond with enthusiasm when given the opportunity to work by themselves or with others. They listen attentively to others and respect each other's views. They say that learning is fun and speak enthusiastically about their lessons.
- Pupils with behavioural and/or emotional difficulties benefit from programmes tailored to their needs and this provision has had a positive impact on their learning and their personal development.
- Pupils have excellent relationships with adults, feel very safe and both pupils and parents are confident that any poor behaviour is dealt with promptly and effectively. They are aware of the different forms of bullying that can take place and know how to deal with it; house captains and playground buddies actively help their peers at break and lunchtimes. They know how to stay safe and have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Extracurricular activities are very popular.
- Attendance rates are above average and punctuality is good.

The leadership and management are good

- The leadership and management of the headteacher are outstanding. She provides a very clear sense of direction based on an accurate evaluation of the school's work. Strategies to improve teaching and learning, raise standards and to accelerate progress across the school have proved successful and have led to improvements in these areas since the previous inspection, despite a rapid increase in the numbers on roll and subsequent changes in staffing.
- The headteacher is strongly supported by the senior leadership team who have an accurate view of the school's performance and how to improve further and are fully involved in making checks and driving improvement in teaching and learning. This process, and the detailed analysis of pupils' progress, triggers any appropriate actions which are needed for pupils and training for staff to improve their skills.
- Issues identified in the previous inspection report have been tackled successfully. Teachers work well as a team to develop the topic-based curriculum and regularly share with each other what works well. This results in a good degree of consistency across the school. The school is well-placed to improve further.
- Safeguarding meets government requirements. The school does all it can to keep its pupils safe.
- There are good links with a local high school, the local network of schools and the community. The school works closely with parents and with outside agencies to support its pupils.
- The curriculum meets the needs and interests of the pupils well and pupils talk enthusiastically about the topics they are studying and the problem-solving activities that make their learning enjoyable. The curriculum is effectively adapted for pupils with special educational needs and those with behavioural difficulties. It is enriched by a variety of activities such as activity days,

'WOW' writing days, the reading club and music, as well as a range of sporting activities, visits and visitors. Pupils also benefit from specialist teaching in physical education and music.

- Pupils have frequent opportunities to reflect and appreciate their own skills and the skills of others, for example, through weekly assemblies, and to examine their own emotions and empathise with others through religious education and literacy. This is successful in increasing pupils' confidence and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- The local authority now provides light touch support for this good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas which need to be improved. Governors understand data and are fully involved in making checks on the performance of the school. They have a good understanding of the progress pupils make and the quality of teaching. They have undertaken relevant training. They are fully involved in the performance management of teachers and in the management of the budget. They are very supportive and well equipped to hold leaders to account, for instance, to ensure best use is made of the pupil premium funding.

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	105230
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	400769

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	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Ashcroft
Headteacher	Clare Doodson
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2010
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