

St Basil's Catholic Primary School

Hough Green road, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 4SZ

Inspection dates

19–20 March 2013

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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Children make good progress from starting points that are lower than the national average, and achieve well by the end of Year 6.
- Attainment in English is above the national average. While attainment in mathematics is behind that seen in English, it is improving.
- Teaching is good. Lessons are interesting and pupils are keen to learn. Teachers' marking and use of challenging targets within books helps pupils to improve quickly.
- Governors have high expectations and have improved their knowledge and skills since the last inspection to ensure they now challenge the school to improve in all areas.
- Behaviour around school is good. Pupils readily share with others and have good manners. Teachers manage behaviour well in lessons and disruption is rare. There are few incidents of bullying and pupils say they feel safe at all times.
- Children get a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where the teaching and activities inspire children and promote learning in all areas of the curriculum.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have improved teaching and learning since the last inspection, and have increased the skills of the leadership team to secure further improvements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small amount of teaching does not yet include enough specific support for the less-able, or sufficient challenge for the more-able, so that all pupils achieve to their maximum ability in all lessons.
- Subject coordinators do not yet have sufficient skills to analyse the large amount of data that is collected on pupils' progress.
- Leaders are not yet monitoring all teaching staff equally robustly.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 21 lessons and an assembly.
- Inspectors visited the school's breakfast club and spoke to parents who were on site for a school performance assembly.
- Meetings were held with pupils, subject leaders, governors, a local authority representative, the headteacher and senior staff.
- A wide range of school documentation was seen, including data on pupil achievement and progress from the schools 'target tracker' computer system.
- Samples of pupils' books were seen from all year groups and across the curriculum.
- The 25 responses to the online questionnaire 'Parent View' were also seen.

Inspection team

Rebecca Lawton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Steve Rigby

Additional Inspector

Ian Wellens

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. There is a two-form entry in each year, and an equal balance of boys and girls.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is almost double the national average. Pupil premium is additional funding to provide extra support for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils in local authority care, and pupils who have parents serving in the armed forces.
- The proportions of pupils supported by school action, school action plus and statements of special needs are all average. The school has a strong relationship with Brookfields, a local special school, where a small number of pupils spend a proportion of their school time in order to meet their particular needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides a breakfast club for pupils, which is well attended.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all is good and more is outstanding by:
 - making sure there is enough challenge for the more-able pupils in every lesson
 - matching support for the less-able and those with special educational needs more closely in every lesson.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - increasing the skills of subject leaders in analysing the information collected by the school so that they can target support with more precision and see how well actions to boost pupils' progress are working
 - increasing the opportunities for senior leaders to monitor the work of teaching staff, including teaching assistants and support staff.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with attainment profiles that are much lower than national averages. Teachers work hard to ensure that, by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children achieve well and are only slightly below national averages.
- In Key Stage 1, the use of targeted one-to-one support in the key areas of English and mathematics helps to address any weaknesses identified in Year 1. Consequently, no-one falls behind and pupils make good progress.
- Pupils make good progress across Key Stages 1 and 2, so that attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly in line with national averages.
- Progress in writing has improved significantly following a whole-school approach to increasing writing opportunities in all subjects, and using more creative structures to inspire pupils. Training for staff in writing approaches has had a direct impact on increasing pupils' achievement in writing.
- A new mathematics programme is being used to give children additional one-to-one support in Years 1 and Year 2. The positive impact of this programme is beginning to be seen in pupils' increased mathematics skills and higher attainment at the end of Year 2.
- The rate of progress made by pupils with special educational needs varies over their time in school. In some classes, their progress is fast, in others it is slower. This is because information about their progress is not always used to target support efficiently. Pupils who attend the specialist provision at Brookfields make good progress while they are there.
- The pupil premium is being spent effectively to help pupils known to be eligible for free school meals improve their skills in English and mathematics. It is being used to close the gap between the attainment of these pupils and their peers, as well as ensuring equal access to opportunities such as extra-curricular music, school trips and the breakfast club. At the moment, the gap remains in Year 6; pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are still roughly two terms behind their peers in English and mathematics. However, in other year groups, the gap is closing and the support given in Years 1 and 2 is clearly working, as almost all are on track by the time they start Key Stage 2.
- Work in books shows that pupils are making good progress over time in a wide range of subjects. Their good achievement in music, the arts and project-based lessons shows progress in a well-balanced range of topics and skills. Marking is consistently good and helps pupils to improve their work.
- Reading has a high profile in school. Pupils have access to a good range of books, and enjoy reading often. Reading journals show parents support reading at home, and the communication between parents and school helps pupils to make good progress in reading.

The quality of teaching is good

- Areas for improvement from the last inspection - to improve marking and assessment - have been met fully. Teachers' marking in different subjects shows clear next steps to help pupils succeed. There are regular sessions where pupils and teachers reflect on the progress that has been made towards targets, and discussions around how to improve work are recorded within books.
- Teachers are using assessment as a tool for learning in all subjects. Examples were seen of pupils using assessment independently, looking at each other's work and comparing work using targets for success. This ensures that pupils are confident in their own abilities and in how to make improvements.
- There remains a small amount of teaching that is less inspiring, and where tasks are not yet supporting the less-able, or challenging the more-able pupils to push themselves to their

maximum ability.

- The school has recently appointed a senior leader to be responsible for the more-able pupils to ensure that they will be challenged in all lessons and reach their maximum potential. Clear plans are in place, although actions have not yet ensured that all teaching includes the challenge that is required. The less-able pupils who do not have special educational needs are not always supported as well as they could be in every lesson.
- In the best lessons, pupils are guided to explore activities independently, and teachers use good questions to promote understanding within topics. Teachers prepare interesting resources and use technology and the school grounds as a learning tool to interest and excite learners. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher took pupils into the hall to show them a large 'number line' and demonstrated rounding up and down to the nearest ten by walking the pupils up and down the length of the hall. This made the topic memorable and exciting.
- Teachers work well with Brookfield Special School in catering for specific pupils' additional needs. A partnership arrangement ensures that those pupils who have their school week split between the two sites, make equal progress to their peers. The two schools manage the curriculum and targets for these pupils through good communication and well-informed planning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupil's attitudes to learning are good in all lessons. Their willingness to learn and to take risks in order to succeed means that, in the best lessons, pupils are able to be independent: exploring and investigating topics on their own and using well-chosen resources and technology to support their progress. Teachers supply them with interesting topics and tasks and pupils discuss enthusiastically and ask questions of the teacher and each other.
- In one lesson seen, pupils used their own moral and ethical judgements to decide how profits should be allocated to banana growers and the supply chain, agreeing a 'fair' price. When the teacher then revealed the 'real-life' percentages and profits, the pupils began a high-level discussion between themselves about 'fair' pricing and the problems faced by growers and world markets.
- Where there is weaker behaviour in lessons, teachers manage this well and remedy it quickly, so that disruption to learning is uncommon.
- Parents and pupils express few concerns about behaviour. The few minor concerns, and any rare incidents of bullying, are dealt with efficiently. Pupils report feeling safe and able to report any worries, which they know will be sorted out quickly by teachers.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about all different types of bullying, including how to stay safe online. They describe assemblies and lessons covering aspects of racism and e-safety and where posters providing helpful information can be found around school.
- A small number of pupils are persistently absent. This issue is being tackled through additional educational welfare support, continual contact from school, letters and phone calls. This is having a small, but increasingly positive, impact on the attendance of this group of pupils.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils is given high priority within school. Teachers promote culture through activities such as music, drama and dance; and religious education is strong throughout all year groups. The school works with partners to promote health and well-being through 'fit for life' and sports projects, covering healthy eating habits and exercise. Displays, visiting experts, and extra-curricular trips and events all help to enrich the pupils' learning experiences.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection, particularly in English. Performance management is used well to ensure each teacher is working towards whole-school areas for improvement as well as individual challenging targets. However, the monitoring of support staff and teaching assistants is less robust.
- Teaching staff understand that their effectiveness in the classroom is linked to their pay and career progression.
- Senior leaders communicate high expectations. However, their skills in analysing the data they collect on pupils' progress are underdeveloped. Currently, pupils' progress information is not used to focus all teachers' efforts on particular groups of pupils. This means that some pupils, particularly the less-able and more-able, are not being stretched to achieve as well as they possibly could. In addition, this lack of robust analysis limits leaders' ability to see which support is having the greatest impact on improving outcomes for pupils.
- The curriculum includes a good variety of interesting and exciting topics that encourage pupils to achieve well. Good use is made of experts from outside the school for special events and performances, and pupils take part in a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Music, religious education and health topics are particularly strong.
- Communication with parents is a strength of the school. Parents are regularly invited to attend events on site that celebrate success, and good relationships are built with teaching staff. The school asks parents to share their views through questionnaires and letters home, and acts upon the information that is received.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements. Policies are updated frequently and all important documents are up-to-date, agreed with the governing body, and stored safely.
- The local authority representative has led training events and coaching sessions in school and the partnership between the school and local authority is strong. Since the last inspection, the school has received appropriate support from the local authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have increased their knowledge and skills since the previous inspection through a system of training and recruitment. The governing body now has representatives with skills in all key areas needed for good governance of a school. There are a significant number of governors with educational experience who are able to knowledgeably challenge the headteacher's and the school's performance. Governors are aware of the way the pupil premium is spent, and collect information to check it is spent wisely, and to good effect. Governors monitor the quality of teaching and learning as well as equality of provision and attainment, and have independent access to the school's data. They judge the school's performance against itself in previous years and against other schools to check they are making sufficient progress. The governors play an active part in performance management, and there is a named 'pair governor' for subject areas and for specific staff. This ensures the governors are well informed about all aspects of the school's performance.

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	111390
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	401182

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	358
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	M Findlater
Headteacher	Win Douglas
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2010
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