

St Benedict's Catholic Primary School

Quebec Road, Warrington, Cheshire, WA2 7SB

Inspection dates 9–10 July 2013

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| 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.

- The work of the senior leaders, supported by a highly committed staff team and a strong governing body, has led to a number of improvements, particularly in pupils' writing.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers work hard to make lessons fun and interesting, catering for the pupils' interests. Consequently, pupils learn well in lessons.
- School leaders and staff share a desire and determination to constantly improve standards. This is supported by a thorough system of checking on the quality of teaching and effective staff training.
- The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is a strong feature of the school. Pupils and adults respect and care for each other.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are eager to learn and succeed, and know how to work independently. Consequently, learning is at least good in all lessons.
- From starting points which are below those typical for their age they make good progress and, by the end of Year 6, attainment is above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing.
- Relationships are a strength of the school. The whole school community contributes to a warm, welcoming and happy environment in which the pupils thrive and feel safe.
- The curriculum is outstanding. It provides a rich learning experience for the pupils that allows them to explore their world and use their key skills in a range of subjects.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, teachers do not provide work at the right level for all groups of pupils in the class, particularly the more able.
- Senior leaders do not always give clear, measurable indicators of success in improvement plans and for teacher performance targets.
- Marking in books is not consistently good. It does not always make clear to the pupils what they must do to improve their work, and teachers do not always give them the opportunity to correct it.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons delivered by eight teachers including a joint observation with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made a few short visits to observe pupils' learning and hear some pupils read. A whole-school assembly was observed and one inspector observed the work of the school breakfast club, 'Ben's Buddies'.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, staff, representatives of the governing body, a group of parents, a local authority representative and two groups of pupils. Inspectors also talked to pupils on the playground.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a range of documents including: the school's own information about pupils' progress; planning; the monitoring of learning and teacher performance; organisation of the curriculum; safeguarding information; and the minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors also took account of 27 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and also 20 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Peter Martin, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Elaine Maloney

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is lower than average. (This is additional funding provided by the government for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after).
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is lower than that found in most schools. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those who are learning English as an additional language, is below that found nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has a breakfast and after-school club on site which is managed by the school and the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that more pupils make at least good progress by:
 - extending the innovative planning and inspirational teaching strategies seen in the best lessons throughout the school
 - ensuring that the learning needs of all pupils, particularly the more able, are met by providing work which matches their level of ability and is sufficiently challenging
 - making sure that teachers check more regularly on pupils' understanding during lessons so teaching can be modified where necessary so all pupils learn well
 - encouraging pupils to ensure that the presentation of their work is of a high standard in all subjects
 - ensuring that teachers' marking provides helpful feedback to pupils across different subjects and that they are given opportunities to respond to teachers' comments.
- Ensure that leaders and managers include focused measures of success and timescales, in school improvement planning and in targets to improve teachers' performance, so that the success of actions taken can be more easily determined.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Nursery class with levels of knowledge and understanding below those typical for their age and well below in some key skills such as writing and number. The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes is good and children benefit from good, innovative and stimulating teaching and good use of the outdoor areas. Consequently, by the time they enter Year 1 the gap between their levels and those typically found nationally have narrowed considerably.
- The school's results in the annual Year 1 reading check were just above the national average because of the good phonics (linking letters with the sounds they make) teaching which gets off to a good start in the Nursery. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are consistently broadly average which represents good progress from pupils' low starting points
- Standards in mathematics at the end of Year 6 are well above those expected and represent outstanding progress. Standards in English dipped in 2012 owing to a fall in pupils' attainment in writing. The school carried out a full review and overhaul of its approach to the teaching of writing. This has resulted in a sharp rise in standards for writing across the school. Attainment is now average. Reading is above average. This represents good progress overall.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, pupils from minority ethnic groups and pupils for whom English is an additional language, are well supported and are making good progress overall.
- Effective use of pupil premium funding has resulted in eligible pupils attaining in English and mathematics as well as their peers and similar pupils nationally. The proportion of pupils in 2013 who made the expected progress compares favourably with national figures. The proportion exceeding expected progress is smaller than national averages but rising.
- Dedicated support staff are used skilfully. They help pupils with their learning and build successful relationships to develop the pupils' confidence in their own abilities.
- The progress of all pupils is tracked rigorously and reviewed half-termly. This enables the school to identify any pupils who are falling behind so they can provide additional help and ensure that all have equal opportunity to achieve.
- Pupils read often and widely at school and at home. Parents give enthusiastic support for their children through the school's home-reading programme which also provides an excellent means of two-way communication with their teachers. As a result, pupils are making good, and in some cases outstanding, progress in their reading.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching observed was solidly good with some was outstanding. Teachers work very hard to make lessons interesting and fun. As a result, pupils are highly motivated, eager to succeed and consistently make good progress in lessons.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage thanks to lively, stimulating teaching which fosters independence and self-confidence. For example, in one lesson in the Nursery children could be seen happily writing out receipts from the 'Ice-cream shop'. Outdoor provision is good and links well to the work done in the classroom.
- Pupils say they enjoy lessons, that they are 'fun', and that teachers help them if they have problems, 'Teachers don't shout at you they just help!'
- Parents said that they were very happy with the quality of the teaching their children received. One parent commented that her child, 'wants to come to school even when ill'.
- The high-quality relationships within the school are a real strength; pupils and all adults within the school community show care and respect for each other. Teachers talk considerately to pupils, setting a good example for pupils to copy. They use praise well to encourage and show

that they value the contributions pupils make in lessons as well as to the general life of the school. Parents agree and speak highly of the welcoming atmosphere of the school.

- Lessons are generally given at a good, lively pace which keeps pupils stimulated and active. The teachers' good subject knowledge and good questioning skills challenge pupils and make them think more deeply about their answers, ensuring that they learn well in their lessons.
- A range of good teaching methods motivates and stimulates pupils. Work is linked to the pupils' interests as much as possible. In one outstanding lesson pupils watched a short clip from a Harry Potter film before exploring how they could include problems and resolutions in their own writing to make it more exciting. This resulted in high-quality writing.
- Teachers plan lessons well and set challenging tasks for when pupils work by themselves. However, on occasion, the level of work set is not sufficiently challenging to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly the more able.
- Opportunities for pupils to assess for themselves how well they have done are a key feature in most lessons, even in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 classes. In one outstanding lesson in Year 6 pupils were asked to assess their own work and that of their partner. They were urged to challenge themselves and each other in order to extend and improve on their work. The pupils did this with great maturity and listened to and valued each other's opinions.
- In the very best lessons teachers checked on pupils' understanding and progress continuously as the lesson progressed. However, in some lessons teachers do this less effectively or not early enough to enable them to modify their teaching if required.
- The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. In the best examples, comments tell pupils what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve their work. However this is not the case in all marking.
- Pupils do not always take sufficient care with the presentation of their work because teachers do not always expect them to do so; this is particularly evident when pupils use worksheets.
- A strong feature of the teaching is the strong teamwork between the teachers and learning support staff who help pupils with their learning and contribute a great deal to their progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of the pupils in the school is outstanding. Behaviour observed was never less than good and, for the most part, was excellent. Pupils are friendly, polite and very well behaved in and out of the classroom. They speak respectfully to adults and each other. They have excellent manners and move around the school in an orderly and cheerful way.
- Pupils are proud of their school. Older pupils routinely carry out responsibilities with care, contributing much to the smooth running of the school. They take on the role of playground buddies caring for the younger pupils - a responsibility they take very seriously. One Year 5 parent said that her son was upset because he could not do his buddying at the moment, since he had a broken arm, because he 'loved being a buddy'.
- Pupils of all ages show excellent attitudes to their learning. They are keen to learn and succeed. They work well together and listen carefully to their teacher and each other. Lessons run smoothly as a result and are lively places of learning.
- The school provides a happy and safe environment where pupils feel safe, secure, well cared for and can thrive. They are happy to come to school.
- They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and the school actively develops this understanding, providing effective teaching about 'stranger danger', road safety, the dangers of drugs, and safety when accessing the internet.
- Pupils believe that the behaviour in school is good and are adamant that there is no bullying, 'there's a little falling out sometimes, but no bullying'. They feel that the playground buddy system helps to maintain safe and happy playgrounds.
- The vast majority of parents agreed that their children were well cared for and felt safe at school and were unanimous in their belief that behaviour was good. Observations during the inspection

and the school's behaviour records confirmed the views of the pupils and parents.

- Despite the considerable effort the school makes to promote good attendance, it is below national average, mainly owing to extended holidays taken by pupils with families overseas.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, with strong support of staff and the governing body, provides good leadership. Teamwork is a strong feature of the school and the contribution of all adults has a positive impact and is highly valued by school leaders and pupils.
- The school's accurate checks on how well it is doing have led to the identification of the appropriate key areas for school development and effective planning to bring about improvement. School leaders know their school's strengths and weaknesses. The focus on writing as a priority has had an immediate impact and led to a rise in writing standards.
- Teaching and pupils' work is regularly monitored by senior and subject leaders. Useful feedback focuses on specific improvements to raise the quality of teaching.
- However, some actions in the improvement plan and for teachers' targets lack clear, measurable outcomes of success and clear timescales. This makes checking the success of actions more difficult to evaluate.
- The school has a strong ethos of care, inclusion and equality. The needs of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs are identified early and their needs are provided for.
- The progress of all pupil groups is carefully tracked. Data is analysed regularly and helps to identify pupils who may be falling behind or in need of additional support.
- Pupils have good access to books in school and read in school and at home on a daily basis. They show a real love of books and take every opportunity to read independently or to adults at home and school.
- The school curriculum is outstanding. It provides rich experiences, for example, with educational trips including annual residential trips for Years 4, 5 and 6. There are themed weeks and days such 'Magic week' and 'Alien landing day' which ensure that pupils find learning exciting as well as providing a wealth of opportunities for pupils to practise their key skills, particularly their writing, in all areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Its foundation is the caring atmosphere and mutual respect shown by all members of its community. The many musical, artistic and performing arts and sporting opportunities provided ensure a good, rounded education for its pupils.
- The school has a very good relationship with its parents and the large majority speak very positively about all aspects of school life and its leadership. They are kept well informed. For example, the recently introduced 'Knowledge Fairs', giving parents a greater insight into what their children have been doing, have been very well received.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust and meet all requirements
- The school's breakfast and after-care club provision provides outstanding wrap-around care for the pupils who attend. Pupils are provided with stimulating activities and healthy snacks.
- The local authority provides appropriate and effective support and challenge to this good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly committed to, very knowledgeable about and supportive of the school. Governors provide robust challenge to its leaders and managers to ensure that it continues to move forward. They check safeguarding is secure and carefully oversee arrangements for the use of the pupil premium and checks on its success. The governing body is closely involved in the evaluation of teachers' performance and the impact on their pay. It has a keen understanding of the quality of teaching and of standards and how the school compares to other schools locally and nationally. Financial management is secure and efficient.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 111308 |
| Local authority | Warrington |
| Inspection number | 413040 |

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

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| 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 | 245 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Michele Walker |
| Headteacher | Kevin McCourt |
| Date of previous school inspection | 8 March 2010 |
| Telephone number | 01925 234699 |
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