

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Narrow Lane, Walsall, WS8 6HX

Inspection dates 15–16 October 2013

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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and the governing body. The governors effectively challenge and support the school well.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and achieve good standards at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, as a result of good teaching over time.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around school is very good. They are very proud of their school and feel safe.
- Parents and carers are positive about the school. They praise the staff's commitments to keeping their children safe and happy at school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium funding make at least as much progress as other pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- A small minority of teaching requires improvement. At times pupils' work is not matched to their abilities well enough.
- The recently appointed middle leaders are not yet fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching.
- The quality of marking in pupils' books does not always help them to improve their work.
- Standards in mathematics are not yet as high as in reading and writing. The school is continuing to help pupils to make faster progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 15 lessons. Two lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, governors, a representative from the local authority, and senior staff in the school.
- The views of the 24 parents and carers who responded to the survey on Parent View were taken into account, as well as those gathered through discussions with parents and carers on the playground. The inspectors also received and considered 11 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, including assembly and hymn practice, and looked at a wide range of documentation including: national assessment data and the school's own assessments; the school's evaluation of its work; procedures for the management of teachers' performance; the school development plan; the sports funding premium action plan; and samples of pupils' work. They also heard pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised the arrangements and records kept to safeguard pupils.

Inspection team

Michelle Pickering, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Stephen Palmer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average size primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by school action is slightly above average and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is equal to the national average. This is additional funding provided to schools by the government to support pupils eligible for free school meals, children in the care of the local authority and children with a parent or carer in the armed services. At the time of the inspection, there were no children from families in the armed services.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups has increased since the last inspection and is well below average.
- The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.
- The school has been through a period of leadership instability, including the long-term absence and subsequent resignation of the previous headteacher. The new substantive headteacher is in her third term leading the school.
- A before- and after-school club operates from the school site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to more frequently outstanding, especially in mathematics and writing, by improving the use of assessment to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities.
- Further develop a stimulating curriculum which offers a progression in skills, knowledge and understanding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Many children start at this school with average skills for their age. Their starting points can vary considerably from year to year but, from their individual starting points, they make good progress in their early years and by the time they move on to Year 1 their mathematical and reading skills are close to average when compared to those of others. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the rest of the school although achievement is not yet outstanding as the results for 2013 dipped when compared with those in previous years.
- The phonics screening check in Year 1 last year showed that children were making a good start in learning to read and spell. These scores were above national figures.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and standards in reading, writing and mathematics are now above average. In 2013 the proportion of pupils who made good progress was well above average.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 who are supported by pupil premium funding were achieving higher than all other pupils. The school has closed the gap between these groups of pupils.
- Standards in Key Stage 2 have been above average since the last inspection, except in 2013. Pupils do better in mathematics than they do in English. Overall, most make good progress in improving their literacy skills although they are slightly weaker in writing.
- School checks in the current Years 3 to 6 show that pupils' progress is good. This indicates that attainment will continue to rise and be above average. All Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Standards at the end of 2013 were not as high as in previous years. This was due to a small cohort of pupils sitting the tests, with over a third being on the special educational needs register.
- The attainment of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs pupils is above average compared to that of similar pupils. They make at least expected progress in reading and mathematics and two thirds of the group made at least expected progress in writing.
- Children who are looked after make good progress. The school knows this group of children well and invests time and resources to ensure they achieve as well as they can.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium do well. In 2012, the very small number of pupils supported by the pupil premium were some two years behind their peers in English and six months behind in mathematics. Current data show the school is narrowing the gap significantly between this group of pupils and all other pupils. The funding has been targeted well and is making a difference to this group of pupils.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those whose first language is not English make the same progress as their peers in the school.
- The school has not yet received its government sports funding. The school has appropriate plans to ensure best value for money. It has planned an approach aimed at promoting sport, physical education and healthy lifestyles, and through a two year staff coaching programme the approach will be sustainable when the funding ends in two years time. Pupils are enthusiastic about the additional opportunities this will create for them.

The quality of teaching

is good

- A range of teaching was seen by the inspectors. In the lessons that were good there were some features that were outstanding.
- Pupils' progress and the monitoring records of the school show teaching is usually good and sometimes outstanding, for example reading progress in Year 6 is three terms ahead of what would be expected at this stage.
- Targets are used across the school. They are not yet making a consistent impact on pupils' progress, particularly in writing and mathematics.

- Pupils' work is generally marked well. The school has recently introduced a new marking scheme; pupils are now expected to make a written response to the comments from the teacher. It is not yet developed fully or embedded across the school so has not yet had an impact on all pupils' work. Pupils need more guidance about how to respond to and make use of the feedback from their teachers.
- Work set for pupils is not always suitable. Occasionally, the tasks are either too easy or too difficult and are not suitably adjusted. This hampers pupils' progress in both writing and mathematics.
- Progress is tracked carefully and accurately by the school. This shows that all years groups are now making more progress than expected in each age range.
- There are good relationships between adults and children; pupils strive to meet the expectations set by the adults.
- In the best lessons teachers had planned work to meet the needs and the interest of their pupils, and additional adults were used to promote the learning of a specific group. This ensured that all pupils were engaged in their learning and could make progress in these lessons.
- Pupils demonstrated a love of reading including those pupils who find reading a challenge. The school has plans to increase the range of books available for pupils to read.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour and their enjoyment of learning are good. Pupils are able to work on their own and in groups. Behaviour is not yet outstanding because in the weaker lessons pupils show too little engagement in, and enthusiasm for, their learning. Pupils stray off task when the teacher dominates the discussion or their work is not challenging enough.
- Pupils are very polite and courteous around the school and are happy to talk about their school, work and learning. They move around the school in a calm and controlled way and help each other.
- Pupils show good behaviour in assemblies, where the school promotes spiritual and moral development well. Children are reflective and show empathy when asked to consider those who are not as fortunate as themselves. They show reverence during prayer time and demonstrate they know the differences between right and wrong behaviour.
- In their responses to the online questionnaire, many parents and carers said they feel that their children are happy and safe. The school is also holding some workshop sessions for parents and carers to help them keep their children safe when they are not in school.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying, but say it is very rare in the school. They are confident that any incidents would always be dealt with effectively by staff.
- The pupils spoken to said they feel safe in school and showed they had an understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, for example on the internet. They were able to talk about how the school supports them to learn about keeping safe, for example through the keeping safe on the internet lessons that they had.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are strong. They demonstrate respect for one another.
- The school has very few incidents of poor behaviour and deals effectively with them if they occur. It is clear from the school's records that parents and carers are supportive of the behaviour strategies and are involved fully if their child has misbehaved.
- Attendance is just below the national average. This is as a result of parents and carers authorising absence in term time to take family holidays. The recently appointed headteacher does not hesitate in taking robust action when this occurs.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders, especially the headteacher, care deeply about their school and have detailed plans to achieve their high ambitions for pupils. The values of the school are reflected in their sense of purpose, their caring, their high standards and their drive and commitment. The newly appointed deputy headteacher is providing additional leadership capacity to the school.

- The headteacher and governors made key decisions and instigated changes in Key Stage 1 earlier this year which have resulted in a significant rise in end of Key Stage 1 assessments.
- The headteacher has appointed some skilled middle leaders. They are inexperienced, however and there are plans for them to be coached and mentored to enable them to make a rapid impact. The school is working effectively with other local schools to provide this coaching model.
- Some leaders are not involved enough in checking on and improving the school. They are not systematically involved in the analysis of the impact actions are having on pupils' progress or the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
- The results from the staff survey show that the staff are very committed to the current leadership of the school and recognise all the hard work that the current leadership has undertaken since taking up this role.
- All aspects of safeguarding are met to keep pupils safe. The school makes sure that all pupils are given equal opportunities and that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The local authority has been supportive of both the headteacher and governing body and has provided suitable training when requested. It has also provided a review meeting process to oversee the progress the school has been making.
- Arrangements for managing teachers' performance are now in place. Teachers have performance targets linked to the progress of the pupils they teach and to the school's priorities, and the headteacher will not authorise salary increases unless targets have been met. Teachers value the support and training they are given and this has raised the quality of teaching in school.
- Senior leaders have rightly recognised the need to develop the range of subjects offered at the school by introducing a curriculum based on a progression of skills. The pupils develop well socially, morally, spiritually and culturally. For example, they are involved in the life of the parish organising a weekly Mass in school, a monthly Mass in church and singing in the choir. The school council is involved in decision making, for example raising funds for CAFOD which is a Catholic charity.
- Interesting activities provided outside lessons and specialist sports coaching are attended and enjoyed by pupils.
- The leaders of the school engage parents and carers in the life of the school, including taking responsibilities for organisation, for example parents and carers run the mother and toddler group at the school and accompany the walking bus alongside school staff.
- Responses to Parent View and letters from parents and carers were positive about the school, the headteacher and the support given to their children. The majority of parents and carers who expressed a view would recommend the school to others.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school's strengths well and what still needs to be done. They are visible in school and visit lessons and have a good understanding about the strengths in teaching. They have a good knowledge of how well the school performs and have demonstrated clearly that they will challenge the leadership of the school to be accountable. They have been closely involved in all the recent changes to the school. They are now well qualified to check that the headteacher is setting appropriate performance targets for teachers, rewarding good teachers and challenging underperformance. The local authority has supported the governing body well through a period of major change. Its training programme has enabled governors to fulfil their roles, for example an understanding data workshop has enabled the governors to challenge and evaluate the impact of the pupil premium funding. Governors know how the school is performing in relation to other schools and have used this knowledge to question the headteacher and to influence decisions they make about future spending plans. Governors have been fully involved in decisions about how the school spends the pupil premium and sports 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	104242
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	429489

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	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr David Mellor
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	5–9 March 2009
Telephone number	01543 452921
Email address	postbox@stbernadette.walsall.sch.uk

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