

Saint Bernadette Catholic Primary School

Walsingham Way, London Colney, St Albans, AL2 1NL

Inspection dates 22–23 October 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.

- Considerable improvements have been made since the last inspection
- Children in the Nursery and Reception get off to a good start and their progress is good.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 also make good progress.
- Positive action has been taken to raise achievement in Year 3 to 6, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils are now making good progress and attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average in reading, writing and mathematics
- The improved teaching has had a positive impact on pupils' progress. Teaching is good and some is outstanding.
- Teachers expect pupils to do their best and use explanations and questioning well to promote good learning.
- Pupils know how well they are doing.
- Teachers set demanding tasks that are mostly well suited to pupils' abilities and learning needs.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and excited about their learning
- The school's atmosphere is caring and positive.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. In some lessons, attitudes and behaviour are impeccable.
- Pupils feel extremely safe and very well cared for by staff.
- The experienced headteacher has gained the confidence of the school community and provides strong leadership in raising achievement and improving teaching.
- Other key leaders and governors have made a valuable contribution to improving the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally the tasks are not sufficiently well tailored to pupils' individual needs.
- There is some variation in the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- In just a few lessons, pupils' learning does not move at a fast enough pace.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons. Some of these were seen jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, a representative from the local authority, governors and pupils.
- The inspectors took account of the 88 responses to the online survey (Parent View).
- Questionnaires from 17 members of staff were analysed.
- The inspectors examined school policies, information about pupils' attainment and progress, teachers' plans, pupils' work and the school's development planning.

Inspection team

Derek Watts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mary Hinds

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- Over two thirds of the pupils are White British. Other pupils come from a range of different ethnic backgrounds, including Irish, any other White background and African.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- A below-average proportion of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and other groups.
- The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by making sure that:
 - teachers always set tasks which are at the right level of difficulty for individual pupils
 - pupils' learning in each lesson is moved on at a quick pace.
- Take action to accelerate the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs whose progress is less than good, by:
 - carefully identifying specific needs and gaps in their learning
 - providing targeted support and learning materials to promote good learning
 - checking the impact of all new actions on pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils, including those from different ethnic backgrounds, are achieving well.
- Children enter the Nursery with knowledge and skills broadly expected for their age. Improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage mean that children now make good progress in all the areas of learning because of good teaching and the interesting range of activities provided.
- Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. In one Year 2 lesson, for example, pupils made good progress in identifying adjectives to describe landscape scenes and a haunted house. In discussion, they described settings with animation and expression. They chose powerful adjectives in writing a description of a setting.
- In the national tests for Year 6 in 2012, results were above average in English but only average in mathematics. Their progress in reading and mathematics was not as rapid as it was in their writing.
- Positive action has been taken to raise pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6. Pupils are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Information on pupils' attainment indicates that Year 6 results in 2013 were better than in the previous year and are likely to be above average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, national comparative data are not yet available to ensure accurate evaluation.
- The most-able pupils are successfully challenged and extended. As a result, an above average proportion of pupils reach the higher levels by the end of Year 6 in reading writing and mathematics.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is less consistent. While they are making expected progress, not enough are making good or better than expected progress. Some intervention and support is not fully effective in promoting consistently good progress.
- In the 2012 national tests for Year 6, the very few pupils supported by the pupil premium attained much lower standards than the others. These pupils were about 30 months behind the others in reading and writing and 36 months behind in mathematics. More recent data confirm that the school is narrowing the gap between eligible pupils and the others. In 2013, most pupils supported by pupil premium made good progress in reading and writing and expected in mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening because teachers provide well-planned opportunities for them to discuss their learning in pairs or small groups. By Year 6, pupils are articulate and confident speakers.
- Pupils show enthusiasm for reading. The teaching of phonics, letters and the sounds they make, has been strengthened and in the Year 1 reading check in 2013, almost all pupils attained the expected standard, a significant rise of the previous year.
- Writing is a strength of the school. Pupils write for a range of purposes. They apply their writing skills well in English lesson and in a range of other topics. In Year 6, pupils made exceptional progress when writing interesting descriptions of a London setting during the blitz. They were

imaginative and used similes and metaphors successfully to bring their writing to life.

- Most pupils are now making good progress in mathematics. Pupils in Year 3 made good progress in their understanding of multiples and recorded their findings well in Venn diagrams. In a Year 5 and 6 set, pupils made rapid progress in solving fraction problems. They were well focused on checking the calculations of others' for accuracy.
- Pupils are developing healthy lifestyles and physical fitness through the school's physical education programme and the additional sporting activities on offer. They benefit from the teaching by staff and outside coaches.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The good teaching has had a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement.
- Pupils appreciate the good quality teaching they receive. Some of their comments included, 'Teachers challenge you', 'Teachers are supportive' and 'My teacher explains things so well'.
- There are examples of outstanding teaching in Years 4, 5 and 6. In these lessons, pupils were inspired by the teachers' enthusiasm and strong subject knowledge. They were fully engaged in their learning as they rose to the teachers' high expectations and to the challenge of the tasks set. Pupils were highly productive and learned at a rapid pace. They knew how well they were doing and reviewed their own and others' learning accurately.
- Teachers establish very positive relationships with pupils and expect them to do their very best. A positive classroom atmosphere for learning is created. Pupils are cooperative, relate very well to others and reflect on their learning.
- In the Nursery and Reception, children are provided with interesting indoor and outdoor activities. There is a good blend between adult-led activities and those chosen by the children. Good opportunities are provided for children to explore and learn on their own.
- Teachers ensure that the purpose of the lesson is clearly shared with the pupils. As a result, the pupils know what they are expected to learn. Helpful 'steps to success' are provided to guide learning in lessons.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for discussion and use questioning well to promote learning and check pupils' understanding. Reading skills are taught through a well-structured programme. A range of strategies are used to promote ideas for writing and to promote writing skills. These include: visual stimuli, discussion, the demonstration of writing skills by teachers and drama.
- In the main, teachers check pupils' attainment accurately and use this information to plan their teaching and to match tasks to pupils' different abilities. As a result, pupils are challenged appropriately and most make good gains in acquiring knowledge and deepening their understanding.
- Just occasionally, tasks are not sufficiently well linked to pupils' specific needs and the rate of learning is adversely affected. There are times when teachers do not move pupils' learning on quickly enough. This can happen when introductions to lessons are too long and pupils are not able to participate fully in the lesson and get quickly down to work.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are generally taught well and supported. Teaching assistants are well deployed in lessons and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. However, not all interventions and learning programmes are promoting consistently good progress for this group of pupils. Some pupils have gaps in their learning.
- Pupils find teachers' marking and verbal feedback helpful. Pupils know how well they are doing and are provided with clear comments about the next steps to improve their learning

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, were very positive that their children were happy at school, felt safe and were well looked after.
- Pupils informed inspectors, 'Everyone listens to your ideas', 'We work well in groups and independently', 'We all get on with each other' and 'Behaviour is good and excellent'. The positive views expressed by parents and pupils reflect the inspection findings.
- Children in the Nursery settle quickly into the school because of the strong relationships that adults form with children. They feel safe and relate well to others. Children in the Nursery and Reception thoroughly enjoy the learning activities provided. They behave well in the classrooms and the outdoor areas.
- Older pupils, too, show enthusiasm and excitement for learning. Their behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Where teaching is outstanding, pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are impeccable. The school's records of incidents show that behaviour is typically good over time.
- Discussions with pupils show that they have a clear understanding of bullying in its different forms, including persistent name-calling and cyber-bullying. Pupils stated that there was no bullying in the school. They told the inspector that incidents of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with quickly by the staff. A pupil commented, 'Teachers never let you do anything naughty'.
- Pupils are courteous, friendly and responsible. They are clearly proud to be members of their school and appreciate the care and education provided. Those on the school council represent their fellow pupils well. They organise fund raising activities for different charities.
- Through their studies and events such as 'One World Week' pupils have gained a very clear understanding of different cultures and faiths. They show consideration and respect for others.
- Attendance has been below average but the school is working to improve this. More recently, attendance levels have been close to average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has gained the confidence and respect of parents, pupils, staff and governors and has been the key in bringing about improvements since the previous inspection.
- Teamwork among the staff is strong and all staff show considerable commitment to raising achievement and doing the very best for the pupils. The findings of the staff questionnaire indicate that staff believe that the school is well-led and managed, that professional development is

effective and that there is a sharp focus on teaching and learning.

- The headteacher, key leaders, staff and governors have worked well together in bringing about necessary improvements. As a result, since the previous inspection, pupils' achievement and teaching have improved from satisfactory to good.
- Considerable emphasis has been placed on strengthening teaching in order to raise pupils' achievement. The quality of teaching is carefully checked by the headteacher, senior staff and the local authority. In selecting teachers, some astute appointments have been made. There are effective procedures for appraising staff performance and developing their professional skills. Targets for teachers to improve their performance are closely linked to pupils' progress and to improvement priorities.
- New teachers, especially those beginning their career, are well supported by experienced staff. There is a very positive culture among the staff of sharing of ideas and good practice. As a result, new teachers have settled well and are already contributing to the school's success. As one newly qualified teacher put it, 'I have received amazing guidance and help'.
- The local authority has a clear overview of the school's performance and has rightly acknowledged the headteacher and her team's efforts in moving the school forward. Local authority advisers and consultants have provided good support in the development of areas such as mathematics.
- An interesting range of learning activities are planned and provided to promote good achievement and good personal development for pupils. Additional activities and clubs and visits are much appreciated by the pupils. The recent sports grant has been used well to extend pupils' physical and sporting activities. Pupils are impressed with the new outdoor gym apparatus and the additional coaching in different sports.
- Pupil-premium funding has been properly planned and used to accelerate the progress of eligible pupils. The school has provided additional support including one-to-one tuition, and this is having a positive impact on the progress of pupils being supported.
- The school has a caring, positive and welcoming atmosphere where pupils can learn and thrive. There are no signs of discrimination and all pupils have access to the full range of activities provided. Staff strive to make sure that all pupils all do as well as they can.
- The results of Parent View indicate that parents are very pleased with the care and education provided for their children. Concerns are very few.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are enthusiastic and have a clear overview of the school's performance. In particular, they recognise the school's rapid journey of improvement under the headteacher's leadership. There is a good understanding of pupils' attainment and progress. Governors are kept accurately informed about the quality of teaching by the headteacher. The school's systems for the performance of staff ensure that good practice is recognised and that effective support is provided to improve teachers' skills where necessary. Governors ensure that the pupil premium grant is properly spent. They are checking that the grant is improving the performance of pupils supported by the funding. The governors have attended useful courses to improve their effectiveness. All safeguarding requirements are met.

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	117489
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	425264

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	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Bussandri
Headteacher	Elisabeth Barton
Date of previous school inspection	01 February 2012
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