

# St Bernard's RC Primary School Manchester

Burnage Lane, Burnage, Manchester, Greater Manchester M19 1DR

## Inspection dates

7–8 March 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The school is improving rapidly after the setback of 2016. The headteacher's strong and effective leadership has stabilised staffing at all levels. It has made striving for further improvement a prime focus for all staff and ensured that assessments are accurate.
- Pupils' books show that, in most classes, pupils are making good progress in English, mathematics and in a range of other subjects. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are already higher than they were at the end of 2016.
- Despite being good overall, teaching does not consistently ensure that the most able pupils, including those at the top end of the middle-ability group, make the best possible progress.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving rapidly. Although not fully in place in all classes, changes in how mathematics is being taught are nevertheless helping pupils to think more deeply, reason and solve mathematical problems.
- Children make good progress from their starting points in all areas of learning in Nursery and Reception.
- Good leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities means that these pupils make good progress.
- The leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics is not fully established.
- Governors use their skills well to challenge leaders to raise standards even further. They make sure that finances, including the pupil premium funding, are spent wisely.
- Pupils behave well. They say that they feel safe and that the school teaches them how to keep themselves safe. They are kind to each other and show great respect for adults. They are keen to learn and to make progress.
- Pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are supported well. Staff understand their different needs and help them to reflect on the consequence of their actions.
- Most parents are happy with the school. They praise the staff for always being willing to help them and their children.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils can make even faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
  - eliminating the remaining inconsistencies in teaching within some year groups
  - completing the work to extend the good practice in mathematics to all year groups
  - giving the most able pupils, and the more able pupils in the middle-ability group, harder work to do so that they can reach higher standards.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by giving those who lead subjects other than English and mathematics the skills and the time to lead and manage their subjects well.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- When she took over in September 2014, the headteacher found herself without a senior leadership team and with few subject leaders. Several staff had left at the end of the school year and had been replaced by temporary staff. There followed a high turnover of staff, and the appointment of some inexperienced staff. All of this limited school improvement and caused concern for some parents.
- The headteacher quickly analysed what needed to be done and, over the next year, gave the school's work clear purpose and direction. She has subsequently created an effective leadership team and appointed staff to key positions. She stabilised staffing by September 2016. The work since then has resulted in rapid improvement throughout the school in teaching and in learning.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors said that they are very satisfied with the school and the progress that their children are making. They praised staff for being approachable and helpful, for supporting them with their children's learning and helping them to manage their children's behaviour at home.
- Subject leaders for English and mathematics have a good understanding of pupils' progress across the school. They work collaboratively with the leaders of the different key stages, and with staff from other schools, and have successfully improved teaching and learning. The leadership of other subjects is less secure. Many of the leaders are new and have not had the same opportunities to fulfil their roles.
- Most leaders and teachers make good use of the information that they have about the progress that pupils make. They use this information to plan work that increases pupils' learning. Nevertheless, there is scope to improve the challenge for the most able pupils and for pupils in the middle-ability group who, with a push, could do even better.
- The diocese and the local authority have provided valuable support for the school and leaders have used that support well. Leaders have also worked closely with local schools to successfully improve teaching and make sure that all assessments are accurate.
- The school improvement plan and other action plans have sensible but robust priorities for improvement. Leaders include realistic timescales with clear lines of accountability. Intended outcomes relate securely to measurable improvements in pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders have effective procedures in place for checking the performance of teachers, which have resulted in rapid improvements this year to the quality of teaching. Leaders regularly highlight strengths and plan effective training to support identified areas for improvement.
- Staff's responses to the online survey were mostly positive. A small number of staff, however, feel that they are not consulted enough. This is because the headteacher and governors have set very clear ground rules, with high expectations for staff and pupils.
- The school's curriculum is well planned. There is a sharp emphasis on reading and writing, including developing writing in different subjects. There is also an increasingly sharp emphasis on achieving mastery in mathematics, although not equally so in all classes. Other subjects are given due attention, most often in topic work.

- Visits, visitors and a good range of clubs in and out of the normal school day add to pupils' enjoyment of learning and give them memorable experiences they otherwise might not have.
- Pupils are helped to understand the values underpinning British society. A different value is explored each week in assemblies. Special events, coupled with the school's personal, social, health and citizenship programme, enable pupils to become reflective and caring. They also learn to be tolerant and respectful of others, regardless of faith, culture, background or belief.
- Leaders and governors make sure that pupil premium funding enables disadvantaged pupils to make good progress. Leaders' recent review led to changes in the way the funding is managed so that pupils can gain more from it. The spending of funding is kept under close scrutiny to ensure that it diminishes the differences in progress between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally.
- The primary schools sports funding is used well to develop staff expertise and to provide opportunities for pupils to participate in a wide range of sports, including competitive sport. Thus pupils develop a range of interests and skills they might otherwise not have the opportunity to gain.
- The funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is spent well. Effective leadership ensures that additional support and well-targeted resources enable the pupils to learn well in lessons and make good progress overall.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance is good. Governors have sought training and support to help them fulfil their roles and they are doing so well. They have provided good support for the headteacher in stabilising staffing and establishing an effective senior leadership team.
- Governors recognise the importance of analysing the progress of pupils at St Bernard's, of comparing it with that of pupils at other schools, and of challenging leaders to improve it. Discussions with governors and the minutes of governing body meetings show that they do these things rigorously.
- The governing body has a good understanding of the procedures for managing staff performance. Governors support the headteacher in holding staff to account and in the decisions related to pay increases.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective
- Safeguarding is a strong element of the school's work. Procedures are reviewed regularly at governors' meetings. They are effective and known to all staff.
- Staff are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are safe and know how to keep themselves safe. Fire drills take place half-termly and risk assessments are carried out for all relevant activities.
- Parents are kept fully informed of the school's approach to safeguarding and child protection. Records are up to date and stored securely. All referrals are followed up to ensure that children remain safe.

- Leaders have established very clear and effective procedures to check any unexplained absences. Where there is cause for concern, staff make home visits and alert the relevant authorities.
- When an exclusion cannot be avoided, where possible, reciprocal arrangements with local schools mean that a pupil can be educated off-site. This allows the pupil to continue to learn.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Improvements in leadership and management and stability in staffing, along with a concerted programme of staff training, have led to good teaching, learning and assessment.
- Teachers work together well, sharing good practice and learning from each other. They also work with staff in other schools to check that their assessments of pupils' progress are accurate and that they have the evidence to prove it.
- Secure in their own subject knowledge, teachers confidently engage pupils in learning and, in most cases, hold their attention well. They establish clear expectations and routines so that classrooms are calm and learning is purposeful. Occasionally, some teachers allow noise levels to escalate or do not notice when pupils' minds have wandered. At these times, learning is not as effective.
- Reading, including phonics, is taught well, as is writing. Teaching successfully encourages pupils to read for pleasure as well as for information. Staff regularly challenge pupils to use a wide range of vocabulary to bring their writing to life for the reader.
- Good mathematics teaching ensures that pupils learn to use different ways of calculating. They then select the most efficient way of working as they apply their knowledge in problem-solving activities. The increased focus on reasoning and solving problems is deepening pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts and encouraging them to think for themselves. However, these aspects are not fully in place in all classes.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for teaching, especially for disadvantaged pupils, for those pupils who are in danger of falling behind, and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They are briefed well and they receive appropriate training to help them fulfil their roles.
- Teaching is less effective in challenging the most able pupils and those at the top end of the middle-ability group to explore their ideas in greater depth and extend their understanding.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The atmosphere throughout the school is of a warm, nurturing environment where

pupils are well cared for and safe. Parents who spoke to inspectors voiced similar sentiments as they told of how staff look after their children.

- Pupils say that they feel safe in school, that the staff care for them well and that they always have someone to turn to should they have any concerns. They have a good understanding of online safety. They benefit from regular sessions that teach them about the risks that the internet, including social media, can present. They also speak knowledgeably about, for example, stranger danger and road safety.
- The 'Pupil Voice' column in several of the school's action plans shows that leaders and staff value and act upon pupils' views. Pupils appreciate this. They readily and maturely voice their opinions on a wide range of matters and contribute to overall school improvement.
- Pupils like the opportunities that they have to work together and say that they learn much by doing so. This was particularly evident in mathematics sessions as they challenged each other to think and reason.
- Pupils understand the different types of bullying that can take place and they know what to do if they see or experience it. They say incidents of bullying are very rare but a small number of pupils, from different backgrounds, admit to the occasional racist name-calling, while acknowledging that they know it to be wrong.
- All incidents that are perceived to be bullying, even if they turn out to be only a falling-out, are meticulously recorded, along with the action taken to try to avoid them happening again. The same applies to any incidents of racism or any other form of discrimination.
- Pupils enjoy the positions of responsibility that they are given. They make formal applications for roles such as school councillors and peer mediators. This process gives them an appreciation of the value of these roles, which they take very seriously, and of the process of democracy.
- Pupils are justifiably proud of their school and of the improvement in their learning. They recognise that they now learn better and faster. They are enthusiastic about doing so and they want to do well. They do not always present their work well, however. In mathematics, for example, they sometimes construct diagrams without rulers, or set calculations out untidily, making the steps towards their answers difficult to follow.
- The pupils who attend the breakfast club benefit from a good start to their day. They are supervised well and they enjoy the activities on offer.
- When asked to sum the school up in three words, pupils offered 'friendship', 'learning' and 'mistakes', explaining that 'we all learn from our mistakes'. They are prepared well for the next stage of their education and for adult life.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons, around the school and in the playground. They are polite and caring, confident and articulate, and always ready to help others. They have a strong moral code and a clear sense of what is right and wrong. They understand the

importance of rules and the consequences of not adhering to rules.

- Pupils usually listen well but can be distracted if they lose focus on the task or become bored because they do not get to their work quickly enough. On the few occasions when behaviour does slip, pupils respond quickly to instructions from staff.
- Pupils who have behavioural difficulties are supported well. The school's procedures for managing pupils' behaviour show a good understanding of how different incidents need to be dealt with, depending on their nature and the needs of individual pupils. Pupils and parents praised the reflection room, where, if necessary, pupils can go with a member of staff to reflect on the consequence of their actions.
- In the playground, pupils play well together. Encouraged by staff, including coaches, they participate wholeheartedly in games, making good use of the sports equipment available to them. They understand the importance of being physically active.
- Attendance is average and there has been a drop in persistent absence and an improvement in punctuality. Registers now close earlier and staff apply register codes rigorously. Therefore, pupils who do turn up late, even though their presence is recorded, cause attendance figures to be lower than they might otherwise be.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Inspection judgements differ from those that might reasonably be concluded from the published test results in 2016. These results were significantly lower than in any previous year for which there is information. Pupils in Year 6 in the last academic year did not make the progress they should have made, given their starting points in Year 3.
- Investigations showed that the sharp drop was the result of a high turnover of staff across the school, including at management level, and a series of temporary, often inexperienced, staff between September 2014 and July 2016. These factors meant that school improvement was significantly compromised.
- Since September 2016, pupils have made rapid gains in reading, writing and mathematics. Their progress, as shown in the school's records and confirmed by the work in pupils' books, is once again good.
- Pupils in Year 6 have been assessed using the test papers from 2016. The results show that standards are already well ahead of where they were at the end of the last school year. This higher standard also typifies pupils' work in other year groups.
- Most pupils, in key stages 1 and 2, enjoy reading. They read with confidence and understanding, though not always with expression. For less-able readers in key stage 1, fluency and understanding are sometimes compromised because the pupils continue to sound out even the words they know and they lose the gist of the story.
- When they come across unfamiliar words, pupils show that they can break the words down, use phonic cues, or cues from pictures or other parts of the text. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their favourite books, some of which they read for pleasure, and some for information. They understand the importance of being able to read well.
- Pupils write well in different styles for different purposes, with an awareness of who their reader might be. They readily use dictionaries and thesauri to find words that will

grab the reader's attention, thus gaining a good range of vocabulary.

- As they tackled different versions of the text of Romeo and Juliet, pupils in Year 6 showed great empathy with the different characters and used figurative language extremely well to voice their thoughts. For example, reflecting on how Romeo felt after having killed Tybalt, they wrote 'How can a person be filled with the deepest joy one day and the greatest despair the next?' and 'My body is full of sorrow and regret, pounding at the soul of my conscience.'
- In mathematics, the increased focus on problem-solving is encouraging deeper thought and reasoning. Pupils readily discuss their work with each other, test out different methods of working, and use a wide range of well-chosen equipment to aid their understanding.
- In mathematics, pupils in Year 4 talked enthusiastically about why a range of statements were true or false, as their understanding of place value was tested to the limit. They worked in a systematic way, explaining their reasoning and demonstrating practically what they were saying.
- Mathematical work is becoming increasingly challenging. In most classes, pupils are now pushed to answer, prove and explain their answers, solve problems and then create problems for others to solve, to test their own understanding.
- Despite all of the above, in both English and mathematics, there is still scope to push the most able pupils further and to help pupils in the upper reaches of the middle-ability band to aim for the top one. These pupils make good progress overall but they are not consistently challenged to take their learning as far as they can.
- The differences are diminishing between disadvantaged pupils in the school and other pupils nationally. In some year groups, for example, Year 6, the differences have all but disappeared. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress given their starting points.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress. Effective leadership and management of this aspect of the school's work ensure that learning is broken down into the smaller steps the pupils need to take to show progress. Staff who work with the pupils are well trained and well briefed and they help the pupils to achieve well.
- Work in the books of pupils who speak English as an additional language shows that they make the same good progress as other pupils.
- Pupils also make good progress in a range of other subjects as they encounter them during topic work. Particular examples were in history, geography and science, and also in the pupils' religious education books, all of which showed that pupils use their literacy and, where relevant, their mathematical skills in different subjects.
- Pupils enjoy the increased range of sports and physical education activities now available to them as a result of the sports funding initiative. They participate wholeheartedly and gain a good understanding of why it is important to take regular exercise and eat healthily.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children start school in the early years with skills, knowledge and understanding below



those typical for their age. Staff work closely with parents, pre-school providers and other schools to ensure that their assessments are accurate at the start, be it in Nursery or in Reception.

- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development, although it varies from year to year, is usually similar to that found nationally. This indicates good progress and prepares children well for their work in Year 1. Children are taught well.
- Written records and the work in children's books show that learning is deeper and understanding greater as children are encouraged to think for themselves. Adults now allow pupils the freedom to take their learning in different directions. Thus, children are developing skills for good learning that will stand them in good stead for later.
- The good range of resources stimulates children's curiosity and deepens their enjoyment of learning. This was evident, for example, as they created a wormery and a bug hotel, and learned about caring for animals in the 'vet's surgery'.
- Good leadership has instilled in the staff an enthusiasm and drive to raise standards further. It has transformed the early years area, indoors and out, this year. Parents recognise the improvement. They commented that there was a greater focus on learning now and praised how quickly their children were learning to read, write and do mathematics.
- Staff understand the learning process and the steps that the children need to take to make progress. Throughout, adults engage well with the children. They are skilled at doing so without taking over or limiting learning, but by asking questions or pointing out additional things that the children might not have noticed.
- The children's personal development, welfare and well-being is of paramount importance. The learning areas are safe and well supervised and children are taught how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Children behave well. They follow established routines, often independently, and respond quickly to instructions.
- The progress of disadvantaged children is tracked closely. Where experiences are lacking, they are addressed through what the school offers – for example, the outside garden. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are also helped to catch up with their learning and make the progress of which they are capable.
- Children develop early reading and writing skills successfully through well-planned phonics sessions and opportunities to read and write within different activities. However, displays do not showcase children's writing enough so that they can learn from each other. There is limited use of technology to help children develop reading, writing and number skills.
- Good teaching of number and other mathematical skills mirrors what is happening in the rest of the school. From the start, staff teach children to explain their answers and deepen their understanding through simple problem-solving.

## School details

Unique reference number	105541
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10024285

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	337
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	James Walsh
Headteacher	Fiona Maguire
Telephone number	0161 432 7635
Website	<a href="http://www.st-bernards.manchester.sch.uk">www.st-bernards.manchester.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@st-bernards.manchester.sch.uk">admin@st-bernards.manchester.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	21–22 March 2012

## Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It has a breakfast club.
- Nursery and Reception children attend full time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The school did not meet the current government floor standards in 2016. These standards set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its

website.

- There has been a high turnover of staff, including at senior management level, since the previous inspection. A new headteacher took up post in September 2014, at which point there was a high proportion of inexperienced or temporary staff, and no senior leadership team.
- Following a successful bid, the school is receiving support from a local teaching alliance.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in most classes. The lead inspector undertook a learning walk with the headteacher.
- Inspectors examined pupils' work and the most recent information about pupils' attainment and progress.
- Inspectors met with pupils, formally and informally, listened to pupils in Years 1 to 6 read and talked with pupils about their reading habits and their understanding of what they read. They took account of the 18 responses to the online pupil questionnaire.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons and around the school, including at play and lunchtimes. The school's records for behaviour and attendance were also scrutinised, along with documentation for safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with leaders, staff, governors, a representative from the local authority and a representative from the diocese. Inspectors also took account of the 21 responses to the online questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors examined records relating to governance, the performance of staff and the provision for special educational needs and/or disabilities. They also scrutinised the school's own evaluation of its performance and its plans for improvement.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they brought their children to school. They also took account of the 15 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, and examined the outcomes of the school's own recent questionnaire for parents.

## Inspection team

Doris Bell, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Adrian Martin	Ofsted Inspector
Sheryl Farnworth	Ofsted Inspector
Gaynor Rennie	Ofsted Inspector

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