

St Benedict's Roman Catholic Primary School, Ampleforth

Back Lane, Ampleforth, York, North Yorkshire YO62 4DE

Inspection dates

29–30 March 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leadership and staffing changes over the last year have contributed to a lack of learning continuity.
- Standards reached in reading, writing and especially mathematics at key stages 1 and 2 have been variable over the last two years.
- Inconsistent teaching quality has slowed down pupil progress.
- Assessment, until very recently, has not been aligned to the new curriculum. New systems for tracking progress are yet to be fully embedded.
- Pupils' written work suffers from frequent spelling errors and variable handwriting. Pupils do not apply grammar and punctuation rules with confidence.
- Tasks in mathematics are not always planned to provide the right level of challenge for different groups of pupils. Misconceptions are not picked up quickly enough.
- Progress for boys in reading and writing does not match that seen nationally.
- Subject leadership and wider curriculum development is at an early stage.

The school has the following strengths

- New leaders have provided strong direction to staff over a short period of time. Good partnership arrangements are pivotal to this school improvement drive.
- Effective provision has been introduced to support those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective.
- Children in the early years are now getting off to a flying start. Highly skilled adults provide a stimulating learning environment in which children are blossoming.
- Well-informed governors work productively with leaders and keep a watchful eye on the life of the school and pupil well-being
- The distinct Catholic ethos contributes strongly to pupils' good personal development.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment at all key stages to raise standards in written work by:
 - leaders setting consistently high expectations and checking frequently on the quality of pupils' written presentation across a range of subjects
 - establishing a rigorous approach to the teaching and application of handwriting
 - identifying key spelling errors of commonly used words at an early stage so pupils avoid repetition in future work
 - ensuring that the application of grammar and punctuation skills builds on secure understanding.
- Accelerate the progress and attainment of pupils in mathematics by:
 - placing a greater emphasis on the building up and rapid recall of key number skills in order to tackle arithmetical tasks more confidently
 - providing sequences of tasks at the right level that challenge all groups, including the most able pupils, to apply reasoning and explain their strategies
 - using assessment information more effectively to identify and address misconceptions quickly.
- Sustain the capacity for continued improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and curriculum design by:
 - building further on newly established teaching and learning partnerships to support new and current staff in developing consistently good practice
 - developing support for subject leadership through increased team and collaborative working.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, changes in leadership, governance and staffing have resulted in a period of instability for the school. New leaders recognised that outcomes and provision for pupils had not remained consistently good and have acted swiftly to ensure that current pupils are making more secure progress.
- The local authority has provided frequent support over a difficult period above and beyond its rigorous school review process. Now that substantive senior leadership is in place and the school is working effectively with partner schools and the North Star and Polaris Teaching Alliances, there is good capacity for further improvement.
- The recently appointed head of school and the new executive headteacher have worked tirelessly to improve teaching, clarify policies and ensure that key school functions are fit for purpose. Some aspects of this work have required difficult decisions in a short timeframe.
- The head of school has introduced new approaches for checking on pupils' progress, based on prudent use of tests and more frequent teacher assessment. This provides a comprehensive overview and analysis of achievement. An accurate view of attainment has allowed leaders and teachers to aim higher in setting demanding pupil targets.
- Leaders have tightened up procedures for appraising the performance of teachers and making pay decisions. Targets are now tied more closely to increased proportions of pupils reaching and exceeding expected standards.
- Leaders challenge and support staff well through a range of monitoring activities and staff value additional guidance from training opportunities and specialist advisers brokered through the rich partnership arrangements. There is a good sense of teamwork.
- The special educational needs coordinator began to work with the school in November 2016 and immediately conducted a thorough audit of need. She quickly established new procedures to identify pupils requiring additional support. Now that these pupils' needs are being addressed, they are starting to catch up in their learning.
- The very few pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding are also now making similarly good progress.
- Subject leaders for English and mathematics now have a clearer understanding of their responsibilities and are consequently starting to have an impact on outcomes. They have gained valuable expertise through work with the local authority.
- Senior leaders acknowledge that further work is now needed to develop leadership strengths in a range of other subjects. Subject leaders and curriculum teams have not yet drawn up a full overview of the long-term curriculum in respect of different subject components.
- There is a wide variety of enriching activities that broaden pupils' learning, such as the Forest School studies, the York pantomime visit or outdoor pursuit experiences.
- The funding for primary school physical education and sport is used extremely well.

Many pupils get the opportunity to participate in competitive sport with other schools, often very successfully. Teachers work alongside an experienced coach so that they increase their own expertise. Sporting achievements by pupils outside school across a variety of disciplines are celebrated widely.

- Leaders and staff promote a culture of respect and tolerance with an emphasis on equal opportunities. Pupil attitudes reflect the strong Christian ethos that runs across the school. The provision for multicultural education is less effective, however, in broadening pupils' understanding about life in modern Britain.
- Leaders use a range of approaches to check on teaching quality, which is improving. Their scrutiny of pupils' workbooks, however, has not pinpointed inconsistencies in written presentation sharply enough.

Governance of the school

- The reconstituted governing body provides good support and is now able to offer greater critical challenge to leaders. This is because governors receive detailed information about the work of the school from senior leaders that enables them to have an accurate understanding of pupil progress.
- Governors work efficiently and strategically because they have established sound procedures in sharing information in a timely way in advance of meetings and because they verify leaders' reports through visits to lessons, formalised meetings with staff and discussions with pupils.
- Governors have liaised with the local authority and Catholic partnership school to secure the services of experienced and proven leaders at a time of staff turbulence. This has helped to provide stability.
- The work of the governing body is carefully distributed through link governors for classes and subjects. Individual governor visits are informed by an agreed focus theme, with findings well documented and reported to the full governing body. The Governor of the Month system ensures that each one plays an active part in school life.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Records of recruitment procedures meet statutory requirements. Induction arrangements are secure and checks are in place through mentorship arrangements.
- Leaders pay due regard to the administration of medicines, emergency evacuation, risk assessments, first aid provision and the maintenance of accident records. Documentation is well maintained and accessible.
- Governors play a keen part in checking on the condition of the school and conduct termly site visits. These are recorded, with programmes of remedial works costed out. Leaders and governors are committed to making improvements, within budget constraints, to the fabric and resources of the school.
- Leaders have provided training on safeguarding matters to all staff and governors. Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at governing body and staff meetings and leaders have ensured that key groups receive frequent updates, thus allowing all staff

to contribute to policy. A governor responsible for safeguarding meets termly with the head of school to maintain an overview of child protection procedures and caseload.

- Leaders are alive to the challenges posed by the use of electronic communication and social media. Through frequent coverage of safety issues in the curriculum, pupils are also safety-alert, especially regarding e-safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is inconsistent across different classes and in different subjects. Some inconsistency stems from staffing turbulence in the previous year. Although new curriculum demands are now being more fully met, teaching over time has been variable and, as a result, pupils' progress is uneven.
- Teachers do not always check sharply on pupils' understanding before moving on to the next topic and occasionally do not check on pupils' corrections of errors. This leaves pupils unclear about their learning, for example when simplifying fractions or when applying more advanced forms of punctuation.
- In mathematics, some activities are not pitched carefully enough for different groups. Work may be overly repetitive or too hard for the least able. Although there is a choice of starred challenges, exercises for most-able pupils sometimes lack complexity. Pupils' insecure recall of number facts slows progress in arithmetic and problem solving.
- Some teaching uses practical experience effectively to shape pupils' understanding, for example as seen in Year 1/2 when pupils folded and cut strips of paper to calculate halves and quarters of a metre. One most-able pupil subsequently reflected on the experience to explain the idea of halving 100 and then again to find 25 centimetres.
- Teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils to write across a range of subjects, especially in history and science, and for different purposes. The content of pupils' writing is often lively with varied vocabulary but some, including the most able pupils, struggle to write in sentences or punctuate them accurately.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' written presentation are not high enough. There are frequent basic errors in spelling for all groups of pupils. This is partly because pupils' understanding of spelling rules is weak, but also because teachers do not identify or prioritise common word misspellings rigorously enough, and so errors are repeated.
- Handwriting guidance across the school lacks a coherent approach. Some pupils, especially boys, struggle with correct letter size or joins so that their writing lacks consistency. Teachers rarely model correct formation in books and poor writing habits, such as weak pen grip or poor posture, have evolved unchecked for some pupils.
- The teaching of phonics has been reorganised to meet the needs of different ages and aptitudes of pupils. Younger pupils receive good support in the reading process and weaker readers are keen to show how well they can sound out unfamiliar words.
- Teachers ensure that the older pupils are challenged in their reading through a range of different and thought-provoking text types that deepen comprehension skills. However, reading activities occasionally lack purpose and this means that the use of learning time is not maximised.

- Teachers set homework weekly to help pupils consolidate key skills and pupils are conscientious in completing this. Some homework covers a range of subjects and pupils are able to choose how to complete it, as seen in the varied reports produced by Year 1/2 pupils studying a science topic on materials.
- Positive learning attitudes are evident across the school and pupils say this is because lessons are enjoyable. Teachers try to capture pupils' imagination, as in Year 3/4 when the teacher used a model volcano to demonstrate a lava eruption as a stimulus for descriptive writing.
- Teaching assistants provide good additional support, working unobtrusively under the direction of the teacher. They know the pupils well, encourage them to focus attention, and draw out their understanding, as seen in Year 5/6 where the teaching assistant, through skilful questioning, deepened pupils' understanding of a poem.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils like to take on responsibilities, such as acting as school or sports councillors and fulfilling chaplaincy duties. They proudly explained to the inspector that they had organised a school talent show and chill-out day in aid of charity.
- The Christian ethos of the school is woven through many aspects of school life and encourages pupils to display caring and respectful attitudes. Pupils look after each other well and older pupils look out for the younger children's well-being.
- Pupils enjoy taking part in the spiritual life of the school and community. Older pupils have the opportunity to take part in a pilgrimage to nearby Ampleforth Abbey and two pupils volunteered to act as altar servers in the church for a funeral, later recounting their experiences with great empathy. Singing in assembly is enthusiastic and vibrant.
- Pupils' experiences are extended through a variety of special events or club activities, such as the Shakespeare Macbeth 'play in a day' or the popular journalism group.
- Pupils are friendly and courteous and get along well with each other. They say there is rarely any bullying and they feel safe at school, trusting the adults to look after them well.
- Pupils show a good understanding of potential dangers posed by electronic communication and social media. They also recall the safety messages from visitors such as the NSPCC, who came to talk to them about Childline.
- Pupils are aware of the importance of good diet and know that too much sugar or fat intake can be harmful. They understand the reasons behind the new school policy on healthy snacks and explain that we all need to exercise regularly.
- A good range of sporting competitions and opportunities develops pupils' interests and promotes independence. Staff and coaches emphasise the need for positive attitudes when participating and one Year 6 pupil said, 'Even if someone isn't good at running and comes in last, we still cheer them on.'

- Pupils enjoy learning, especially drama activities as part of religious education lessons. They are pleased that teachers have listened and responded to their ideas on what makes the best learning experiences. Sometimes, however, a lack of clarity and guidance from adults means that pupils do not take sufficient pride in their written work.
- Pupils are unsure when talking about other faiths and cultures represented in modern Britain, sometimes confusing these with historical periods or modern languages. While pupils do display positive attitudes, they do not explicitly link British values to school values.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils move around school calmly, remembering to step aside for adults and greet visitors politely. In the dining hall they say that there are some occasional high spirits but this is quickly dealt with.
- Leaders and pupils say that behaviour had become variable but is now much improved as a result of consistent approaches, which pupils acknowledge as fair. 'If someone is misbehaving, a short period of reflection usually sorts it out,' one Year 6 pupil said.
- In lessons, pupils generally have a strong work ethic and settle down quickly when moving from one activity to another. There is a little off-task behaviour in lessons where teaching is not fully engaging but this is rare. Pupils who find concentration difficult are supported well by teaching assistants.
- At playtimes, pupils are active and play good-naturedly with their friends. There are appropriate levels of supervision, well-established routines and positive relationships maintained between pupils and staff. Occasionally, however, a small minority of pupils show a lack of consideration when lining up or on returning to class for lessons.
- Attendance is in line with the national average and is monitored closely by staff. Pupils like coming to school, respect their teachers and say they enjoy learning. There is no persistent absence and no groups of pupils display poor attendance habits.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- As a result of inconsistent teaching across the school, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics across key stages 1 and 2 has been unsteady, particularly in 2016. Assessment for current pupils, however, shows a significant increase in the proportions of pupils in all cohorts who are reaching standards expected of their age.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the phonics screening standard dropped in 2015 to below the national average but was well above in 2016, with every pupil being successful. Teachers have increased the frequency of phonics tuition and current projections suggest that a high number of pupils will also meet the standard this year.
- At key stage 1 in 2015 and 2016, from typical starting points, the proportions of pupils reaching expected standards in writing and mathematics were below the national averages. In 2016, reading outcomes reflected national averages, having been well below in 2015.

- At key stage 2 in 2015, standards in writing and mathematics were below national averages but similar in reading. In 2016, progress rates and standards for reading, writing, mathematics, and grammar and punctuation were well below those seen nationally. The performance of boys was particularly poor.
- In 2016, there were no pupils at key stage 2 who exceeded expected standards for the combined subjects of reading, writing and mathematics. This is because outcomes in mathematics were so low. In reading, however, proportions reaching the higher standard were above those seen nationally.
- Scrutiny of workbooks shows that, while pupils are completing a considerable amount of written work, progress is hindered by variable presentation and because teaching does not always build upon prior learning systematically.
- The most able pupils read with confidence, fluency and expression. They have a good understanding of vocabulary and talk about their favourite authors. Some boys feel that the range of books in the school library has a limited appeal; leaders have listened to their requests and have agreed to address this issue.
- The progress of current pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities shows that they are starting to catch up quickly as a result of better analysis of progress and more focused support.
- Older pupils display a strong commitment towards learning. They like to engage in school life and show positive attitudes that are likely to support their learning and development when they move on to their next schools.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision is good because teaching is now consistently good and children thrive in their development, enjoying their learning in a secure, stimulating and nurturing environment.
- The early years leader provides strong direction to colleagues, relates very well to parents and knows the children well. Her expertise has been crucial in bringing about the recent rapid improvement in provision.
- Effective transition arrangements are in place to include home visits, visits to Nursery settings and a taster week to pave the way for a smooth entry into school. Children settle well into routines and parents have confidence in the early years leadership.
- Children join the Reception class with abilities that are broadly typical. Their learning advances securely so that proportions reaching a good level of development have been consistently above average for the last three years. The current focus is to go further by increasing the proportions of children who achieve beyond expected standards.
- The very few children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make comparable progress to other children because staff support their needs well. Staff make good use of help from external agencies for any children who have health problems.
- Areas of learning are very well supported indoors and outside, with excellent use being made of natural objects to capture children's curiosity. Activities in key skills and

creative areas link in well to themes, such as the 'Jack and the Beanstalk' tale.

- Adults plan learning through purposeful activities that inspire and excite children. 'Come and look! There's been a giant!' exclaimed one of the children, leading the inspector to some huge footprints, which the teacher was helping children to measure. Children quickly latched on to the idea and soon were measuring and comparing all sorts of objects, with the teacher extending their mathematical vocabulary opportunely.
- Children work and play harmoniously in a kind and caring manner. Activities are designed to engage boys and girls equally and they interact positively together, sustaining their interest. This allows focused sessions on number and phonics with small groups to proceed without interruption.
- In these sessions, the teacher provides different levels of challenge in tasks, such as the number apparatus work in addition to find various ways to make 12. She did not allow one boy to avoid a harder activity, encouraging him to have a go, which he did successfully.
- Effective phonics teaching is later backed up through play activity choices, as seen when the experienced teaching assistant sensitively supported a boy in writing the word 'beans' correctly, helping him break it up into the different sounds.
- Staff adjust learning very skilfully in response to children's reactions and developing interests. Assessment is thorough and accurate, with children's work recorded through an electronic system. Parents are able to contribute to this and are very pleased at the way they can share their children's achievements.
- Welfare requirements and safeguarding arrangements are robust. Clear procedures for first aid and medicine administration are in place and the setting is secure and tidy.

School details

Unique reference number	121650
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10024023

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	82
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Una Stewart
Headteacher	Emma Barrs
Telephone number	01439 788340
Website	www.st-benedicts.n-yorks.sch.uk/
Email address	headteacher@st-benedicts.n-yorks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 November 2012

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. There are four classes, three of which are mixed-age classes.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language has increased to approximately 10% in recent years owing to a number of Eastern European pupils joining the school.
- The proportion of current pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. There are too few disadvantaged pupils to be able to comment on the progress of this group without risking identifying individual pupils.
- There are fewer girls than boys in the school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly higher than the national average. There are no pupils with a statement of

special educational needs, or education, health and care plans.

- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been significant changes in staffing and leadership since the time of the previous inspection. The headteacher left in February 2016 and governors secured an interim acting head of school and appointed an executive headteacher, a national leader of education, to oversee the headship. A substantive head of school was appointed in September 2016.
- The governing body was reconstituted in 2015 and since then there have been two changes of chair. The current chair is acting on a seconded arrangement from the Catholic school partnership while training is completed for a governor to take on the role.
- Three teachers left the school during the last year and their positions are currently being covered on a temporary basis pending recruitment for September 2017. One of these teachers, based in the early years, is a specialist leader of education and a leading teacher for the local authority. She will continue to support the school in the next academic year.
- As one of the teachers who left the school was the special educational needs leader, an experienced special educational needs coordinator from the Catholic partnership school, St Mary's School in Malton, is covering this role. This arrangement is also set to continue.
- The school accesses valuable support and training through the North Star and Polaris Teaching Alliance and the Diocese of Middlesbrough.
- In addition, the local authority has provided frequent and flexible support to the school outside its routine review process.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about details of the school curriculum by subject and year group.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 9 lessons or part-lessons across all classes to assess teaching and learning. The head of school and lead inspector viewed all lessons jointly.
- The inspector listened to some pupils reading from Years 2, 3, 5 and 6.
- The inspector sampled work from all year groups in English and mathematics.
- The inspector conducted meetings with the executive headteacher, head of school, middle leaders, subject leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector analysed information from a scrutiny of school documentation. This included published data about pupils' progress and attainment, previous inspection reports, external reports by the local authority and the school's latest assessment information.
- The inspector viewed the school's own evaluative judgements, information about the performance of current pupils, curriculum enrichment records and school monitoring information. He also looked at governing body minutes and safeguarding documentation.
- The inspector took the views of parents into account through informal discussions with parents at the start of the school day and by analysing responses from the 41 parents who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector took the views of pupils into account through a planned meeting with pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. He also viewed the results from the online pupil survey to which 16 pupils had responded. He met groups of pupils informally at playtime and lunchtime.
- The inspector took the views of staff into account by analysing responses from the online survey. The school had obtained responses from six staff.

Inspection team

James Reid, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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