

Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School

Boadicea Street, Kings Cross, London N1 0UF

Inspection dates

16–17 October 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders have established effective systems to raise standards after a decline since the previous inspection. This improvement is most evident in mathematics.
- Pupils in all year groups are making good progress. Leaders have made very effective use of their monitoring of standards to target support where individuals may be falling behind.
- Governors are proud of the school. However, they have not had the information they need about the challenges facing the school to enable them to play a fully effective role in its development.
- Teaching has not only focused on improving pupils' skills in writing and mathematics but also on the wider curriculum, including physical education (PE) and music. However, there is more work to do to ensure that the teaching of reading in key stage 2 is equally effective.
- Pupils' attendance has improved, reflecting the importance placed on it by leaders and staff. It is now broadly average.
- Teachers know the pupils very well. Teaching is good overall. Pupils find learning exciting because it captures their interests.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are doing well because care is taken to plan work that meets their individual needs.
- Pupils show respect, tolerance and kindness towards others. They are well behaved and are willing to work hard. Leaders have ensured that pupils are very well cared for and make well-considered provision for their personal development.
- Children in the early years make good progress from their starting points. Good provision in the Reception and Nursery classes means that children make rapid progress and are well prepared for Year 1.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable governors to hold leaders to account more accurately by developing the quality of improvement planning so that the school's priorities are clear.
- Improve the effectiveness of the teaching of reading in key stage 2 by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' reading comprehension
 - ensuring that both lower-attaining pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are targeted accurately
 - increasing the frequency of opportunities to read demanding texts across a range of subjects, including the humanities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders lead the school with care and sensitivity. Their vision is to improve teaching and create memorable learning experiences for pupils. This is proving successful, particularly in mathematics.
- Senior leaders have created a clear set of school values which inform the school's Catholic ethos and are understood by pupils. The headteacher and deputy headteacher make an effective leadership team which is well supported by a capable governing body. Together, they have maintained a consistent focus on improving the quality of learning and pupils' progress.
- Although leaders have a clear view of the school's strengths, development planning has lacked clarity. Consequently, the school's priorities have not been clear, and leaders have not been held to account by governors on some aspects of the school's work that needed improvement, including progress in reading by the end of key stage 2.
- The impact of leaders' work is shown by improvements in the teaching of mathematics. Leaders recognised that standards needed to rise rapidly as the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the national tests remained below average in 2017. Changes were made to the teaching of mathematics and standards are now rising rapidly. Children in the early years make a good start to their numeracy skills, which is built upon in key stage 1.
- Middle leaders are similarly ambitious for the school. They are enthusiastic about their work and can link the actions they take to improved outcomes for pupils. For example, the successful development of innovative mathematics teaching has led to increased expertise and, in turn, to significant improvements in pupils' progress in key stage 2.
- The school's new assessment system is intended to enable senior leaders to hold teachers to account for the progress pupils make in their classes. This system is now starting to provide useful information that can be analysed to identify any underachievement of groups of pupils. The headteacher is keen to develop this further so that teachers can make use of the analysis in planning work for pupils.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding well to support disadvantaged pupils, using a range of strategies. For example, leaders have been very quick to address the drop in reading standards of these pupils in the 2017 end-of-key-stage assessments. Support in lessons is augmented with more intensive intervention where needed and high-quality resources. Additionally, the funding is used for pupils' personal development by providing access to extra-curricular activities. Because of these strategies, disadvantaged pupils now generally make the same progress as other pupils nationally.
- The primary PE and sport premium enables the school to provide specialist teaching. Pupils benefit from a good range of clubs and opportunities and take part in sporting events.
- The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is helping pupils gain a thorough understanding of life in modern Britain. The school's deeply held values place mutual respect at its core, which contributes to the Catholic ethos of school life.

- The curriculum at Blessed Sacrament is broad and diverse. There is a focus on developing pupils' key literacy and numeracy skills, but pupils also enjoy studying subjects such as PE and music. These are developed through an active approach which pupils find interesting, particularly when they can choose for themselves when to tackle the learning challenges given to them.
- The school has received very useful support from Islington local authority. The authority has a good understanding of the school and has provided advice and consultancy to support leaders' strategies. This included providing a detailed review of school performance and support for the teaching of reading; after identifying this as a current issue, training for teachers and challenging school leaders has had a positive impact.

Governance of the school

- Governors are thorough in carrying out their duties. They pay frequent visits to the school and consequently know the school well. They have acted conscientiously to enable the school to develop its vision of a caring school community with a strong Catholic identity.
- However, the governing body has not, until recently, acted as a driving force in school improvement. In recent years, governors have not focused directly on the main challenges facing the school, in part because of weaknesses in the school's development planning.
- Governors' committees provide a focus on pupils' progress and deployment of resources. Many of the governors have a long association with the school and rightly value its place in the community. They are keen to promote the school further so that it is fully recognised for the good work which takes place there.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders have ensured that all members of staff are trained in child protection procedures. The school's policies and practice are thorough. A strong culture of safety exists in the school. Key staff engage with parents, carers and other stakeholders to ensure that all pupils are supported and safe.
- Pupils are very confident that the school is a safe place; parents and staff at the school who responded to Ofsted's surveys or spoke with an inspector agree with this view. Governors are thorough in their checking of safeguarding procedures and place the safety of pupils uppermost in their work. School leaders work very effectively with external agencies, such as social services, to ensure that when concerns are raised, they are always followed up quickly and with due care. Key staff have ensured that safer recruitment training and practice are up to date.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good and ensures that all groups of pupils do well. Mostly, teaching is characterised by effective use of time and high expectations of the quality of work that pupils produce.

- The school has successfully improved the way teachers assess pupils' work. Teachers give useful feedback during lessons, which pupils can act upon immediately and so improve their work. The assessment information is also used well to identify which pupils need additional support or further challenge.
- Teaching is usually effective in making lessons challenging and interesting for all pupils. For example, in an English lesson in key stage 2, pupils responded very well to the teacher's use of extended questioning to think deeply about using examples of personification in their writing.
- However, some teaching of reading fails to challenge pupils, reflecting expectations that are too low. As a result, overall, pupils are not making the progress in reading of which they are capable, in both English lessons and other subjects. This is partly because they are not given demanding texts to read, particularly in history and geography.
- Teaching staff have very strong relationships with the pupils. They work well with the additional adults who support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Pupils know that the staff want them to do well. In turn, this has developed pupils' positive attitudes towards learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Leaders have ensured that the welfare and care of pupils are at the heart of the school community. Pupils work and play together harmoniously because they are taught to show tolerance of diversity and awareness of how to be successful learners. Through a strong curriculum, the school is developing their awareness of different faiths, ethnic backgrounds and cultures, and of people with protected characteristics. This is helping pupils to have a better understanding of life in modern Britain.
- Positive messages about how to tackle and respond to bullying have been helpful to pupils. They are particularly knowledgeable about how to keep safe while working on the internet. Pupils say that bullying does not take place at the school, though were it to occur, they know the systems that exist are robust and easily accessible. The school's records of behaviour incidents demonstrated this to be the case over time.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders have instilled a sense of community in the school. This is evident in how the pupils care for one another. They are taught how to show respect for each other, even if they hold very different beliefs or points of view.
- The school communicates well with parents, who are positive about the school's work. One parent's comment, typical of others, shows how parents value the work of the staff, saying, 'This is a fantastic school. My children are doing very well, and they love going to school every day.' Parents also told inspectors that they appreciate the care taken by senior staff to ensure that their children are well cared for.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Current pupils are making very good progress in mathematics and writing. This is reflected in the school's assessments of their progress over time, in their books and in their learning in lessons. This is the result of consistently good teaching over time. Although there are indications of improving progress in reading, progress remains slower than in writing and mathematics, and pupils' attainment in reading remains below average.
- In 2017, the proportion of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected standards in the phonics screening check matched the national average. They clearly enjoy reading, and senior leaders have ensured that a wide variety of good-quality reading materials are available to them.
- In 2017, the proportions of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected standard in writing and mathematics were average, but below average in reading. The proportions attaining the higher standard in reading and mathematics were below average. The headteacher recognises that more should be expected of pupils in reading, and is already putting in place strategies that aim to redress this shortfall.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress in writing and mathematics. Leaders are tracking their progress more closely, and differences in progress and attainment between these and other pupils have been eradicated. Leaders are committed to maintaining this improvement by targeting additional support where it is most needed. Disadvantaged pupils, as others, make slower progress in reading, and their attainment in reading remains below average.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making better progress than in the past. Their needs are now becoming better identified, and they are given precise support by teachers and support staff. However, this is not yet as well established in reading as it is in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils are generally well prepared for the next stage of their education when they leave the school at the end of Year 6. This is because of the good foundation they receive at Blessed Sacrament School. Pupils are confident and positive about their future because they have learned to be successful.

Early years provision

Good

- Staff plan carefully to ensure that children learn well and make substantial progress from their starting points. As a result, children's levels of development have been maintained since the previous inspection and are close to those seen nationally.
- Teachers in the Reception and Nursery classes create a welcoming learning environment which interests children in activities that they find enjoyable. Very skilful teaching ensures that children get plenty of experiences in learning how to read and write.
- Teaching assistants work well to support children in their learning. Children are excited by the topics that they study. They settle swiftly to work and are very well behaved and respectful towards one another.

- Classrooms are well resourced and staffed so that children can learn independently or with adults, as they choose. The adults place themselves carefully, so that they are always the focus of any of the main teaching activities taking place. Children are enthusiastic and work well together, enjoying the activities which take place both indoors and outside.
- This strength of provision is typified in the Reception class, where teachers work hard to create wonderful opportunities for children to learn outside. Across all classes, children are very well cared for and their well-being is of paramount importance. This year, a small number of two-year-old children are now included in the Nursery class. The needs of these children are well met, and they are happy to play alongside their older peers.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has worked successfully to raise disadvantaged children's achievement. They are now doing as well as their peers.
- Children develop very positive attitudes to school life in the early years and are well prepared for moving into Year 1. Children in the Reception class are already showing increased skill in writing and all children clearly enjoy their experiences while at the school.
- The school is developing effective partnership working with parents, who give the school valuable information about their children as they begin life in school. Parents are clearly valued in these first steps and contribute to the assessments made of progress throughout this key stage.

School details

Unique reference number	100451
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10058919

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Smith
Headteacher	Norah Flatley
Telephone number	0207 278 2187
Website	www.blessedsacrament-islington.co.uk/
Email address	jackie.payne@blessedsacrament.islington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 October 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average. The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils being supported for their special educational needs is very high.
- The school is a Catholic voluntary-aided school in the Diocese of Westminster. Its last diocese inspection (section 48) took place in 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in samples of lessons in all year groups, several of which were visited jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- The inspection team heard some pupils read in several year groups as they worked and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's improvement plan and records of pupils' behaviour, safety, safeguarding and attendance. They also scrutinised assessment information of individual pupils and records of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors met with teachers and spoke with pupils. A meeting was held with three members of the governing body. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority. Several meetings were also held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- The views of parents were obtained through 37 responses to the online Ofsted Parent View survey, as well as informal discussions which were held with parents on the first day of the inspection.

Inspection team

Tim McLoughlin, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jayne Jardine

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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