

Inspection of St Bernard's Roman Catholic Primary School

Sherbourne Road, Ellesmere Port, Merseyside CH65 5EW

Inspection dates: 25–26 February 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy school where pupils' learning often extends beyond the classroom and beyond the school day. There is a real sense of community in the school. Pupils have good relationships with their friends and the adults who teach them. They behave well and do their best to live up to the high expectations that staff have of them.

Educational trips and residential visits underpin the school's exciting curriculum. Leaders and staff also provide a wide range of after-school activities to support pupils' development. This inspires pupils to develop positive attitudes and become successful learners. Pupils are encouraged to be proud of their achievements and ambitious for their futures.

Pupils learn about the importance of equality and justice. They learn about cultures and beliefs that are different from their own. They learn to see difference as a positive aspect of their lives.

The pupils who spoke to us said that they feel safe in school. Staff take good care of pupils and do all that they can to support their well-being. Pupils said that bullying rarely happens. They trust staff and said that problems are sorted out quickly. One pupil said, 'We can tell our teacher anything.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, including governors, are ambitious for all pupils. They have developed a curriculum that is well structured and imaginative and supports pupils' learning across all subjects. The curriculum inspires pupils to learn and to develop a love of learning. Teachers ensure that pupils of all abilities achieve well. This includes those pupils who are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Mathematics is a strength. The structure of the curriculum helps pupils to develop a secure understanding of what they are learning before moving on to new topics. As a result, pupils learn more and remember more in mathematics as they move through the school. They achieve well in this subject at the end of Year 6.

Leaders have worked successfully with staff to improve the reading curriculum. Published data shows that pupils are now making better progress in reading across key stage 2. They attain well by the end of Year 6. However, there are still too many pupils who fail to reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Some of the pupils who struggle with their early reading do not get the support that they require to catch up quickly with their peers. These pupils also need more guidance on the books that they choose to read for pleasure.

Leaders have organised the history curriculum so that pupils not only study past events but also consider the impact that these events have on our lives today. Pupils in Year 6 had a good understanding of significant events from the past. For example, they understood how the Second World War began and ended. They also understood how war is impacting on people and communities today. Leaders have also developed a science curriculum that supports pupils' learning effectively. Pupils regularly use practical work and scientific enquiry to test their increasing scientific knowledge. However, when recording their learning in science and history, many pupils do not apply their writing skills well enough.

The early years curriculum is well organised and matched to children's needs. Children behave well and enjoy the challenges that are set for them each day. They enjoy talking about their learning. They develop a love of books and stories. They also develop a good understanding of number.

Leaders support pupils' personal development exceptionally well. Every pupil is equally valued as a member of the school community. They behave well and value the friendships that they make in school. Staff support pupils in developing confidence and resilience. They teach pupils about the importance of keeping physically and mentally fit. Pupils also learn about environmental issues and the importance of becoming a good citizen. However, overall attendance has been below the national average over recent years and too many pupils are persistently absent from school. This has a negative impact on their achievement.

There are many activities for pupils to get involved in outside of lessons. Pupils regularly take part in drama productions and musical events. Older pupils have recently worked with a local theatre company to create a play about the plight of refugees. Pupils also enjoy residential visits where they are given experiences such as canoeing and rock climbing.

Teachers are extremely well supported by leaders. They have regular access to training and are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. The members of staff we met said that they enjoy working at this school. They said that they feel valued and that senior leaders are mindful of their workload and their well-being.

Governors are well informed about the school. They ensure that the school is well led and managed and they provide a good balance of support and challenge for senior leaders.

Parents and carers hold the school in high regard. They are extremely positive about the school's leadership team and the support that staff provide for pupils.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is given the highest priority at this school. Staff are vigilant.

Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are made on all adults who work at the school. Staff are well trained in safeguarding matters. They know what to do if they

have any concerns about a pupil's safety or welfare. Leaders have developed an excellent working relationship with parents. Leaders work well with other professionals, where necessary, to ensure that pupils and their families are given the support that they need. Leaders also ensure that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some of the pupils who struggle to develop their phonics knowledge find it difficult to catch up with their peers. This impacts on their current and future learning in English and other subjects. Staff need to ensure that they adapt the reading curriculum plans more effectively to meet the varied needs of pupils. They also need to better support pupils in choosing the books that they read for pleasure.
- Pupils' attendance has been well below the national average over recent years and too many pupils are persistently absent from school. This means that many pupils are not learning as well as they should. Leaders need to work closely with parents to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	140896
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10122183
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bernadette Letissier
Headteacher	Stephen Jevons (head of school) Andrew Moor (executive principal)
Website	www.stbernardsrc.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Bernard's Roman Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy school on 1 June 2014. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- In July 2017, the school was inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate the quality of religious education and the Catholic nature of the school.
- St Bernard's was designated a teaching school in September 2014.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- During this inspection, we met with four governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body.

- We met with several members of the leadership team, including the principal, the head of school, the assistant headteacher, subject leaders, the early years leader and the teacher who coordinates support for pupils with SEND.
- We did deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, science and history. Our inspection activity included: an evaluation of curriculum planning; visits to lessons with leaders; scrutiny of pupils' work; listening to pupils read; discussions with subject leaders, teachers and teaching assistants; and discussions with pupils about their learning.
- We looked at the school's safeguarding records and the checks that leaders make on staff prior to them starting work at the school. We discussed safeguarding and behaviour when meeting with pupils, teachers and other members of staff.
- We observed pupils' behaviour during lunchtimes and lessons. We spoke to pupils about reading and their views on behaviour and bullying.
- We took account of the 34 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

Paul Tomkow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Collette Mather

Ofsted Inspector

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