

Inspection of St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Tile Barn Close, Cove, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 8LS

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 September 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that it is fun to be at this school. Pupils enjoy learning, especially in English and science. One pupil said he likes it when the work is hard, 'because I like to challenge myself'. However, despite some improvements, the curriculum that pupils learn is not always well organised or challenging enough.

Pupils typically behave very well around the school and in classrooms. Playtimes are noticeably happy and friendly occasions, as pupils from different backgrounds, ethnicities and faiths enjoy each other's company. Bullying is rare. Pupils know that adults will help them if there is any unkindness or if they are worried about anything. This helps pupils to feel safe in school.

Adults make sure that pupils get lots of opportunities to experience and learn about the world in which they live. Pupils like it when their parents come and talk in assembly about the jobs they do. They enjoyed a recent 'virtual science museum experience' and are excited by the prospect of a forthcoming trip to a living rainforest.

Parents and carers appreciate the nurturing and welcoming ethos in the school. Several praised leaders and staff for their hard work and dedication during the pandemic.

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

Leaders, governors and staff want the best for pupils. They have worked together to make some important improvements to St Bernadette's since the previous inspection. New policies and practices mean that the school is more organised. Governors are better trained. Classrooms are typically calmer, more purposeful places. The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are better identified and understood. Staff feel well supported by leaders. All this has helped to create a positive environment in which pupils are ready and eager to learn.

Pupils' reading is not as well developed as it should be. In Years 1 and 2, decisions about how to organise phonics and reading are being ironed out. Identification of what pupils know and can do has improved. There is support for pupils who need to catch up. However, some staff are not clear about how to help pupils read accurately and fluently. There are not enough books that closely match the sounds that pupils are learning. Some of the books that pupils use to learn to read are too hard for them. Daily story time does not always happen.

Leaders have made some useful changes to the curriculum to address previous weaknesses. The national curriculum is now broadly covered. Some subjects and topics are now structured so that they help pupils build up knowledge step by step. This is particularly the case in music and in early years, which are real strengths in the school.

However, in some subjects, leaders have not thought carefully enough about what they want pupils to learn throughout their whole time in school. It is not always clear to teachers what knowledge they need to teach, and in what order. Expectations of what pupils can achieve have been raised, but are not high enough in some subjects. As a result, there are gaps in what pupils know. Some pupils' misconceptions have not been identified and addressed.

Helpful training has improved teachers' knowledge and skills in certain subjects. This has helped teachers to improve how they identify and help pupils who need to catch up in English and mathematics. However, some staff lack knowledge in other subjects.

The challenges presented by the pandemic have meant that senior leaders have not provided as much training for subject leaders as they would have liked. Some leaders are not clear about how to plan a curriculum. Others are inexperienced in monitoring their colleagues' work. Consequently, leaders do not have a clear enough picture of where there are holes in the curriculum. They do not always know whether what has been planned for pupils to learn is being learned.

In early years, the calm, caring environment ensures that children settle quickly. Staff expertly build children's knowledge and skills across all the areas of learning. Children's introduction to reading is a positive experience. Children are introduced to a wide range of language and stories. The phonics programme is clearly structured and followed. Consequently, children are well prepared to enter Year 1.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are well trained in safeguarding. Consequently, they know the signs that might indicate a pupil is at risk of harm. Adults report any concerns promptly. Leaders consult with external safeguarding partners and other agencies to secure extra help for pupils who need it. Teachers make sure that pupils are educated about how to stay safe, including when online. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are confident to tell an adult if they have any concerns. Leaders check staff's suitability to work with children before they start to work at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in key stage 1 and key stage 2 is not fully developed. This is because some subject leaders do not know how to plan a coherent and well-sequenced curriculum effectively. Senior leaders and governors need to make sure that subject leaders receive appropriate training to ensure that curriculum plans identify clearly what pupils need to know in each subject across a pupil's time in school.

- Some staff do not have the subject knowledge they need to teach all the areas of the curriculum. This has an impact on how well pupils achieve. Leaders should ensure that staff are trained so that they have the knowledge they need to plan and teach all subjects effectively.
- Leaders at all levels have not checked carefully enough that their vision for the curriculum is fully realised. Consequently, some parts of the curriculum are not taught in a logical order. Expectations of what pupils should know, understand and be able to do are not consistently challenging enough. Leaders need to review their monitoring of the curriculum so that they are assured that the full curriculum is being delivered as they intend. This will help to ensure that pupils know more and remember more and are therefore better prepared for their next stage of education.
- Phonics is not well enough organised at key stage 1. Not enough thought has gone into how to structure phonics groups. Some staff are not clear about the strategies that help pupils to apply their phonics when reading. Sometimes the books that pupils use to learn to read are too hard for them. There are not enough books that closely match the sounds that pupils are learning. Leaders need to act quickly to ensure that phonics provision is better organised, resourced and delivered, so that all pupils gain the knowledge that they need to become fluent, speedy readers by the end of key stage 1.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	116391
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10200879
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	276
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gerard Owens
Headteacher	Paula Dix
Website	www.st-bernadettes.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 and 21 February 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Several new staff have joined the school since the previous inspection. This includes a new head of school, who took up his role in September 2019.
- In January 2021, the school federated with another local Catholic primary school. At this time, governance was reconstituted so that one governing body now oversees both schools.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school has a breakfast club and an after-school club operating on the site. This provision is managed by the school.
- A section 48 inspection to evaluate the distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School as a Catholic school took place in November 2016. The school's next section 48 inspection is due in November 2021.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of school and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. She also held discussions with a representative from the local authority and a representative from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics, history, personal, social and health education (PSHE), and music. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also visited lessons in the deep-dive subjects that were being taught during the inspection. In addition to the deep dives, inspectors spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- Documents relating to safeguarding were checked, including the checks that leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children. Inspectors met with leaders and spoke with staff about safeguarding. They checked that child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented effectively across the school.
- An inspector spoke to parents before school. Inspectors considered the 45 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and associated free-text responses.
- Inspectors considered the 24 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff. Inspectors met with several teachers and staff during the inspection.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation provided by the school, including the school's self-evaluation, school development plan, school policies, curriculum documents, and records relating to SEND, governance, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Liz McIntosh	Ofsted Inspector
Mary McCarthy	Ofsted Inspector

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