

Inspection of a good school: St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Preston Road, Withdean, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 6UT

Inspection dates:

9 and 10 November 2021

Outcome

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy. They feel known, valued and safe. Pupils repeatedly explained how they value the way staff smile when they come into a room or pass them in the corridor. All parents and carers who completed the Ofsted Parent View survey felt their children were happy and safe at school. Pupils are confident that if they do have any worries, or need help with their work, adults will help.

Pupils behave well. They strive to model the school's values. For example, a pupil explained how an experience of rebuilding a clay sculpture after it had collapsed was an opportunity to show resilience. On the playground and around the school pupils are kind to each other. They take pleasure in working together in pairs or groups, or in offering each other a helping hand. This culture of kindness means that any bullying is rare, and quickly dealt with.

Expectations are high and pupils rise to these. They take pride in their work and wider achievements. The school values its place in the community. In addition to the many links with the church, pupils take part in local projects and exhibitions. This develops a strong sense of belonging for pupils.

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

In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, the school has been through a period of significant turbulence and change. Much of the senior and subject leadership team are new to their posts, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Senior leaders have wisely worked closely with the local authority and diocese to ensure that everyone has had the support that they need, and that the right strategic changes have been made, to ensure a continuing good-quality education for pupils. It is early days for some of the new policies and systems which have started well but have not been in place long enough for leaders to fully evaluate their impact.

Staff feel supported by leaders. They said that their workload is considered and well managed. For example, leaders are delivering the early morning pupil catch-up sessions. Governors keep a weather eye on staff well-being.

Leaders have devised an ambitious and high-quality curriculum. Staff have been supported in the implementation of this curriculum by well-sequenced plans and appropriate training. Clear progression can be seen in lessons and pupils' workbooks. Pupils build confidently on their secure knowledge across the curriculum. They attain well.

Reading is at the centre of the curriculum and has a high profile around the school. It is not unusual to see pupils choosing to read at playtimes. All staff have been trained in the new approach to the teaching of phonics. Teaching of phonics is regular and consistent. This helps pupils learn to read quickly and confidently. Right from the start in Reception Year, children enthusiastically and confidently explore letter sounds and patterns. As pupils move through the school, they regularly practise their skills using books that are carefully matched to their needs. Those pupils who need a little extra help, or start to fall behind, are quickly identified and given the help they need to catch up quickly.

Children get off to a similarly secure start to their mathematics in Reception Year. They explore numbers and the ways to group and represent them through games that reinforce what they are taught. Pupils build on these secure foundations as they move through the school. They enjoy the challenges associated with mathematics, such as regular times tables practice. Pupils relish applying their skills to a range of problems, such as retrieving information from charts, or working out how much of the classroom could be covered by the distance of their handspans.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have their needs carefully and precisely identified. These needs are met well, both within the classroom and through additional input when it is needed. For example, teachers make sure that pupils receive any necessary pre-teaching or additional vocabulary support to help access lessons.

Pupils are interested in their learning. They behave well in lessons, listening attentively and following instructions. This supports learning well. Pupils understand the new behaviour system and are keen to progress up the 'behaviour ladders' displayed in the classrooms. They are supportive of each other and value sharing or listening to different ideas.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a high quality. Through everyday experience, the curriculum and additional opportunities, pupils are encouraged to develop as rounded individuals with an outward-facing and mature understanding of themselves and the world. They are well prepared for the next stages of their education and beyond.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding records and systems, including processes for recruitment, are well managed and comprehensive. Staff and governors have had the training they need to recognise and respond to safeguarding issues. Risks are quickly identified, and support is provided if necessary. This includes working with other agencies where appropriate to help keep pupils safe.

The school exudes an atmosphere of care and concern for others. Close relationships are built which help staff spot if there are needs or concerns. This helps to keep pupils safe. Pupils learn how to help to keep themselves safe, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have introduced a range of new policies and systems which have developed a clear curriculum intent and are supporting staff well in the implementation of this. Leaders at all levels, including governors, should ensure that they monitor and review these changes in due course to fully evaluate the impact the changes are having on securing the highest quality of education for all pupils.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2012.

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	114546
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10200393
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	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Janet Silva
Headteacher	Claire Smith
Website	http://www.stberns.brighton-hove.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher at the time of the previous inspection suffered from a period of ill health before sadly passing away earlier this year. The school had a period of interim headship before the appointment of the current headteacher at the beginning of the first pandemic lockdown. A new deputy headteacher and several new members of staff have also been appointed. This included the creation of a learning mentor role to provide additional emotional support for pupils.
- The school does not use alternative providers.
- The school is a Roman Catholic voluntary-aided school. The last statutory inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 took place in June 2018.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation.
- During the inspection, the inspector met regularly with the headteacher. Meetings were also held with other school leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, early years lead and the safeguarding team. The inspector met with governors,

including the chair. The inspector also had telephone conversations with representatives from the local authority and the diocese.

- The inspector conducted deep dives into reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector listened to some pupils reading.
- Records associated with safeguarding were reviewed, including the single central record and appointment procedures. The inspector spoke to staff about their safeguarding training and spoke to pupils about the support they have in understanding how to keep safe.
- The inspector reviewed responses to the staff, pupil and parent Ofsted questionnaires.
- Groups of staff met with the inspector to share their views about the school, including on workload and well-being. The inspector completed a tour of the school with pupils and spoke to them on the playground and in the dining hall.

Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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