

Inspection of St Benedict's Catholic Primary School

Charlton Lane, Midsomer Norton, Radstock, Somerset BA3 4BD

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Relationships are at the heart of this school. Pupils, staff and parents feel a part of the warm, friendly school community. Through the values of the school, pupils learn about belonging to their local and global community. They develop a strong sense of citizenship and service to others through a wide variety of charitable works.

Pupils behave well. Low-level disruption is rare in lessons. Children in Reception quickly learn how to share and play well together. Older pupils enjoy helping younger pupils during breaktimes. In many areas of the curriculum, pupils show highly positive attitudes to their learning. However, the curriculum in some subjects is not yet meeting the needs of all pupils. In these subjects, pupils can lose focus and attention and take less care with their work.

Following the pandemic, leaders have ensured a focus on pupils' physical and mental health. Pupils are proud of their physical education (PE) award, which recognises their major contribution to physical education. Buddy, the therapy dog, is a popular addition to the school community.

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

Since the arrival of new senior leaders, there has been a sharp focus on improving the quality of education that pupils receive. Leaders quickly prioritised the areas for improvement that would have the biggest impact on outcomes for pupils. Staffing changes have undoubtedly affected the pace of improvements. However, leaders have not wavered in their determination to secure the necessary developments. This has resulted in a staff team that is positive and motivated. Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel well supported by leaders and committed to the school's improvement journey. Governors' oversight of the school's work is also making a strong contribution to its improvement.

Leaders have made the early reading curriculum their highest priority. The new phonics programme is well sequenced. This means that pupils build on the sounds they know. They learn to segment words and blend sounds together, which means they can read with increasing fluency. Pupils who fall behind get the help that they need to enable them to catch up more quickly. Older pupils learn to use a range of reading skills, such as summarising what they have read. They enjoy applying these to texts of different genres and complexity. Leaders know there is still work to do to ensure that teaching uses a common approach to the development of pupils' reading.

Pupils' writing is weak. Leaders' and teachers' expectations of pupils are not high enough, including in the early years. Leaders have identified the knowledge they want pupils to learn in most aspects of the writing curriculum. However, staff's understanding of how to develop pupils' ability to compose different types of writing is weak. Units of learning are not well sequenced, and pupils complete many stand-

alone activities that are not related to longer writing tasks. Pupils do not apply the phonics or grammar they know or punctuate accurately. Teaching does not identify these mistakes effectively, so pupils continue to make the same errors.

Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not learn as well as they could. This is because teaching is not well matched to their starting points. In English, all pupils with SEND have the same learning objectives as their peers. This is not always appropriate due to gaps in their knowledge. Learning is better matched to pupils' needs in mathematics. However, some pupils with SEND do not move beyond fluency activities, which means they miss out on applying what they do know to reasoning or solving problems. Individual learning plans for pupils with SEND are too broad. Leaders do not support teachers effectively enough to adapt teaching to meet the needs of some pupils with SEND.

The wider curriculum is well designed. Leaders have identified the knowledge they want pupils to learn. They have carefully considered how to build pupils' cultural capital through the curriculum, which is brought to life through a variety of visits and visitors. Subject leadership is not yet developed enough to have an accurate picture of how well the curriculum is being implemented across the school. This limits leaders' ability to drive improvements in their subject.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have introduced effective systems for managing safeguarding. They ensure that all staff know how to use these. Regular training and updates mean that staff are knowledgeable about the signs to look out for. Staff are confident in recording and reporting concerns. Leaders act swiftly and appropriately when concerns are raised. They are tenacious when other agencies are not fulfilling their responsibilities. Leaders have escalated cases with the local authority where necessary.

Pupils feel safe and parents agree. Pupils learn how to stay safe. They know about cyber-bullying and other forms of online risks. They are confident to tell an adult about it if it occurs.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers have low expectations of pupils' writing. As a result, pupils, including children in the early years, do not achieve well. Leaders must improve teachers' subject knowledge, so that teachers have much higher expectations of what pupils can achieve in their writing.
- Teaching is not consistently effective across the whole curriculum. This means that in some subjects, pupils do not learn as well. Leaders must ensure that

teachers have the support and guidance they need to implement all subject curriculums consistently.

- The support for some pupils with SEND is not effective. This means these pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that plans for these pupils support teachers to adapt teaching to better match these pupils' starting points.
- Subject leadership is not fully developed. Curriculum leaders do not evaluate how well pupils learn effectively enough. Senior leaders must ensure that subject leaders develop the expertise they need to improve the quality of the curriculum.

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.

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	123840
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10256617
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	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jon Stratford
Headteacher	Ellen Croker
Website	www.stbenedicts.info/somerset/primary/st-benedicts
Date of previous inspection	10–11 March 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is in the Diocese of Clifton. Its most recent section 48 inspection was in July 2022, where its overall effectiveness was judged to be good.
- The executive headteacher and the head of school both took up post in September 2021.
- There have been a number of staffing changes since September 2021, including during this academic year.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including early reading, mathematics and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, head of school, special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, and teaching and support staff. The lead inspector also spoke with members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority and the diocese.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leaders to discuss how pupils are kept safe in school. Inspectors considered the school's recruitment procedures, staff induction and training, records of concerns and their engagement with external agencies. They also spoke with staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to an adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. In addition, they met with pupils informally and formally to hear their views.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. Inspectors also took into consideration responses to the staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plan and documentation relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Angela Folland, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jyotsna Paranjape

Ofsted Inspector

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