

Inspection of St Bede's Catholic Primary School, Weaverham

Keepers Lane, Weaverham, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 3BY

Inspection dates: 31 October and 1 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 15 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils delight in attending this warm, caring school. They said that they love their friends and teachers. Everyone is welcome at the school, regardless of their differences.

Pupils speak to each other kindly. They know staff will listen to their worries and take action to help resolve any concerns. Some pupils benefit from speaking with staff who have received specialist training in helping pupils to manage their emotions.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. These are mostly realised, particularly in subjects with published results. Pupils said that they enjoy the range of subjects that they learn.

Throughout the school, pupils talk and play cooperatively, including during breaktimes. They know the school rules and try their best to follow them. Most pupils make appropriate behaviour choices in lessons. They know that chatting or disturbing others is disrespectful.

Older pupils take on a range of leadership responsibilities. For example, pupils in Year 6 enjoy being a buddy to a child in the Reception class. Pupils in Year 6 also act as safety officers or house captains. The school holds an annual swimming gala which all pupils can enter. The older pupils get into the water with the younger children to support and encourage them. The school places a high value on developing pupils' talents and interests through a range of activities such as choir and illustration clubs.

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

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum which enables most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve well. Pupils with SEND are identified quickly. The school makes sure that their needs are met effectively. Often, this includes working with other, specialist agencies.

Across each year group, pupils embrace the joy of reading. They are keen readers who readily discuss a range of authors and books, including different types of texts.

From the outset, children in the Reception class quickly learn the sounds that individual letters make. They experience success by reading books that contain the sounds that they have learned. Skilled staff use carefully crafted conversations to build on children's communication and language skills. However, in some areas of learning in the early years, the curriculum is not delivered as fully as the school intends. This means that a small number of children are not able to deepen their learning.

Pupils in Year 1 continue to learn a range of sounds made by a combination of letters. This enables them to read more complex texts confidently and fluently. Pupils who are not keeping up with the pace of the phonics programme are quickly spotted. The school makes sure that appropriate support is put in place for these pupils so that they, too, become skilled readers.

In most subjects, the school has identified the key subject content that it wants pupils to learn. In these subjects, teachers know exactly what to teach and when to teach it. However, in a small number of other subjects, the order in which pupils will learn new information lacks clarity. This makes it difficult for pupils to build readily on what they already know and can do.

In most subjects, teachers' checks on pupils' learning help to identify when pupils have not understood new concepts. However, this is less effective in a small number of subjects. This means that teachers are unable to identify pupils' misconceptions.

Children in the early years play happily together and welcome visitors to the classroom with polite conversation. At the end of breaktimes, older pupils listen carefully to instructions and re-enter the school building in a calm and orderly manner. They continue to move around the school building in this sensible way.

The school places great emphasis on developing pupils' learning beyond the academic curriculum. It makes sure that they are prepared for life in modern British society. For example, older pupils visit London to further understand democracy. Through regular discussions, pupils learn about a range of current affairs at an age-appropriate level. They learn about faiths and cultures different to their own. The school encourages pupils to be active citizens by raising money for a range of charities, many of which are linked to the school community.

Governors know the school well. They use this knowledge to challenge and support the school, particularly around the quality of education. Governors prioritise pupils' becoming positive members of society, as well as their achievement of high academic standards.

Staff are proud to be a part of the school community. They appreciate their views being listened to and the support that is offered to help reduce the impact of any changes, for example the training that they receive in relation to new initiatives. This enables them to carry out their roles effectively and to manage their workload.

Parents and carers appreciate how the school involves them in their children's education. They value events such as parent meetings and regular information. Parents are highly positive about the care and support that their children receive at school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in the early years is not delivered as thoroughly as the school intends. This means that some children in the early years do not develop their knowledge and skills as well as they could in some areas of learning. The school should ensure that the activities and resources chosen to deliver the early years curriculum maximise children's opportunities to develop their learning.
- In a small number of subjects, the school has not set out clearly enough the order in which key knowledge should be delivered. As a result, some pupils are not able to build on their previous learning in a coherent manner. This means that they do not deepen their knowledge over time. The school should establish the order in which subject content should be taught so that pupils build logically on their prior knowledge.
- In a few subjects, teachers' checks on pupils' learning are less effective than in other subjects. This means that teachers cannot identify misconceptions, which leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school should make sure that teachers spot and then address gaps in pupils' knowledge.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	111341
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10226357
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	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paula Aspinall
Headteacher	Louise Conlon
Website	www.st-bedes.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 June 2008, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a voluntary-aided Catholic school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in June 2019, carried out by the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place before the end of the 2026 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, as well as other subject leaders in school. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority and the Diocese of Shrewsbury.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, this involved holding discussions about the curriculum, reviewing curriculum documentation, visiting a sample of lessons, speaking to pupils about their learning and looking at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector observed several pupils, from Year 1 to Year 3, reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. They looked at curriculum documentation and the work completed by pupils. Inspectors also spoke to some pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and recreational times.
- Inspectors took account of the responses from the Ofsted survey for staff. An inspector spoke to parents at the start of the day as they brought their children to school. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- No pupils completed the Ofsted survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Sheena Clark, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Moira Loftus

Ofsted Inspector

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