

Inspection of St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Narrow Lane, Brownhills, Walsall, West Midlands WS8 6HX

Inspection dates: 30 April and 1 May 2024

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	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The interim principal of this school is Gary Linford. This school is part of St John Bosco Catholic Academy (the trust), which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the accounting officer, Helen Parkes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Phillip Hancox.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Bernadette's is a welcoming school to all. Many refer to the school as being like a family. This is because pupils feel happy and safe. They are well cared for.

Pupils thrive in the school's calm environment. There are respectful relationships between staff and pupils. Staff know their pupils well and work hard to support them. Parents and carers appreciate this. They have also welcomed the work of the school to improve communication and keep them up to date.

The school has designed a curriculum to enable pupils to enjoy school and achieve. Pupils rise to teachers' high expectations of their learning and enjoy their lessons. The school continues to strengthen its curriculum and how it is taught. This is helping to improve outcomes for pupils.

Pupils are kind to one another and behave well in lessons and on the playground. If there are any disagreements between pupils, they are confident that staff will help resolve things quickly. Pupils appreciate the range of equipment that makes playtimes enjoyable.

As pupils move through the school, they take increasing responsibility. For example, pupils work as house captains or supporting charity work as a part of the 'Mini-Vinnies'. Pupils take these opportunities seriously and wear their badges with pride.

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

The school is ambitious for what all pupils can achieve, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In all subjects, the school has identified what pupils should remember. The curriculum has been designed so that knowledge builds progressively from the early years. As a result, most pupils achieve well.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They revisit previously taught content logically and this helps pupils learn. In French lessons, for example, this is effective in enabling pupils to know and remember more. However, pupils' mistakes and misunderstandings are not always identified quickly or accurately enough. This limits the progress that pupils make in some subjects.

Pupils with SEND have their needs quickly identified. These pupils are generally well supported through adaptations to lessons and additional interventions. However, sometimes their specific learning targets are not precise enough. This slows the progress some pupils make.

From the early years onwards, reading is a priority across the school. Everyone is clear about how this should be taught from the start of Reception. The school has worked to ensure that the teaching of reading is effective. Staff use carefully chosen

resources. Pupils who fall behind in their reading are provided with extra help. This is effective in enabling pupils to catch up quickly.

Leaders have carefully considered the books that pupils read. Regular reading in class helps pupils improve their vocabulary and develop a love of reading. For example, children in Reception listened with great engagement and interest to a well-told story. Some books pupils read have been selected to help pupils learn about important topics. For example, Year 6 pupils talked about how the book 'Journey to Jo'burg' helped them to understand more about racism and injustice.

The school's high expectations and the orderly behaviour of pupils mean that the school is calm and purposeful. Pupils are friendly and courteous. Children in Reception take turns and demonstrate good manners. Across the school, pupils respond positively to the strategies to promote good behaviour. Parents appreciate the recent changes made to how the school manages behaviour.

The school is working hard on improving pupils' attendance because it knows that this is important. Leaders meet weekly to check the attendance of individual pupils and act quickly if this is a concern. This work has resulted in improved outcomes for some pupils.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have a thoughtful understanding of different faiths and cultures. The pastoral support that the school provides is valued by pupils and their families. Carefully planned work helps pupils learn about risks online and offline. Pupils appreciate the places in school for quiet reflection, such as the prayer garden. They have enjoyed the trips and visits they have been on and are looking forward to more. The extra-curricular provision is popular, and many pupils enjoy the sporting opportunities that the school provides.

Since the last inspection, there is a new headteacher and the trust has provided additional support to the school during a period of change. The new leadership team has managed staff changes effectively. Trustees and governors know the school well and provide effective challenge to leaders. The school staff are a cohesive team focused on securing the best outcomes for pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective, but a minor improvement is needed.

Staff ensure that safeguarding concerns are recorded. Leaders ensure these concerns are acted on. However, the school does not monitor the record-keeping of child protection concerns carefully enough. This affects leaders' ability to understand safeguarding cases clearly and ensure all the right actions have been taken at the right time to keep pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Records of concerns about pupils are not reviewed regularly enough to check that the information is current. This means that staff do not always have an up-to-date picture of the risks certain pupils may face. The school should ensure better oversight of safeguarding records to ensure staff understand potential risks.
- In a few subjects, teachers do not always respond effectively to pupils' errors. This limits the progress that some pupils make in these subjects. The school should ensure that teachers are more consistent in checking pupils' learning and responding to any gaps or misconceptions it shows.
- Sometimes, the targets set for pupils with SEND do not provide sufficient information about the support they should receive. This means that, at times, staff do not help pupils to succeed with specific targets as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that targets set for pupils with SEND set out clearly what is to be learned and the support required.

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	147163
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10322912
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	144
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Phillip Hancox
CEO of the trust	Helen Parkes (Accounting Officer)
Principal	Gary Linford (Interim Principal)
Website	www.stbernadette.walsall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced some leadership changes. The current interim headteacher was appointed in April 2024.
- St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy in September 2021. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school joined the St John Bosco Catholic Academy in September 2021. There are eight academies in the trust.
- This is a Roman Catholic school. The school is within the Archdiocese of Birmingham. The school received its last section 48 inspection in June 2019. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The school's next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.
- The school does not use 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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and French. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also listened to pupils reading.
- Inspectors discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and visited other lessons, including in the early years.
- 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.
- During the inspection, the inspector held meetings with the accounting officer, the primary school improvement lead, an independent SEN adviser who works with the school, the interim principal, the acting assistant principal and other leaders and staff.
- An inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of the board.
- An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the diocese.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys. They considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including comments submitted via the free-text facility.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour, attendance, the school's curriculum, and improvement planning. The school's website was also checked.
- Inspectors considered information on pupils' behaviour, attendance and personal development.

Inspection team

John Rowe, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Susan Ray

Ofsted Inspector

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