



St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104242
LEA Walsall
Inspection number 277112
Inspection dates 30 November 2005 to 1 December 2005
Reporting inspector Christine Field RISP

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Narrow Lane
School category	Community		Brownhills
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Walsall, West Midlands WS8 6HX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01543 452921
Number on roll	192	Fax number	01543 452921
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Father David Mellor
Date of previous inspection	24 January 2000	Headteacher	Mr Tony Mcann

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Bernadette's is a small Catholic primary school with an attached nursery unit. When children start in the nursery their attainment is typically average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and a few have a different heritage. No pupils are learning English as a new language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The evidence from the inspection confirms the school's view that its overall effectiveness is good. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and the school has good capacity to continue to improve. Parents and pupils are extremely proud of their school and show high levels of involvement in its daily life. The school gives good value for money.

Children receive a good start to their education in the Nursery and Reception classes and achieve well, with virtually all reaching the level expected for their age. Most pupils achieve well during their time at school, particularly in English where good progress is made in all years. Progress in mathematics is satisfactory overall, but good in Years 5 and 6 where pupils are grouped in ability sets that are having a positive impact on achievement. Teaching is good overall, with strengths that lead to happy and settled learning. However, in marking and target setting, there is insufficient focus on assisting the highest attainers to make more consistent progress.

Pupils experience a good curriculum, are very well looked after and given plenty of worthwhile opportunities that assist their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils grow into responsible future citizens because of the positive way the school nurtures the social and academic growth of each individual.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher gives clear educational direction and has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The senior management team are undertaking a more active role in the process of monitoring and evaluation as more time is made for them to observe teaching and learning. However, the school recognises that more development is required to make monitoring a more rigorous system, enabling the pinpointing and sharing of best practice. Staff are an effective team who are united in their determination to move the school forward. Governors are well informed, undertake their duties well and give good service to the school community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable higher attaining pupils to achieve more by raising teacher's expectations of what pupils' can achieve, particularly in mathematics.
- Ensure that target setting and teachers' marking support pupils' next steps in learning and involves them in reviewing their progress.
- Sharpen monitoring and evaluation processes to identify how well pupils are learning in all years.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From a broadly average starting point, children in the Nursery and Reception achieve well. Most make good progress to reach standards that are at the level expected when they transfer to Year 1. A few exceed this and start work on the National Curriculum early. Standards in the 2005 national tests were average in Year 2 and above average

in Year 6. Current standards in Years 2 and 6 are broadly average. Most pupils make generally good progress, but the rate is uneven for some. The best progress is made in Years 5 and 6 because work is well matched to the pupils' stage of learning and they are grouped in sets to enable them to work faster. The school has worked effectively to raise standards in writing in all years and the outcomes are positive, as reflected in the good quality of writing in pupils' books and on display. The school is alert to the need to raise teachers' expectations of what individual pupils are capable of achieving in mathematics, particularly potentially higher attainers. In some years, an over-reliance on worksheets is limiting independent problem-solving skills.

Lower attaining pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, benefit from specific work programmes that support their consistently good progress in all years. These pupils achieve well in meeting their individual targets. Those who are potentially higher attainers do not receive a similar measured approach to assist their achievement. The targets set for them sometimes lack challenge.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are very proud of their school and enjoy being there. One pupil summed this up by saying: 'I like this school because the teachers are kind, everyone is friendly and there are good things to look forward to every day'. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive and their behaviour in and around the school is exemplary. They show considerable care for each other and older pupils are always keen to help and support younger ones. The influence of the church is effective and contributes well to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is good. 'Truly trusted' status, which is the highest accolade in school for personal responsibility, is seen as a very positive feature and gives the recipient a permanent seat on the school council. Pupils have good opportunities to develop initiative and take responsibility, for example as buddies or house captains. In fundraising activities on behalf of local and national charities, pupils gain an awareness of those less fortunate than themselves.

Pupils are very aware of safety issues and are alert to initiatives such as 'stranger danger'. Pupils experience 'healthy weeks' and know what a healthy diet consists of, and why they need physical activity. The 'walk to school' events are viewed very much as helping to keep the external area of the school safe from too much traffic – and pupils healthy in the process. Pupils' involvement in sporting and music activities helps build cooperation and teamwork. Through such initiatives as producing the school magazine, pupils are building good life skills that will help secure their future economic well-being. Attendance levels are good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall. The teaching of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is consistently good. Teaching assistants are very effective in providing additional support that helps this group of pupils to make good progress in building their basic skills.

Classes are settled and happy places where very good relationships underpin the pupils' desire to do the best they can. High expectations, a brisk pace and a good level of challenge in what is planned and taught are assisting pupils in Years 5 and 6 to learn very successfully. A mathematics lesson observed by inspectors had all of these features. However, some lessons in mathematics, though satisfactory, are not as stimulating or engaging and some of the highfliers could be stretched more. The use of targets to help pupils focus their next steps in learning is developing. However, there is limited use made of targets in marking to show pupils where improvement lies. Additionally, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to review their targets and evaluate how well they are doing.

Satisfactory teaching in the Nursery and Reception reported at the last inspection is now of good quality and helps the youngest children in school to receive a good start. A strong focus on practical, hands-on learning is a very positive feature in supporting their good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A wide range of extra-curricular activities, to which all pupils have free access, enriches the good curriculum. Lunchtime art club and choir practices were observed by inspectors to be much enjoyed by the many pupils who took part. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is also good and has been improved since the last inspection to provide a good quality learning environment. The good focus on promoting basic skills has been recognised by the recent award of the Basic Skills mark. The 'nurture group', which meets outside lesson time and is attended by pupils with gifts and talents who are selected by teachers, is a positive feature. Educational visits, visitors to school and international links make an effective contribution to all learners' progress in their work at school. A new approach to the teaching and learning of reading using letter sounds, together with their use in the teaching of writing has contributed effectively to the good and rising standards. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved substantially since the previous inspection. The accreditation of the NAACE mark is testament to the good quality. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the use of interactive whiteboards in lessons and enjoy the colourful illustrations that teachers use to bring learning alive.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for pupils is good and reflects the very positive Catholic ethos of the school. Good attention is paid to safeguarding pupils, with effective systems in place to assess risks and ensure health and safety. Pupils feel safe in school and attribute it to the strong commitment shown by all adults. Pupils told inspectors that they know at least one adult whom they could go to for help if they have a personal problem or any worries. Parents identify the safe and supportive learning environment that the school successfully provides as a key strength. Child protection arrangements are robust. Recently, writing targets for individual pupils have been set and are used by teachers to check progress. In Year 6, pupils have the next target to aim for highlighted on cards on their desks and this is a positive feature in supporting progress. However, this is not consistent practice. The use of pupil targets in mathematics is planned but not yet implemented. The precise target setting works particularly well in assisting the good progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Their growing self-confidence strongly indicates that the school's guidance and support arrangements are effective. Transition arrangements with secondary schools ensure smooth transfer of pupils and the information relating to them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management is good, as reflected in pupils' good academic and social achievement. The headteacher sets high expectations and gives clear direction to the work of the school. He has a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Monitoring is increasingly involving senior staff in the process, but more work is required to enable them to build an accurate view of progress and to pinpoint the best features of teaching that enable the most effective learning.

The school recognises that there is more to do in enabling higher attainers to reach the standards of which they are capable in mathematics and in making better use of marking and target setting to aid progress. All staff are committed to the headteacher's vision for the future and are working effectively to move the school forward. Governors are supportive and fulfil all required responsibilities and, together with parents and pupils, are fully involved in the school's development. Good partnerships with community and church add extra value to the quality of education provided. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and has good capacity to become even more effective. The school provides good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

The School Council St Bernadette's RC Primary Narrow Lane Brownhills Walsall WS8 6HX

2 December 2005

Dear Children

Thank you very much for giving us such a friendly welcome to your school. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting, talking and eating lunch with you.

What we liked best

- You work hard, always try your best and behave very sensibly.
- You are kind and thoughtful to each other and are very proud of your school.
- There are lots of exciting activities, such as brain gym, French, choir and art club for you to take part in with your friends.
- Your teachers and the adults take good care of you and make sure that you feel safe and secure and get extra support if you find things difficult.
- You know how to look after yourselves, know what is good to eat and why you should do some exercise to keep fit.

What we think the school can do to improve

- The headteacher and staff are keen to make the school even better and will be looking more closely at how well you are doing, especially in mathematics.
- Some of you are ready for even harder work and ready to undertake more independent practical activities.
- Teachers need to tell you more about how you can improve your work and involve you in making regular checks on your achievements.

Yours sincerely

Christine Ann Field Lead Inspector