



St Brigid's RC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105523
Local Authority Manchester
Inspection number 287249
Inspection dates 7–8 February 2007
Reporting inspector Brenda McIntosh

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Grey Mare Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Beswick, Manchester
Age range of pupils	3–11		Lancashire M11 3DR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 2235538
Number on roll (school)	216	Fax number	0161 2306105
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Fr Tim Hopkins
		Headteacher	Mr Frank Smith
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Brigid's Primary School is about average in size. It is situated in east Manchester where major regeneration is taking place. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. About three quarters of the pupils are of White British heritage with the remainder coming from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds; the principle groups being Black African and Irish Travellers. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school educates a very small number of looked-after children. The school has received many awards to recognise various aspects of its success including the British Council International Award and the Manchester Gold Inclusion Standard.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Brigid's is a good school with several outstanding features. The headteacher and chair of governors strive successfully to realise the school's mission to give every child the chance to make the very best of their own talents and achieve the highest possible standards. The very clear direction they set results in high aspirations and a shared pursuit of excellence. Pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. Pupils are valued as individuals and develop a real sense of their own worth that increases their self-confidence. This is reflected in pupils' comments such as, 'Here we believe we can do anything if we put our minds to it' and 'It's really good being a pupil at this school because we get treated with respect.' As pupils grow older they express their views confidently and with a high level of maturity. Their understanding of their rights and responsibilities extends way beyond their own community. This is because of the school's extensive range of partnerships and international links that enrich the opportunities available to them. The school has taken advantage of many innovative projects offered to them through the re-generation programme for the area. As a result, pupils have a very good awareness of the changes taking place around them and play an active part in shaping their own future community.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with attainment that is well below that expected for their age. They settle quickly and happily into routines because the staff take time to get to know them and their families before they start school. This helps them get off to a good start and contributes effectively to the good progress they make in all areas of their learning. Throughout the rest of the school pupils continue to make good progress to attain broadly average standards overall by the end of Year 6. The stronger focus on English and mathematics over recent years has resulted in good teaching enabling pupils to make good progress and achieve consistently well in these subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress because of the good support they receive. At the end of both key stages Black African pupils do very well and often attain above average standards. In science, pupils' standards and progress have not matched those seen in mathematics and English. Following the sharp decline in standards in science in 2005 the school's decisive action led to substantial improvement in 2006, although more able pupils did not do as well as they could. New strategies for teaching science and assessing how well pupils are doing have resulted in improvements but these are not fully in use across the school to ensure pupils progress at a consistently good pace. Pupils are gaining a good awareness of how their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) can help them with their learning in other subjects.

The school continually reviews the curriculum and ensures pupils enjoy learning, achieve well and develop a greater understanding of the world in which they live. Pupils' requests have influenced improvements, for example, more opportunities for drama and role-play have helped improve the quality of their writing. The curriculum is good and appropriately enriched with resources and learning experiences to meet the needs of the school's increasingly diverse community. All cultures are shared and celebrated in a very positive way. Pupils from all backgrounds have equal chance to learn about

their own cultural heritage. This results in high self-esteem, good academic achievement and excellent relationships at all levels. The school draws on a wide range of resources and agencies so that pupils work with people with a high level of expertise from outside of the school. For example, pupils are able to take part in a wide range of sporting activities and gain an excellent awareness of how to keep fit and healthy. They are helped to see how important it is for them to stay safe and to be able to make informed choices for themselves about their own health and safety. Attendance is satisfactory and has improved significantly over recent years. Much work has contributed to this success, including effective strategies such as the school council playing a big part in helping to promote good attendance.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and all it provides for their children. Pupils are very well cared for. They receive good guidance in their learning, but the school is at a very early stage of setting individual pupil targets and involving pupils sufficiently in assessing their own learning. Pupils' work is marked but the marking does not give them a clear enough understanding of how well they are doing or how to improve. Effective systems promote excellent behaviour and the staff work successfully together to include pupils who have been excluded from other schools.

Improvement since the last inspection is good. A very high level of investment targeted by the school at the Foundation Stage has led to equally good quality provision and achievement for both Nursery and Reception age children. Leadership and management are good. The senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of its work and where it could do better. The headteacher has recently introduced an 'intermediate leadership tier' and delegated responsibilities further to increase the accountability for the impact of new developments. Teamwork is strong and the commitment to success underpins all aspects of school life. Governors are active in planning for the future and making decisions. The school is well placed to continue its quest for excellence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement and raise standards in science throughout the school, in particular for the more able pupils in Key Stage 2.
- Set pupils precise targets and develop the quality of marking to offer them clearer guidance on what they need to do to achieve them and how well they are doing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Children enter the Foundation Stage with well below average skills overall and especially in their linguistic and social skills. They leave Year 6 with broadly average standards. In the Foundation Stage they progress well, particularly in their personal and social development, but weaknesses remain in calculation and linking letters. The school is tackling these weaknesses to enhance attainment. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and standards are rising steadily. In 2006, results in reading were particularly good and above average. In Key Stage 2 pupils' progress is

consistently good in English and mathematics, and standards are broadly average. The school usually meets or exceeds its challenging targets in English and mathematics. Performance in science has not been as successful as English and mathematics. The school is working towards improving attainment by the end of Year 6, but higher attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently. Black African pupils achieve very well and often attain above average standards at the end of both key stages. Irish Traveller pupils, vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress because of the effective guidance and support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and stems from the inclusive, caring nature of the school. Pupils behave exceedingly well and get enormous pleasure out of learning and all the school offers them. Pupils of all backgrounds show a high level of respect for each other and get on really well together. They take on increasing responsibilities through various roles and tasks they undertake. The work of the school council is impressive and gives a real voice to pupils' views particularly in improving the school's provision. It has played a very important part in raising significantly the levels of attendance, which are now average. Pupils gain an excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles and participate in a whole range of physical activities. In addition to acquiring good basic skills, pupils develop key competencies such as in team working, leadership and public speaking. Visits to the local university and places of work raise pupils' aspirations for their future careers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very effectively and as a result a positive atmosphere and excellent relationships are evident in all classes. Interactive whiteboards are often used well to hold pupils' attention and engage them in their learning. Teaching is effective in English and mathematics and results in good achievement. Assessment information is used well to plan tasks to suit pupils' individual needs. At the start of lessons clear learning objectives are shared with pupils so that they understand what they are going to learn. Pupils particularly enjoy the practical activities in mathematics and rise to the challenge of the teacher's questions to explain their methods of calculation. Teaching assistants work effectively alongside the teachers to ensure pupils are fully involved in the lesson. The school has recently introduced a scheme to improve the teaching and learning in science and check on pupils' progress more accurately. While this has had some effect on improving standards the strategies are not yet fully effective in challenging the more able pupils. In all subjects work is marked but pupils are not given clear guidance on how to improve.

Good teaching in the Foundation Stage provides exciting learning experiences both indoors and outdoors and helps the children achieve well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall. It is enriched significantly by exciting learning opportunities that help the pupils understand and appreciate the world in which they live. It prepares them extremely well for their future role in society. A very wide range of out-of-school clubs, including sports and arts, enhance their learning. A very well-planned programme to develop pupils' personal, health and social skills is successfully helping pupils to gain an understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to keep themselves safe. Links with other schools both nationally and internationally help pupils to gain an excellent awareness of other cultures and the lives of others. The provision for English and mathematics is good and underpins pupils' good progress in developing their basic skills. The school is reviewing the science curriculum to ensure that pupils' scientific skills, knowledge and understanding are developed systematically.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school is fully committed to ensuring pupils are safe and well cared for. Regular health and safety checks and appropriate procedures for child protection are in place. The required checks are made on all adults who work with pupils and the outcomes recorded. Everyone contributes to consistent and fair systems which promote excellent behaviour, including the lunchtime staff. Staff work successfully together to include pupils who have been previously excluded from other schools. Pupils say they feel happy in school and well cared for and, as a result, they are confident that teachers will help them in any difficulties. The school actively supports all families and provides an extensive programme for parents to encourage their involvement in their children's learning. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively supported and guided in their learning. The setting of targets for individual pupils and involving them in assessing their own learning so they know how well they are doing and how to improve is at an early stage of development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is very well led by the headteacher who devolves significant responsibility to other leaders. This autonomy has increased accountability at all levels for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school's developments. The school tracks its performance well but systems are being refined to ensure they have even more impact on pupils' progress. The staff are highly valued and encouraged to share their expertise and pursue ambitions. The school improvement plan stems from accurate self-evaluation and clearly shows that in this school, every child matters. The governing body plays a

full part in all aspects of the self-evaluation and improvement planning process. It responds very well to the changing nature of the school and wider community. Finances are managed very effectively and governors hold the school to account for major spending decisions. For example, they have ensured children in the Foundation Stage are doing well enough as a result of the improved provision. The school gives good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we inspected your school recently. It was lovely to receive such a warm welcome and it was a pleasure to talk to you and spend time in your school. We would like to share with you what we thought. We think St Brigid's is a good school and you appreciate the very good facilities especially in ICT and sport. St Brigid's gives you tremendous opportunities to help prepare you for later life.

It is very clear that all the adults and children get on extremely well together and this helps you to learn in your lessons. We were very pleased with your behaviour and how you happily take on jobs and responsibilities to help the school run smoothly. The staff look after you very well and do their best to help you and your families. We can see that the school councillors take their job very seriously. We are impressed by the way you have helped improved the attendance levels and requested things such as drama that help you enjoy your learning even more. The school provides an excellent range of clubs for you to attend and indeed some of you told us how you really enjoy these experiences. The links with other schools both in this country and those in other parts of the world are quite special in the way they help you understand how other people live.

To help the school become even better we have asked your headteacher and your teachers to help you all do as well in science as you do in English and mathematics. We have also asked the teachers to give you targets to work towards and when they mark your work give you a better understanding of how well you are doing and how to improve.

You have a big part to play in this by continuing to work hard. Keep trying your best and being so positive about learning.

We wish you and the school the very best for the future.