

St Bernard's RC Primary School Manchester

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105541
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	287255
Inspection date	3 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Geoffrey Yates

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	374
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Walsh
Headteacher	Mr P Gallagher
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2002
School address	Burnage Lane Burnage Manchester M19 1DR
Telephone number	0161 4327635
Fax number	0161 4328738

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an above average sized primary school in an urban residential area where socio-economic circumstances are below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. Children's skills on entry to the Foundation Stage are below those expected for children of their age and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Almost all pupils are from White British families and no pupil is at an early stage of learning English. The school has gained many awards including the Healthy School's Bronze Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which provides good value for money and has outstanding strengths in pupils' personal development and welfare, and the level of care it provides. Typical of parents' views is, 'My children are very happy at St Bernard's. The teaching and learning are brilliant.'

From skill levels which are below expectations for their age when they enter the Nursery, pupils' achievement is good across the school and attainment is above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) and achieve what is expected by the time they enter Year 1. By the end of Year 2, standards in mathematics are broadly average. In recent years, standards by the end of Year 2 have declined in reading and writing to below average. Inspection evidence clearly indicates that the decline in standards is being addressed by the successful introduction of an intensive reading and writing initiative. As a result, standards are beginning to rise but remain below average in both subjects. Pupils make rapid progress in Years 3 to 6 and leave the school attaining above average standards in English, mathematics and science. While paying due attention to pupils' academic achievement, the school does not neglect their personal and social development. A good curriculum and good teaching promote pupils' basic skills effectively. Despite the limitations caused by pupils being taught in five separate buildings, some of which are in a poor state of repair, pupils experience a well-balanced curriculum. Stimulating activities such as 'Big Book Week' and a wide range of interesting visits and visits from subject specialists add much value to pupils' knowledge, understanding and confidence, and to their ability to relate very well to each other and to adults. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is excellent. Equally strong are the outstanding care, guidance and support pupils receive. This is particularly effective for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Pupils fully appreciate all the school does for them and respond by behaving outstandingly well in lessons and sensibly around the school. They appreciate the health benefits of eating sensibly and exercising regularly. Pupils are keen to attend the after-school clubs on offer and participate enthusiastically in lessons. 'Teachers are friendly and give you help if you need it', echoes the views of many pupils. Responsibilities are taken very seriously, especially by school council members and by pupil mediators who are proud of the fact that they have a say in 'their' school. They make a good contribution to the wider community through charitable fund-raising and are prepared well for the next stage in their education.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher. They know the school well, have a clear vision for its future and ensure a good balance between promoting pupils' personal and academic development. Governors are well informed and carry out their duties well. The school is well placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading and writing in Key Stage 1.
- Take all possible steps to improve the quality of the accommodation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children's skills on entry to the Nursery are below age-related expectations, with a relative weakness in their use of language. They make good progress across the school and reach above average standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science by the time they leave in Year 6. Staffing difficulties led to a decline in attainment in reading and writing in Key Stage 1 over the past few years. However, an intensive programme to address these concerns is having a positive effect and standards in both subjects are rising but remain below average.

Results in Key Stage 2 national tests demonstrate that standards in the core subjects are consistently above average when pupils leave for their secondary school careers. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils in the current Year 6 are on course to reach their targets and that their attainment continues to be above that found nationally. In addition, pupils take full advantage of the many opportunities they have to apply their basic skills to challenging situations and to use their initiative in order to take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same progress as their peers as a result of the very effective support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. The school's distinctly Christian ethos is reflected in all aspects of school life. For example, pupils are very kind and helpful to each other and relationships are of a high quality. As pupils move through school, they acquire a wide range of impressive interpersonal skills. They develop very good attitudes to learning and say they really enjoy school. Behaviour is outstanding and incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with swiftly. Pupils are trained as mediators and are rightly proud of what they do to help other pupils resolve an occasional quarrel. Pupils talk very knowledgeably about healthy eating and sporting activities, and playground games successfully develop very good attitudes to exercise. Pupils' views are valued. The school council promotes an outstanding sense of citizenship and pupils are frequently asked for their opinions. Pupils are keen to support the community and help charities, for example, by raising money to help people in Africa. Attendance is average and the school works hard to promote good attendance. Given the above average academic standards and outstanding levels of personal development, pupils are given an excellent preparation for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Excellent relationships that help pupils become keen learners lie at the heart of good teaching and learning. A recently introduced initiative to address weaknesses in younger pupils' reading and writing skills is working well with good use made of teachers and classroom support assistants to help pupils improve on their previous best. Pupils benefit from working in ability groups and standards are starting to rise. However, in some classes not enough attention is given to ensuring that when, for example, all pupils are asked to sound out letters they all take part. Teachers have good subject knowledge and their planning takes full account of assessment information to match work well to pupils' needs. In Years 3 to 6, pupils are given excellent

opportunities to use and develop their basic skills in other subjects, with writing being particularly strong. In the Nursery, pupils make very good use of the outside area to extend their learning experiences. For example, despite atrocious weather, children suitably dressed in raincoats and wellingtons responded well to the challenge to investigate mini beasts. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have very carefully monitored programmes of support that help them make good progress. Teachers' marking makes pupils increasingly aware of their own attainment and explains how they can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. However, in some parts of the school, the poor quality accommodation places restrictions on what curriculum opportunities can be provided. For example, inclement weather leads to important decisions about whether it is appropriate to take pupils across the playground in order to access the hall or the information and communication technology suite. The Foundation Stage curriculum enables children to make good progress. Throughout the school, good use is made of social and emotional learning and teaching materials to promote pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education. In Key Stage 1, good strategies are underway to improve reading and writing, which are gradually increasing pupils' progress. In Key Stage 2, every opportunity is provided for pupils to use and develop their basic skills in other subjects. For example, some fascinating mini-sagas (the use of up to 50 words to tell a story) have been produced, with music, art and history being used as a stimulus. Pupils have good opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities. Educational visits and a good range of visitors to school complement learning well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school is a very caring and happy place which, despite its limitations in accommodation, with pupils housed in five separate buildings, provides a safe and secure environment. The safeguarding of pupils and child protection are managed very effectively. Well-thought-out strategies promote pupils' personal development. The training of pupils as playground mediators to help fellow pupils typifies the high priority the school gives to care. Health and safety has a high profile in all that the school does. Academic support and guidance are outstanding. The school uses its assessment and tracking systems very effectively to identify areas for improvement for both groups and individuals. This contributes to excellent support for all, including pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils are very aware of how they are doing and of how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management, including governance, are good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and he is supported well by the deputy headteacher. He has maintained a very clear educational direction for the school through a period when a large number of staff changes have occurred. Parents and pupils are consulted about their views and parents are highly supportive of the school's reading and writing initiative to improve standards lower down the school. The senior leadership team has a good understanding of what needs to be done to

raise standards further. Good use is made of assessment data and the monitoring of teaching and learning to identify strategies to raise standards. The governors know the school well and are very supportive, ensuring that all statutory requirements are met. Although the school knows its strengths and weaknesses well, its judgements on pupils' personal development and the care they receive are too modest because it believes nothing is ever perfect. The school has worked hard to improve the building but much remains to be done. The above average standards by the time pupils leave have been maintained, despite a change in the nature of the school's intake and many staff changes. Given the quality of leadership, the school has good capacity for further improvement.

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Annex A

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	2
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?	1

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.

Annex A

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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave me when I visited the school recently. I really enjoyed talking to you and seeing you in lessons, even if it was only for a very short time.

I am pleased to tell you that your school is a good one and has outstanding strengths in the support you receive and in your personal development. Older pupils do very well in tests because you work very hard and understand the importance of this for the future. I agree with you that your teachers and other adults make lessons interesting and that if you need help you get it. I like the way that the teachers involve you in knowing how you can improve your work even further.

Your behaviour is excellent and I was very impressed with how polite you are. You told me that you feel safe in school and that if problems occur, an adult or a pupil mediator will sort them out. The school council is very busy on your behalf and members enjoy being able to take new things forward to make life better for you.

I have asked the staff who work with younger pupils to make sure that they continue with the good work they are doing to improve reading and writing standards. The staff can not do it on their own so I hope the pupils in the Key Stage 1 classes make an even greater effort to improve their reading and writing skills. I have also asked your headteacher and governors to do all they can to improve the school buildings.

Keep on working hard and continue to play a major part in ensuring that your school is always well regarded by all who come into contact with it.