



St Benet's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108837
Local Authority Sunderland
Inspection number 288203
Inspection date 28 November 2006
Reporting inspector John Heap

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Fulwell Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Sunderland, Tyne and Wear
Age range of pupils	3-11		SR6 9QU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 5535370
Number on roll (school)	349	Fax number	0191 5535371
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Father Oliver Keyes
		Headteacher	Mr David Nevins
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2002		

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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. It serves a residential area with few signs of deprivation and a below average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Children enter the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) with standards broadly typical for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The school's work benefits from recently increased accommodation. The school has the Arts Mark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school is right to judge itself as outstanding. It gives excellent value for money. The vast majority of parents are highly appreciative of the school's challenging, interesting and caring ethos and one put it this way 'Both children have made excellent progress at St Benet's...Needless to say, we are very proud (and privileged) to send our girls to such a caring and successful school.' The school was judged to be successful at the time of the last inspection and there have been good improvements since then, alongside the school maintaining high academic standards. National data show that the school is in the top 10% nationally for the excellent progress made by the pupils. Clearly, the school is well placed to improve further.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy school and this is illustrated by the well above average attendance. Older pupils are very keen to contribute to the day-to-day running of the school, help the younger ones settle in and add their voice to decisions about the school's active place in the local community. Across the school, pupils are very aware and sensitive of the need to be safe and to lead healthy lifestyles. None of these outcomes would be possible without the outstanding curriculum and care provided by the school. A very important part of this are the excellent links with a wide range of outside agencies and providers. Local secondary schools enhance the curriculum in areas like design and technology and visiting artists have helped pupils develop very strong skills, such as making ceramic crosses. The school has very successfully developed a range of traditions that encourage and challenge pupils. For example, a head boy and head girl lead a group of prefects and there are honours boards in the entrance that celebrate pupils' achievements.

Children get a good start in the Foundation Stage and they make good progress. Teaching is consistently good and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Standards in Year 2 are usually above average and pupils make good progress. Nevertheless, pupils could do better in writing, particularly the more able. By the end of Year 6, standards are consistently well above average and progress is excellent. The combination of outstanding personal development and high academic standards means that pupils are very well prepared for future schooling and later life. Again, the quality of teaching is good, with some outstanding practice in Years 5 and 6. Marking is inconsistent across the school and this leads to pupils being unsure of what they need to do to improve further, particularly in writing.

Outstanding outcomes for the pupils and excellent provision are the result of high quality leadership and management. The headteacher believes implicitly in promoting, developing and maintaining core strengths and traditions in the school and he is very well supported in this by his key staff. The steer towards maintaining and further improving the school is focused on the key priorities identified through rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Governors are very supportive and have an accurate view of the school's work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly for the more able in Years 2, 3 and 4.
- Make marking consistent, so that all pupils have a clear view of what they need to do to improve further, particularly in writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress and reach standards typical for their age by the end of Reception. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2, where their basic skills are carefully developed. These are particularly strong in reading and mathematics, but less so in writing, especially among the more able pupils. By the end of Year 2, standards are above average. In Years 3 to 6, teaching in the older classes is outstanding and pupils have exemplary attitudes to learning. As a result, progress is excellent and standards by Year 6 are consistently high. Early indications from the 2006 results show a similar picture, but the proportion of pupils getting the higher than average Level 5 in English is lower than in 2005. The school sets very challenging targets and in the 2005 national tests progress was in the top 10% of school's nationally. Although boys do a little better than girls in the Year 6 national tests, girls make similar progress over time. Pupils with extra learning needs are well supported and make good, and sometimes very good, progress from their starting points. On occasions pupils with below average ability at the age of seven reach average standards at the age of 11.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy school and show it clearly in their high level of involvement, motivation and embracing of the school's traditional values. Moral and social development is particularly strong and, as a result, behaviour is excellent and pupils are extremely polite, friendly, courteous and welcoming to visitors. Pupils are extremely well prepared for the future because of the high levels of skills they gain and also the opportunities to be involved in leadership. For example:

- the school council has a treasurer who manages the council budget
- playleaders and prefects are closely involved with younger pupils and in helping them settle and enjoy school.

Pupils play well together and make excellent relationships with each other and adults and this plays a big part in them rightly feeling safe and secure. Pupils throughout the school have a good understanding of the differences and similarities of people from other cultures. Pupils know and understand the importance of having a healthy and active lifestyle. They take full advantage of the wide range of activities open to

them, such as physical education, food studies in design and technology and after-school clubs.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that teaching is good, with some outstanding practice in Years 5 and 6. The quality of teaching and learning has improved in the Foundation Stage since the last inspection. Across the school, typical features include:

- teachers' good subject knowledge, and a wide variety of teaching strategies, enthusiasm and interest that motivate the pupils
- effective planning ensures that individual needs are met well
- good classroom management sets and maintains clear expectations for attitudes to work and behaviour.

Where teaching is outstanding there are exemplary judgements made on the level of challenge for children. As a result, tasks are very stimulating and engage interest and pupils make excellent progress. The differences between outstanding teaching and good practice are the more demanding pace, a higher level of challenge and marking that focuses more clearly on how well pupils are doing and what they need to do to improve further. Good use of resources promote learning and engage children, for example the new cookery facilities. Pupils' additional learning needs are identified well from Reception onwards and where appropriate targeted support and guidance are available.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for pupils' personal development through its richness, breadth, balance and relevance. This contributes significantly to high quality behaviour, attitudes and high academic standards. Exemplary use is made of external contributors to develop pupils' skills, particularly in design and technology and art. The Catholic foundations of the school are emphasised in the pupils' glass, ceramic and canvas artwork that adorn the walls. Enrichment activities are outstanding and appreciated by pupils and their parents. Across all subjects, pupils make very effective use of their speaking, reading, number and information and communication technology skills. Writing skills are not used as widely and this is one reason why standards are not as high as they could be in some years.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Arrangements for safeguarding and protecting children are robust. Training is up-to-date and staff know what to do in an emergency. Pupils confidently turn to an adult for help in any situation. Pupils' confidence is properly boosted because the very rare instances of inappropriate behaviour are strongly and efficiently dealt with. There have been no exclusions from school because monitoring of behaviour is excellent. Risks are dealt with very well because of the rigorous procedures and monitoring. Challenging targets are established through the effective tracking of academic progress. Nevertheless, better use could be made of the tracking information to set individual learning targets, particularly in writing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The experienced and highly caring headteacher gives very strong leadership in several areas, such as:

- promoting high academic standards and excellent personal development
- providing the outstanding care and curriculum that support all pupils
- maintaining values and traditions that give pupils a will to succeed and attitudes that are supportive to others.

The deputy headteacher and key staff provide very good support. This team has ensured that the school has made good gains since the last inspection through rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Information from monitoring and performance data are used effectively to identify key priorities and timescales for improvement. All within school are focused on these areas and regular reviews inform them about progress and next steps. Governors support the school well and they show a good knowledge of its workings. The school council contributes well to the ongoing review of the school and staff show their trust in older pupils by asking the head boy and head girl to regularly lead school assemblies. Financial management is excellent. The school has good procedures for obtaining value for money in its dealings.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
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	1
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?	1
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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	1
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

St Benet's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Fulwell Road

Sunderland

Tyne and Wear

SR6 9QU

28 November 2006

Dear Children

I thoroughly enjoyed being in your excellent school this week. It was a real privilege to work with you and the adults in your school. I am very grateful for your warm welcome, courtesy and the help you provided. Please give a special thanks to those who talked with me through the day.

What I really liked about your school:

- the happy atmosphere in the school and the way you support each other
- the stunning glass and ceramic work you have done with visiting artists
- the good teaching and the strong teamwork of all the adults that puts your needs first
- the excellent progress that you make, particularly in reading, mathematics and art
- the excellence of your behaviour, attitudes to work and the relationships you develop
- the way that you all contribute to a safe and caring ethos in the school
- the outstanding and interesting range of activities that enrich your curriculum
- the excellent leadership and management, including the contribution of the school council.

I have asked your teachers to make sure that progress in writing is good across all classes. You can be a great help by always doing your best writing, whether it is in literacy or in other subjects. Finally, I have pointed out to staff that their marking of your work needs to be consistent and make sure that you are clear about how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve further. Again, you can really help by following the advice and guidance from your teachers.

Good luck for the future and continue to look after each other.

Yours sincerely

John Heap

Lead inspector