



St Benedict's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111308
Local Authority Warrington
Inspection number 288920
Inspection dates 21–22 February 2007
Reporting inspector Saleem Hussain

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Quebec Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Warrington
Age range of pupils	3–11		Cheshire WA2 7SB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01925 234699
Number on roll (school)	245	Fax number	01925 234701
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr K Hindle
		Headteacher	Mr Kevin McCourt
Date of previous school inspection	29 October 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	21–22 February 2007	288920

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Benedict's is an average sized school close to Warrington town centre. The number of boys and girls is similar. The percentage of pupils taking free school meals is below average, as is the percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion of minority ethnic groups is below average. A small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Attainment on entry to Nursery is mostly below average. The headteacher took up post in September 2006 and has been supported by two acting assistant headteachers.

The school recently gained the Primary Quality Mark, National Healthy Schools award and Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Benedict's is a good school, which provides a good education within a strong family ethos. Pupils feel happy and safe. Consequently, the great majority achieve well. The good provision in the Foundation Stage enables children to get used to learning routines quickly and develops their confidence. This helps them to achieve well, especially in personal and social areas of learning. Standards are broadly average by the time pupils leave school but attainment in English is not quite as good as in mathematics and science. In particular, the more able pupils do not achieve as well as they can in this subject because they are not always given sufficiently challenging work. Overall, however, teaching is good. There is effective teamwork at all levels. For instance, teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure good learning.

The new headteacher has quickly made his mark on the school by developing rigorous new procedures, while maintaining existing strengths. In this work he has been supported well by the two acting assistant headteachers. Good leadership and management are ensuring that teachers and support staff are strategically and effectively used, and this is supporting pupils' learning well. The new headteacher has done much to improve communications and teamwork in school and parents have commented favourably about this. Governors are supporting the school well, working closely and effectively with the senior staff. Overall, the school has a good awareness of its strengths and weaknesses, but a couple of areas are evaluated a little too positively. For example, while the quality of care, guidance and support is good, there are some relative weaknesses in systems for monitoring pupils' progress. Current systems are not particularly effective in helping to identify underperformance, for example of the more able pupils, so that intervention programmes can be implemented to raise achievement.

Personal development, including pupils' behaviour, is good and makes a positive contribution to their achievements. Pupils learn to make a useful contribution to the community. For instance, they are encouraged to take on responsibilities around the school, including becoming members of the school council. Spiritual development is outstanding. For instance, pupils are helped to see the wonder in everything they learn. Every child matters at this school, so, for example, pupils are given extremely good support in understanding how to live healthy lifestyles. The result is that they develop outstanding levels of awareness about this aspect. Pupils are well cared for. They know this and say that they feel safe. Pupils' comments included: 'Teachers cheer me up if I ever feel down and they make learning fun.' The curriculum is good. It is enriched through strong community links, and pupils enjoy the input of many visitors and take part in many educational visits. Inclusion is good. For instance, specialist teaching support from the local authority is organised for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language. The school has recognised the need to improve the performance of the more able pupils in English and is developing good strategies to address this issue. Overall, the school has moved on well since its last inspection, although the monitoring of pupils' performance still needs refinement. Nevertheless, given the good outcomes, provision,

and drive to improve, the school provides good value for money and has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English by the end of Key Stage 2, especially for the more able pupils.
- Improve the systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress so that any underperformance is easily identified and suitable intervention strategies implemented to raise standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From a below average starting point, children in the Foundation Stage make good progress. By the time they begin Year 1 most are working at the levels expected for their age. Overall, good progress continues in Key Stages 1 and 2, and by the time pupils leave school they reach broadly average standards. The most recent test results for Year 6 pupils reflected a fall from the previous year, but this was because a higher than usual proportion of pupils had learning difficulties. Nevertheless, achievement in English lagged behind that in mathematics and science because the more able pupils did not do as well as they might have. The school has recognised this and put good strategies in place to raise the performance of this group in this year's tests. The current group of Year 6 pupils has made good progress since they started school and looks set to achieve the challenging targets that have been set for them. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because of the good support they receive, including from outside specialists. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils who speak English as an additional language progress at the same good rate as others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Enjoyment of school is reflected in good rates of attendance. Even the youngest children in the school say, 'We love it here, everyone really helps us.' Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good, with spiritual development being outstanding. For instance, during lunch, Reception children talked about what they were going to do later and one explained: 'I'm going to be a princess, pray to God and make everyone happy by helping them.' Social skills are well developed through responsibilities such as being playtime helpers.

Pupils are courteous. They are well motivated through rewards, such as Golden Time, and their behaviour is good. Pupils told inspectors: 'There is no bullying here, we're like one family.' Behaviour is best in lessons that are stimulating and challenging. When work is less challenging, a few pupils can become restless and get distracted. Pupils work safely, and healthy lifestyles are exceptionally well promoted. For instance,

pupils love 'Wake and Shake' to pop music before the start of some lessons and there is much opportunity for sport. The recently formed school council is currently busy developing ways of making playtimes even better. This is a good example of pupils' contribution to their school community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good, with some outstanding features. Learners thrived in an excellent Year 2 mathematics lesson because they were all given challenging and stimulating tasks. Consequently, they made exceptional progress. Learning is also at its best when pupils are especially well involved, for instance in talking their work through with a partner. Good practice is developing to improve learning in literacy and numeracy by finding more opportunities for pupils to use and develop these skills across the curriculum. There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils. Consequently, pupils respond well and try hard. Occasionally, lessons lack pace and challenge so progress dips to satisfactory. Teachers are not yet making best use of assessment information to move pupils on as quickly as they might, for example with the most able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It generally meets the needs of pupils well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision in the Foundation Stage, including a well resourced outdoor area, ensures that the youngest children make good progress. Personal, social and health education is effective, leading to pupils' good standards of personal development. Mathematics is used particularly well to promote skills in problem-solving. Good use is made of information and communication technology across the curriculum and even the youngest children are confident in using the new interactive whiteboards. Many visitors and educational visits enrich the curriculum. For instance, an outside agency supports work in science by providing regular, whole-school, workshops. A Year 6 visit to the Isle of Man helps to further develop pupils' personal and social skills. A good range of clubs and after-school activities also makes a significant contribution to learning and achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Parents' views include 'the school helps children settle in well' and 'the school has a wonderful atmosphere'. Very effective relationships between adults and pupils promote pupils' confidence in their learning and enjoyment of school. Child protection procedures are in place and are regularly reviewed. Much information is kept on pupils' progress but the use of this information is an area for

further development. Marking of work is good and pupils have a good awareness of how well they are doing. Good support is given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those speaking English as an additional language. Induction procedures for the youngest children into Nursery and transfer arrangements to secondary school for older pupils are good and prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good. The recently appointed headteacher has very quickly gained the confidence of the school community. Together with the senior leadership team he has successfully built upon the harmonious and hardworking culture that existed in the school. Leaders and managers at all levels share a vision for improvement and effectively promote high-quality care and education. The headteacher, senior staff and governors have generally identified the main strengths and development priorities well. Pupil assessment procedures are being further developed, but the clarity of the information about pupils' progress is currently limited by the quality of records. The impact is that the school's evaluation of pupils' performance is not as sharp as it could be and this slows the implementation of intervention strategies. The school uses financial and other resources efficiently and effectively. Governors are knowledgeable on educational matters and provide good support to the school as critical friends.

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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	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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	3
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

We really enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for letting us watch you learn and play and for talking with us about your school. This really helped us to come to our judgements.

We think you are getting a good education because you are working hard and learning a lot in your lessons. We agree with you that your teachers provide good lessons and that they and all the adults in school care for you and help you a lot with your work.

We are delighted to see the outstanding attitudes you have towards leading healthy lifestyles. We also think that your spiritual development is excellent.

We know that your new headteacher is working very hard to make your school better. Inspectors were pleased to see you behaving so well and how much you all help each other in school. The school council is getting more and more involved in trying to improve things in the school and we are sure that this is a big help to your new headteacher.

We had talks with your new headteacher and governors and told them what we liked about St Benedict's. We also said to them that we felt you could achieve better standards in English by the time you leave Year 6. Finally, we suggested that your school makes some improvements to the way that it checks on your progress.

You can help the school with these improvements by carrying on doing your best, whichever class you are in, especially in English. Thanks again for such an enjoyable visit, it was great!