



St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114546
Local Authority Brighton and Hove
Inspection number 289963
Inspection dates 7–8 February 2007
Reporting inspector Kathryn Taylor

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Preston Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Withdean
Age range of pupils	4–11		Brighton BN1 6UT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01273 553813
Number on roll (school)	213	Fax number	01273 563213
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	John Stone
		Headteacher	Bernadette Connor
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2003		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of average size. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds, but most pupils are fluent English speakers. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities is below average, and none of the pupils has a statement of special educational need. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average. The school has gained the Artsmark and Active Mark Awards. Pupil mobility is low, but fairly recent staff turnover means that several teachers are in new leadership roles.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Bernadette's is a good school with a strong Christian, family ethos. It ensures that pupils are safe, happy and well cared for and that standards and achievement are good.

Children quickly settle into school when they join Reception and make good progress across all of the areas of learning, from an average starting point on entry to school. This is because Reception provision is good and children enjoy an appropriate mix of adult-led and independent activities indoors and outside. The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 is good, with particular strengths in specialist music and French provision, and good after-school activities, visits and visitors.

Standards are above those expected by age seven, and well above average by the time pupils leave. Pupils make good progress because teaching and learning are good, and because the school provides effective additional support to those who need it. There are, however, weaknesses in marking in some classes, which limits academic guidance for pupils about how they might improve their work. Pupils are also not fully involved in assessing their own learning, and setting and reviewing their targets so as to improve their independence in learning and raise standards further. This is why care, guidance and support are good overall, despite the very strong pastoral care, which parents rightly speak highly of.

Parents make a very good contribution to the school and to their children's education and have largely very positive views of it. Typical comments include: 'Teachers give so much time and energy to ensure the children enjoy school' and 'We feel very honoured to be part of the St Bernadette's family'. Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils' very positive attitudes to school and learning contribute well to their achievements and to ensuring that the school is a very harmonious community. Pupils' good basic skills and well-developed social skills mean they are well prepared for secondary school.

The school is well led and managed and governance is good, providing it with a good capacity to continue to improve. Senior leaders regularly monitor teaching and learning and they generally draw well on parents', pupils' and others' views to help determine how well the school is doing. Nevertheless, the school's evaluation of its own performance in some areas is too generous. This is because although monitoring of teaching, learning and pupil progress is regular, the evidence gained from this is not always rigorously and critically evaluated to pinpoint precisely where further improvements are needed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide better guidance to pupils about what they need to do to improve, by improving marking and extending pupils' involvement in reviewing their work and setting targets.
- Introduce greater rigour into the way that the school evaluates provision and identifies future priorities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although there are some year-on-year variations in attainment on entry to school, this is broadly average. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards always exceed the average. In 2006, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were above average at the end of Year 2. At the end of Year 6, standards were well above average in mathematics and science, and exceptionally high in English. Pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science and most meet the challenging targets set for them. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress in relation to their capabilities so that they often attain the expected level by the time they leave the school. This is because provision is well led, pupils' needs are identified quickly and they are well supported in class and through additional support. Pupils with particular talents, for example in music and sports, are challenged well in these areas. The small numbers of pupils who need additional support to learn English receive good support and progress well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say they are happy in school and feel safe. They regularly participate in physical activity during and after school. They know about healthy eating, but this is not always reflected in the snacks that some pupils bring to school. Pupils' thorough enjoyment of school is evidenced in the above average attendance rates and comments such as, 'Lessons are lots of fun!'. Pupils' spiritual, social and moral development is very good. Pupils are sensible, friendly and polite. They behave very well in lessons, are keen to answer questions and they work effectively together. Relationships among pupils of different ages and abilities and from different ethnic backgrounds are very good. In the playground, pupils play happily together and older pupils support younger ones particularly well, for example by teaching them new games. Pupils regularly contribute to charities and to decisions made about the school and they help it to run smoothly. The contributions pupils make to the local community and to the Church are outstanding. Pupils' cultural development is good. They learn about different cultures and religions and are developing a secure understanding of life in a multi-cultural society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and some teaching is outstanding. The best teaching is characterised by teachers' excellent subject knowledge and presentational skills, which challenge pupils and move learning on at a swift pace. General strengths elsewhere include teachers' very good relationships with pupils, good subject knowledge

and well-developed skills in using information and communication technology. Preparation and classroom organisation are good. Lessons, and the pace of pupils' learning, therefore usually proceed at a good pace. Teaching assistants are well trained and deployed and provide pupils with good support. Occasional weaknesses in teaching include some overuse of worksheets, which can limit pupils' independent learning. Marking in some classes also provides too little guidance about the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work, and about how it could be improved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets requirements and also includes specialist music and French teaching. There is the right emphasis on teaching the basic skills, including a large number of intervention programmes to support pupils of different abilities. Links between subjects are developing, but more can still be done in this regard, and to provide opportunities for independent learning and extending pupils' enjoyment even more. Curricular enrichment is very good. Pupils regularly participate in local sporting events and competitions. Many visitors and visits, including a residential trip, significantly add to pupils' learning and their enjoyment of school. A large number of pupils attend the wide variety of after-school activities. In addition, many pupils learn to play musical instruments and participate in the choir, concerts and music productions

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good induction and transfer arrangements help children in Reception to settle quickly, and pupils in Year 6 to approach the move to secondary school with confidence. Pupils' views are regularly sought, valued and acted upon. The staff are very vigilant in supporting all pupils, particularly those who are most vulnerable. They maintain very strong links with parents, health professionals and external agencies in this regard. Pupils are well supervised when moving around the school and outdoors, and there are robust procedures for checking staff and the school site.

The school assesses all pupils' academic progress systematically. Individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties are reviewed regularly and the recently introduced system of personalised learning reviews is proving increasingly effective. Day-to-day assessment through marking and the use of individual pupil targets, however, is not yet fully developed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. It runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The headteacher's strong leadership has helped to maintain the school's calm and supportive ethos and establish good teamwork. This has enabled the school to deal effectively with several changes to senior managers and subject leaders, while maintaining good

standards. Governors are very supportive of the school. They are well informed and involved in school life and regularly monitor provision.

Members of the new senior management team work well together and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and most of its weaknesses. Nevertheless, there is scope to sharpen the overall judgements arising from the school's self-evaluation procedures. Some subjects are already well led, whilst others have new leaders who are beginning to contribute to checking the effectiveness of provision. Some of the subject leaders' action plans, however, focus too much on what subject leaders will do, rather than focusing on where improvements to provision, achievement and standards need to be made.

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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	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?	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	2
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	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	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 very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We found St Bernadette's to be a good school.

These are the things we especially liked about your school:

- You are very friendly, well-behaved and polite. You get on very well together and take good care of each other. This really helps to make your school a happy one.
- Everyone who works in the school makes sure that you settle into school quickly, are safe and well cared for.
- Because you work hard and your teachers teach you well, you make good progress and reach good standards.
- The staff provide many interesting activities during school time and lots of clubs and activities after school. These help you to learn, to enjoy school, and to stay fit and healthy. However we did notice that not all pupils eat healthily at breaktimes.
- Your headteacher and senior managers lead the school well.

These are the things that need to improve:

- We have asked your teachers to improve their marking so that you will all know how you might improve your work, and, to involve you in assessing your work and setting new targets.
- We have asked the staff to get even better at checking how well the school is doing and identifying what needs to be done next.

We feel certain that you will want to help your headteacher, teachers and other staff to make your school even better.