



# St Benedict's Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

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Better  
education  
and care

**Unique Reference Number** 118780  
**Local Authority** Medway  
**Inspection number** 291253  
**Inspection dates** 30–31 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Carole Skinner

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Lambourn Way
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Lordswood
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Chatham ME5 8PU
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 669700
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	199	<b>Fax number</b>	01634 865570
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Stephen Wymer
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Barbara Salamonczyk
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 June 2001		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Benedict's is a one-form entry primary school situated on the outskirts of Chatham. Pupils come from a wide variety of social backgrounds and just over half of them are Catholic. Most pupils are of White British origin. A small proportion comes from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is similar to that seen in most schools. The school has received the Basic Skills Quality Mark for the second time and has also achieved recognition as a Healthy School. It was recently one of the first schools in the UK to be awarded the ICT Mark.

## 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 has a number of outstanding qualities. An overwhelming majority of parents express positive views of the school. One described the school as a 'big happy family' and this certainly sums up the views of parents, children, staff and governors alike. The school's excellent partnerships, not just with parents but with the local and church communities and with other schools and institutions, greatly enrich the quality of education it provides for its pupils. Its strong Christian ethos shines through in the warm and supportive relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils achieve well and reach standards significantly higher than the national average in English, mathematics and science. They do best in English because the school has had a recent successful drive to raise standards in reading and writing, especially for boys. Standards are not quite as high in mathematics, as pupils sometimes lack the skills to tackle complex problems systematically. Good teaching takes into account the needs of individual pupils and builds well upon their previous learning. Pupils are very well motivated and really enjoy learning because lessons are fast paced, lively and interesting. Their enjoyment is enhanced by the good, well planned and varied curriculum which is enriched by a wide variety of additional activities. In Reception, children do well because they are taught good basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as learning independently through play and investigation. The care, guidance and support for pupils are good overall. The excellent care for pupils' health, safety and well-being contributes significantly to their outstanding personal development. As a result, pupils feel safe and happy and have enthusiastically embraced the need to eat healthily and take plenty of exercise. Guidance and support for pupils' academic development are good but still developing. The systems for involving pupils in setting and reviewing their own targets and for tracking their progress from term to term are not yet fully embedded throughout the school. The good leadership and management are constantly seeking ways to make the school even better. Their rigorous evaluation of the quality of provision and its impact on pupils' progress gives them an accurate view of where improvement is needed. Very effective teamwork between all staff and governors ensures that everyone is working towards the same goals. The school has successfully tackled the shortcomings identified by the last inspection and has maintained consistently high standards. There is no complacency at St Benedict's, rather a determination to give pupils the best education it possibly can. This places the school in a strong position to build upon its recent successes.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' skills in using their mathematical knowledge to solve problems methodically.
- Refine the systems for involving pupils in setting and reviewing their individual targets and for tracking their progress towards them from term to term.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good progress from broadly average starting points and achieve well. Good teaching in Reception enables most children to reach or exceed the goals they are expected to achieve by the end of their first year. By the time they reach Year 2, standards are significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2005 and 2006, they were exceptionally high in reading and writing. Standards in Year 6 are consistently above average and improving as new initiatives take effect. In the recent past, there have been small pockets of underachievement in Years 3 to 6 in writing, especially amongst boys, and in mathematics. The school has successfully tackled these shortcomings. The standards achieved by boys in reading and writing are improving year on year as improvements in teaching take effect. Very effective booster groups in literacy and numeracy are having a beneficial effect on reinforcing pupils' understanding. Standards in mathematics are not quite as strong as in English and science. To rectify this, the school has rightly identified the need to improve pupils' mathematical problem solving skills.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development strongly reflects both the school's Catholic foundation and its commitment to celebrating religious and ethnic diversity. Relationships between pupils are excellent. They are polite and respectful to adults and especially welcoming to visitors. Pupils really enjoy school, and this is reflected in their good attendance. As one explained, 'It's a cheerful school where you get to do cheerful things.' Pupils take a pride in all they do and are good ambassadors for their school through their excellent contribution to the parish and local community. They have a mature understanding of wider world issues, such as poverty, and often raise funds for third world charities. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and caring for each other, for example through the buddy system and the playground 'friendship post'. Pupils express their views through the school council and make an excellent contribution to the day-to-day running of the school. All of these activities help to prepare them well for their future role in society.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good progress because they enjoy learning and find lessons interesting. Reception children achieve well because they learn through play and exploration as well as through direct teaching of essential literacy and numeracy skills. All teachers use a good variety of methods and resources to motivate pupils and engage them in learning. There are many good opportunities for pupils to boost their learning through

practical 'hands-on' experiences. Lessons are brisk and purposeful and build effectively on pupils' previous learning. Good support from skilled teaching assistants and carefully planned work help pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities to achieve well. High expectations of all pupils, including the most able, promote good progress throughout the school. In some lessons, teachers do not involve pupils sufficiently in reviewing their own progress or checking to see if they are meeting their targets. There are also inconsistencies in the way teachers mark pupils' work as some do not always show the pupils what they need to do to improve.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs and interests and builds well on their previous learning. Provision for developing pupils' problem-solving skills has been identified correctly as a weaker aspect of the mathematics curriculum and is a current priority for improvement. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very well to enhance learning across the curriculum. Art and music enjoy a high profile. Personal, social and health education contributes very well to pupils' outstanding personal development. The school choir and band enrich pupils' involvement in worship and school productions. The school's excellent partnerships with other institutions add a further dimension to the pupils' experiences. Links with Gillingham Football Club and the sports partnership with a local secondary school have significantly extended opportunities for pupils to participate in competitive sports fixtures. An extensive programme of instrumental music tuition, the teaching of French and a wide range of clubs, visits and visitors provide valuable additional opportunities within and beyond the school day.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of care for pupils' well-being and for their health and safety is outstanding. Each pupil is treated as an individual and all of the adults know them well and ensure their needs are met. Pupils are valued and their efforts and achievements are recognised and praised. This helps to develop their self-esteem and gives them a sense of pride in their achievements. The school makes excellent use of outside agencies to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met. The Rainbows team of trained staff provides valuable support and counselling for pupils who have experienced family bereavement or separation. Support and guidance for pupils' academic progress are good but still developing as new systems are being embedded. Thorough assessments and recording of pupils' progress enable teachers to match work well to pupils' individual needs. The systems for recording these centrally are still evolving and currently lack sufficient detail for senior managers to have a clear picture of pupils' progress from term to term.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Strong teamwork is the key ingredient in the good leadership and management. The headteacher leads from the front, particularly in establishing the school's outstanding ethos. She is complemented very well by her deputy and the rest of the senior management team, whose combined expertise in English, mathematics, science and assessment is having a significant impact on improving teaching and the curriculum and, as a result, raising standards. The roles of other subject leaders in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are a current focus for development. Initiatives to improve boys' achievement in reading and writing have been well thought through and applied consistently, with good results. Careful analysis of data and assessment information has accurately identified where weaknesses need to be tackled in mathematics. Action is taken promptly, training provided and targets set for all teachers. The professional development of all staff is a high priority for the school, and all feel valued. Governors are very supportive of the staff but also willing to challenge when necessary and often engage in vigorous debate to ensure that the right decisions are made. Senior managers are aware of the need to refine the relatively new systems for target setting and tracking of pupils' progress in order to give them even earlier warning of potential underachievement by individual pupils.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 feel so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking to you as well as sitting in on some of your lessons. We were very impressed by your outstanding behaviour and the way you develop into confident and mature young people. You make an excellent contribution to the school and to the local community and you are doing very well in your efforts to keep fit and healthy. You are thoughtful and caring towards to each other and very polite to adults. We thought you would like to know some of the other reasons why St Benedict's is a good school.
- The teachers plan interesting lessons and expect you to work hard. This helps you to enjoy learning and make good progress.
- You reach high standards in English, mathematics and science and you are good at using ICT to help you learn.
- You learn about a good variety of subjects and the school gives you plenty of opportunities to take part in sports, music, dance and art.
- There are lots of exciting things to do outside of normal lessons, such as clubs, learning to play musical instruments and learning French, not to mention the Isle of Wight residential visit for Years 5 and 6.
- All of the adults care for you very well and help you to feel safe and happy at school. The teachers and governors who run the school do a good job because they are always looking for ways to make it even better. They know exactly what needs to be done to improve the school and we agree that the two most important things are:
  - helping you to get better at working out problems in mathematics
  - involving you more in setting your own targets and checking your own progress, as well as keeping a closer eye on how well you are doing each term. You can help your teachers by remembering your targets and using them to help you improve your work.