



St Bernard's Catholic Primary School, Preston

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119449
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291424
Inspection date 22 February 2007
Reporting inspector Jackie Barnes

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Victoria Park Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Lea, Preston
Age range of pupils	4-11		Lancashire, PR2 1RP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01772 728153
Number on roll (school)	159	Fax number	01772 723776
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev. Father Simon Hawksworth
		Headteacher	Mr Gerard McKevitt
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves a very mixed area of rented and private housing about two miles west of the centre of Preston. About one in four pupils receives free school meals, which is above average. Children's attainment when they enter the Reception Year varies widely but overall is below average for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is about average. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and there are no pupils who are at the early stages of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school which is improving rapidly. It has the confidence of parents and works closely with the church and its faith community. Pupils' personal development and safety are given a high priority. The staff care for the pupils well. They respond with good behaviour and co-operative attitudes and enjoyment in learning. They know how to keep safe and healthy and take advantage of the school's provision for physical activity and healthy eating. They leave in Year 6 well prepared for High School.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are average overall. Most pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well. When they start school pupils learn quickly as they make good use of new experiences and by the end of Reception standards are average. Steady and satisfactory progress is made in Key Stage 1 and by Year 2 standards are average with an improving trend. Standards in Year 6 are usually average overall. Progress in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory but tends to be variable from year to year and across subjects. For example, in the 2006 national tests pupils' progress in science and mathematics was considerably better than in English, especially for the most able pupils. This is mainly because the school does not use assessment information as well as it could to plan pupils' learning and check their progress. Better planning by teachers and good support by teaching assistants ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress, and most achieve well.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Good relationships between pupils and teachers, clear introductions to lessons and well prepared resources, maintain pupils' interest and willingness to learn. However, some pupils are given work which is too hard and for others too easy. When teaching assistants are available they are effective in helping pupils whose work is too hard, but the more capable pupils do not always have work that enables them to make the best of their abilities.

The school's leadership and management are satisfactory. A suitably high priority is given by the senior management to keeping all pupils interested in school, and developing their confidence and self-esteem. Most staff have several areas of responsibility which they lead and manage effectively. Occasionally constraints of time or expertise result in an initiative progressing slowly, especially in the evaluation of assessment data. The school has established a good record of successful development in areas it has targeted, such as significantly improving standards in science. The school now has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, especially for the most able pupils.
- Use assessment data more effectively to plan pupils' learning and rigorously check their progress.
- Ensure sufficient time and expertise is available for staff to undertake the key school development priorities, particularly those related to evaluating assessment data.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average in Year 2 and Year 6 and achievement is satisfactory. From below average attainment at entry overall, most children make good progress in the Foundation Stage, especially in their personal development. They all settle quickly into the class routines and are keen to learn. By the end of the Reception year, a large majority are working securely within the goals set for pupils of their age. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory with examples of individual pupils making good progress, especially in writing. National assessments also indicate that standards in Year 2 are slowly improving, especially in writing. However there are inconsistencies from year to year, such as in 2006 when none of the more capable pupils attained the higher Level 3 in writing and mathematics.

Progress in Key Stage 2 continues to be satisfactory overall, with good progress generally made by those pupils who begin Year 3 with low attainment, including most of those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Progress for other pupils is satisfactory, but variable and inconsistent. When the school focuses on a particular subject or group of pupils, such as the recent attention given to science throughout the school, the progress of most pupils improves. The school's present system of linking assessment information to planning for pupils' further progress is not always strong enough to be sure these improvements can be maintained.

The school's Year 6 national test results in 2006 in mathematics and science were a considerable improvement from the previous year, and showed good progress for the boys in mathematics and the more able pupils in science. In English the results dipped with some of the more competent pupils not making enough progress to attain the higher levels. The school exceeded its 2006 targets. The targets set in English for 2007 are too modest but in mathematics they provide a suitably high level of challenge.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. This is a strength of the school. Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported by the faith community and by regular guidance in the day-to-day practice of the school. All pupils are welcomed and settle well into class routines and friendships. They behave well, care for each other and have positive attitudes to learning which contribute well to their work in lessons and to their play. Pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe because they have confidence in the staff to help them when needed. Attendance is about average and pupils recognise why regular attendance is important for their learning. They are knowledgeable about how to stay safe and healthy, and make good use of the school's provision of fruit in the morning and physical activities during and after school. The school council provides a useful focus for pupils to express their ideas, which they do with confidence, and to introduce them to democracy and the skill of compromising. Pupils' sound basic skills in literacy, numeracy and technology,

combined with their ability to work together in the school and wider community, provide a good basis for their future well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall and some is good. Lessons are well prepared with clear introductions to lessons, and good use of resources and practical activities that generally maintain the pupils' interest. The management of behaviour is good with unobtrusive guidance for individual pupils that maintains the flow of the lesson. The supportive relationships between teachers and pupils have a positive effective on pupils' willingness to learn, including asking for help when needed. The pupils rate this highly in their enjoyment of school. On the occasions when expectations of pupils' progress are high, such as when pupils move into a class with older pupils or in the oldest year groups where progress towards national tests sets a brisker pace, there are clear examples of individual pupils considerably accelerating their progress. Teaching assistants give effective learning support and encouragement.

However, there are limitations in the school's systems for planning pupils' learning linked to assessment information, and then checking that progress is good enough. Teachers' planning of learning in most year groups is not sufficiently clear. As a result, the activities prepared do not always provide the right level of challenge to enable all pupils to make consistently good gains over time.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides well for visits, visitors, clubs and additional activities including sport and creative activities. An element of variety in how the school delivers subjects, such as spending a full day on an identified theme such health or the arts, provides additional interest for pupils. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal development. For pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities the curriculum is well adapted to their needs through early assessment and diagnosis, the provision of additional activities linked mainly to helping their progress in literacy and numeracy, and the support of teaching assistants. Although there is some provision for the more able pupils, this is not yet having a consistent impact on their learning in lessons. When the needs of these pupils are given high priority by the school, such as in the recent focus on science, they respond well and a high proportion attain above average standards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The staff take good care of the pupils' welfare and provide effective guidance and example for their personal development. Due attention is given to the safeguarding

and safety of pupils and staff are knowledgeable about the procedures. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and most make good progress in their academic work and personal confidence. The school's systems for academic guidance have been updated recently with targets for all pupils and more detail on how to improve included in the marking of pupils' work. It is early days in the implementation of these improvements so the impact on pupils' progress is still to be seen but many pupils are enthusiastic about achieving their targets. The school's assessment information is currently underused to provide guidance for planning pupils' learning and checking their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is satisfactorily governed, led and managed. A difficult period with a falling roll and reduction in staffing has been managed with minimum disruption. The headteacher has ensured good provision for the pupils' personal development and clearly leads the school's positive approach to welcoming pupils of all abilities and backgrounds. School self-evaluation is satisfactory. Most staff with responsibilities undertake their work effectively and have created a positive environment for teaching and learning. However some roles are currently overburdened. Occasionally, not enough time or expertise are available to maintain the pace of development in key aspects such as the leadership of Key Stage 1 and the further development of assessment and planning systems. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in some aspects, especially the provision of outdoor facilities in the Foundation Stage, higher attainment in writing in Year 2 and in science through the school. Improvements in English have been more difficult to sustain over time. However, other developments have put the school in a good position to build on recent improvements. New staff, including teaching assistants, with some changes in responsibilities, have brought additional expertise and a team committed to further improvement. The leadership of the new co-ordinator for special educational needs has enhanced the provision for these pupils. The school's assessment data are now more readily available in preparation for more rigorous analysis and evaluation to be undertaken. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	3
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	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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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 Bernard's Catholic Primary School, Preston

Victoria Park Avenue

Lea

Preston

Lancashire

PR2 1RP

23 February 2007

Dear Children

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school, and helping me to see how much you enjoy your activities. You are well behaved, and value your friends and teachers. You know how to stay safe and healthy, and you make good use of your school's arrangements for physical activity and healthy eating. You are keen to learn and this shows in the improvements you make in your work and your enthusiasm to meet your targets.

I think you can do even better, so I have asked your school to help you improve your standards in English. Also to plan and check your progress so that you are all able to do your best work in every year group, and to be as successful as you can be by the time you leave for secondary school.

I know you will do all you can to help. Keep watching those targets and asking how you can do better.

My very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

J M Barnes

Lead inspector