



St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, Lancaster

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119584
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291470
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector Joy Byrom

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bowerham Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Lancaster, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	4–11		LA1 4HT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01524 63934
Number on roll (school)	145	Fax number	01524 63934
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Father Peter Foulkes
		Headteacher	Mrs Sharron Halsall
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school, which experienced falling rolls between 2002 and 2004. As a result there are fewer pupils in Years 2, 3, and 4 than other years and pupils in Years 2 to 6 are taught in mixed age classes. The school serves a relatively advantaged though mixed area, and the proportion of pupils taking free school meals is very low. The number of pupils joining and leaving the school at times other than the start and end of primary education is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is average and the number of pupils with statements of special educational need is above average. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is above average and a small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Before and after school childcare is provided by the Community of St Bernadette's.

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 outstanding features. Under the very good leadership of the headteacher, it strives for excellence in all aspects of its work. Parents are delighted with the happy family atmosphere and the caring Christian values that permeate the school. Relationships at all levels within the school and the wider community are excellent. This environment, together with the exceptional level of care, guidance and support for all pupils, results in outstanding personal development. Every child's needs are addressed with understanding, rigour and commitment by a very dedicated team of teachers and teaching assistants; nothing is too much trouble. Pupils enjoy school and know how to keep themselves safe and healthy. By the time they leave school they are very confident, friendly and articulate, with very good independent learning skills, and well prepared for the next stage of their education. The emphasis the school places on personal development begins in Reception with very well planned and monitored activities to ensure every child develops the confidence and social skills needed to get the best from their education. Pupils of all ages take care of each other and are keen to take on responsibility. In short, they are a delight.

Standards by the end of Year 6 are average and in 2006 a good proportion of pupils attained the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science. This was an improvement on 2005, and pupils' achieve well. In the Reception class achievement is also good, in 2006 it was very good. Pupils make most progress in Reception and in the Year5/6 class, because of very good teaching and effective use of marking. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and the school's focus on improving the teaching of writing skills is already raising standards further. The new marking policy is helping pupils understand how to improve, but the very good practice seen in some classes is not yet implemented rigorously in all. The school's rich curriculum contributes to pupils' enjoyment. Good links between subjects, and the emphasis on developing thinking skills and creativity, promote good learning. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved considerably since the last inspection, but access to computers is still limited for some pupils.

The school is well led and effectively managed. The committed and purposeful leadership of the headteacher has given the school a clear vision and sense of direction. This, together with very good governance, has resulted in good improvement since the last inspection, especially over the last two years, and a good capacity to improve further. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress further through the effective use of marking and target setting.
- Ensure all pupils have sufficient access to ICT across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Children's attainment on entry to Reception is broadly typical for their age, although it was slightly below average in 2005 and 2006. By the end of the Reception year pupils reach the nationally expected levels and often exceed them. They make good progress overall and very good progress in their personal and social development.

At Key Stage 1 standards rose steadily from 2003 to 2005. They were significantly above average in 2004 and 2005, and pupils made good progress, although the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 in writing dropped in 2005. In 2006 the results were slightly lower overall, but the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 improved in writing and was particularly high in mathematics.

Over the last four years pupils have reached broadly average standards by the end of Key Stage 2. Progress from Key Stage 1 in 2005 was less than expected, particularly in mathematics. Although in 2006 standards were similar to the 2005 results, this represents good achievement, because this year group started Key Stage 2 at below average standards. The school met its targets for reaching the expected Level 4 and above, and exceeded them by a significant margin for the higher Level 5 in all three subjects. This good achievement is also evident in the current Years 5 and 6, and reflects the improvement in teaching and learning and the focus on writing.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress because of the very good support they receive.

Personal development and well-beingGrade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils in all years are very confident, happy and articulate, and they enjoy school. The extremely well planned and monitored learning activities in Reception ensure that children get off to a very good start. Excellent relationships throughout the school ensure all pupils feel well looked after and valued, and pupils appreciate all their teachers do for them. Pupils know how to keep healthy and safe and do their very best to adopt healthy lifestyles. Almost all pupils do some extra sport. They have excellent attitudes to learning: they are keen and enthusiastic. They work very well both independently and in groups. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they show great consideration for each other. They contribute enthusiastically to their school community through the school council and as class monitors. Older pupils act as 'buddies' to younger pupils who value this support. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the local and wider community through church activities, carol singing and raising money for charity. They are very well prepared for the next stage in their education through excellent links with the local high school and with St Martin's College. They have good literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The very caring Christian ethos makes a significant contribution to this. Assemblies, with their emphasis on Christian values and pupil involvement, give excellent opportunities for pupils' spiritual development. All pupils benefit from the diverse cultures represented in the school, which values and celebrates this diversity. As a result, pupils joining the school from

overseas quickly feel at home and enjoy sharing their experiences and cultural differences with their peers.

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Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The majority of lessons seen during the inspection were good or better; three were outstanding. The best teaching is in Reception and in the Year 5/6 class, where it is very well matched to individual needs and learning is rigorously monitored. All lessons are usually well planned, and in the very best lessons day-to-day assessment is used well to promote good learning. Pupils understand what is required of them and what they must do to improve. They understand their group targets, although they are not always clear what level they are working at. There is a clear marking strategy to help pupils improve their work and the excellent practice in Year 5/6 provides a good model on which to build upon. Teachers have high expectations and usually provide appropriate challenge for all pupils. This is enhanced by the recently introduced 'learning through creativity' initiative to encourage pupils'

thinking skills, which is helping to raise standards. In lessons which are satisfactory, whole class teaching is not always sufficiently matched to pupils' individual needs, and sometimes goes on too long with some loss of pace. The very well planned focus on teaching writing skills is improving standards. Teaching assistants work very well with class teachers to give good learning support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with some very good features. It is well balanced and meets all statutory requirements; in addition all pupils learn French and there is well-planned provision for extended writing. Provision for ICT has greatly improved but, because there are insufficient computers for a whole class, access for individual pupils is uneven between and within classes. An innovative creativity programme is helping pupils to develop their thinking skills and become independent learners. Good planning enables pupils to apply their knowledge and skills in subjects across the curriculum. In the Reception class children are carefully guided to ensure they experience the full range of very well planned indoor and outdoor learning activities.

There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, choir and the popular animation club, which contributes to pupils' enjoyment and well-being. The school council works well, providing the opportunity for pupils to be involved in the running of their school. Very good links with local high schools and St Martin's College enrich pupils' experiences through sharing facilities and expertise. Pupils enjoy their music, French and physical education afternoons, and special themed weeks. Very good use is made of trips, visits and visitors to enhance learning, such as the Key Stage 2 theatre visit to see *Charlotte's Web* during the inspection. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 develop independence and team skills through an outdoor activities residential experience and a trip to France.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's care, guidance and support of pupils are excellent and results in pupils' outstanding personal development. Teachers know their pupils very well and do their utmost to meet all their needs. Pupils value this and say that their teachers are 'very, very kind'. Meticulous records are kept for risk assessment, health and safety and child protection. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are extremely well supported and excellent records kept to monitor their development. As a result, vulnerable pupils, including those arriving at school with little or no English, achieve well. Pupils have group targets which are displayed in the classroom and their progress is checked carefully. Teachers use assessment data effectively to monitor the pupils' progress and to inform their lesson planning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Over the past three years, the very good leadership of the headteacher has brought about a culture of continuous improvement. Her clear vision and direction are embraced by all. All the staff work very well as a team and enjoy excellent relationships. This is a school which strives for excellence in all it does. Performance management of teachers and their professional development is closely linked to the school's priorities for improvement. The school holds the Investors in People award. The school's self-evaluation is largely accurate, and the work of the school is now monitored by subject leaders as well as the senior team. At present it is too early to see the impact of monitoring in all areas of teaching and learning. The headteacher carefully mentors her teachers and there are long-term plans to increase delegation of subject responsibilities.

Under the clear direction of the headteacher, governance has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now very good. Governors are well-informed and very supportive. They challenge appropriately and hold the school to account. The school has made good progress overall since the last inspection, particularly over the last two years. This is now impacting on achievement which is improving. The school has good capacity to improve further.

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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	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?	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?	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	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	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?	2
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?	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	1
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

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, Lancaster

Bowerham Road

Lancaster

Lancashire

LA1 4HT

11 December 2006

Dear Pupils

I have very much enjoyed visiting your school and talking to many of you. You are very friendly and made me feel very welcome. You are right to be proud of your school; it is a good school with some outstanding features. I am very pleased that you enjoy school so much and appreciate your teachers who look after you so well. You also value the school's close links with Father Peter and the church.

I am very impressed by your personal development which is outstanding. You are very confident and express yourselves clearly using a wide vocabulary. You work well together and help each other. You are also good at working independently.

To help you to do even better your school is now going to:

- make sure that marking shows all of you how to improve even more
- ensure that you all have sufficient access to computers so you can practise your ICT skills.

I wish you good luck in the future, and hope you enjoy your Christmas activities!

With very best wishes.

Joy Byrom

(Lead inspector)