

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119691
Local Authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	291506
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Ruth James HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Stephen Pearson
Headteacher	Mr Sean O'Hare
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2003
School address	Devonshire Road Bispham Blackpool Lancashire FY2 0AJ
Telephone number	01253 353641
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

Description of the school

St Bernadette's is an average sized primary school for children aged 4 to 11. The school has slightly fewer pupils eligible for free school meals than average. An average number of children have additional learning needs. Few have statements, but there are a small number of children with complex needs. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Very few have a first language other than English, although the number has increased slightly recently. The vast majority of pupils are Roman Catholics.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, with some excellent features.

The school's partnership with parents, the parish and the local community is strong. Many parents are enthusiastic in their praise for the school. Pastoral care is excellent. Pupils learn to live healthily, and feel secure because they are very well cared for. The appointment of a family support worker has benefited a number of families and enables children to take full advantage of the opportunities that the school offers.

Children's achievement is good in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2 because of good teaching, and support. This includes very effective support from teaching assistants for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. Progress is better in mathematics than in English and science. Writing skills are not sufficiently developed. Progress accelerates again in Key Stage 2. Key Stage 2 statutory assessment test (SAT) results are above national average and value added measures show very good progress between Years 3 and 6, especially in English and science.

Pupils' personal development is good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is good. Pupils behave well and show respect for each other and for adults in the school community and visitors.

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are interesting and offer different activities. Information and communications technology (ICT) is increasingly being used as a tool to promote learning in all subjects. Marking is not consistently focused on helping pupils to improve.

The curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of learning experiences that prepares them well for their future life. Pupils particularly like the range of sporting opportunities offered which help them have healthy lifestyles.

The headteacher gives clear direction to the school's work, ably supported by the deputy head, other staff and the good governing body. The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness is broadly accurate and the school has improved in a number of respects since the last inspection. The school is well placed to continue to improve. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 in order to improve the rate of progress, especially of more able children.
- Improve the writing skills of Key Stage 1 pupils.
- Ensure that marking is consistent and includes guidance on how pupils can improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and standards are above average. When the children join the school their development is around average for their age. They make good progress in all areas of learning during the Foundation Stage and their attainment is higher than the average when they move into Year 1. Personal development is a particular strength and forms a very strong foundation for pupils' later education.

In Key Stage 1 pupils make good progress in mathematics and satisfactory progress in reading, writing and science. In reading and science a good number of pupils attain the average Level 2 but too few pupils reach the higher Level 3. Pupils make mistakes in their punctuation and spelling which prevent them from making better progress in their writing.

Boys and girls make particularly good progress through Key Stage 2. In science and in mathematics, pupils have good skills of investigation and problem solving and an above average number attain the higher level 5 in those subjects. Girls' attainment has improved as a result of the focused sessions aimed at boosting their confidence. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities learn well; those with more complex needs often make excellent progress. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language have effective support and make good progress, especially in communication skills. Those who are gifted or talented have extra challenges, often arranged out of school, where they have access to expert tuition or additional resources.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils respond well to the school's caring ethos and the quality of relationships is very good. Pupils collaborate very well in lessons and in the playground and they have good respect for faiths and beliefs that are different from their own. Pupils enjoy their work, behaviour is good and the older ones demonstrate a good degree of self-discipline. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that incidents of bullying are rare. They have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and take good advantage of the many opportunities for physical exercise and sport. Attendance is above average.

Pupils play an important part in decision-making through their elected school council. They act as buddies and mediators in the playground and were instrumental in decisions about developing the school grounds. They are keen to take responsibility for jobs around school. These factors, together with good standards, means that pupils are well placed to secure a positive future for themselves. Thought-provoking assemblies and strong links with the church help to ensure pupils' good spiritual and cultural development. Pupils have a strong moral sense and are generous in their support for charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2. Good lessons are characterised by a variety of interesting and imaginative learning activities which involve and motivate pupils and encourage them to do their best. ICT resources are often used well to enhance lessons. There are occasional outstanding lessons in Key Stage 2. In an exceptionally well planned Year 6 lesson with the theme of transition, pupils were carefully grouped for different activities. They focused on thinking about their future careers. Tasks included role-play, interviewing and writing a diary. Pupils' enthusiasm and commitment resulted in some excellent outcomes. The lesson was enhanced by the use of a large model 'Tardis' to help them imagine being transported to the future.

The teaching in Key Stage 1 is not as good as in Key Stage 2. Expectations of more able pupils are not high enough. Longer-term tracking of progress is lacking; this could help teachers to set more challenging targets for individuals.

Throughout the school teachers foster very good working relationships which maintain good behaviour and good attitudes to work. Although marking is prompt and there are good examples, not enough emphasis is placed on pointing pupils to ways of improving. Assessment does not always sufficiently involve pupils in assessing their own work.

The teaching of pupils with additional needs is good. Teachers seek out expertise and specialist resources. Teaching assistants make particularly helpful contributions to their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that the curriculum is good. Teachers and support staff successfully promote pupils' personal development, as well as academic achievement, through the rich and varied curriculum.

Extra-curricular sporting opportunities are excellent and promote healthy lifestyles. Children participate in local competitions such as Blackpool Youth Games. A lively and very well attended judo class was in progress before school on the day inspectors arrived. During the week of the inspection local high school students helped with science week activities including a forensic science experiment to solve an imaginary crime. A language club is also offered.

The National Curriculum is delivered and recent investment in ICT is helping to develop its use in the teaching of all subjects. Children benefit from lessons in personal, social and health education. Trips and visits also enhance pupils' experiences. The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school takes excellent care of its pupils; their welfare is at the heart of its work. The recently appointed Family Support Worker helps those with specific difficulties. Pupils are confident that they can turn to an adult if they are worried or upset. Child protection and health and safety procedures are in place. Pupils' individual needs are fully recognised and met. Staff go to great lengths to secure expert advice or resources to cater for pupils' specific needs. Good induction and transition arrangements ensure that Reception children settle quickly and pupils are confident when moving on to the next class or school.

Effective systems for assessing pupils' progress and developing the next steps for learning are in place throughout school. Pupils and their parents are kept well informed of the outcomes through regular conferences with teachers.

Pupils' performance is also carefully tracked in Key Stage 2 and the information is used to set challenging annual targets for pupils' learning. This is an important factor in the good achievement. There are no such systems in place for Key Stage 1. The school recognises that this is the next step in its overhaul of systems for guidance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides a clear vision based on the Catholic ethos, together with effective leadership. The appointment of a new deputy headteacher in September 2006 has brought added momentum to moving the school forward.

The documentation provided in support of the school's self-evaluation was accurate in most of its judgements, and identified some specific areas for development which inspectors agreed with. The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning are highly effective. Senior managers are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and how to bring about improvements. Development plans do not explicitly focus on raising achievement or the quality of teaching and learning, although these are implicit to some extent. Subject coordinators have a good understanding of key issues relating to their areas of responsibility and how to move forward. They are making valuable contributions to staff development. The school has improved since the last inspection but pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 is still not as good as in Key Stage 2.

Systems for tracking progress are particularly effective for pupils with additional learning needs and they are good in Key Stage 2. Systems in Key Stage 1 are not sufficiently well developed to monitor individual progress well over time.

Governance is good. Governors know the school well and are well informed about all aspects of its work. They provide appropriate strategic direction and understand their role as critical friends.

Recent improvements to the school grounds include a soft play surface. Further development is planned. Investments have been made in ICT to promote its use in the classroom. Partnership arrangements with local high schools, the church and on-site nursery and other organisations are very good and contribute to effective transition arrangements, good pastoral care and the curriculum.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	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	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.

Annex A

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

22 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, Blackpool, Lancashire, FY2 0AJ

Thank you very much for the warm welcome when we came to visit your school. We enjoyed meeting you. Many of your parents sent in questionnaires and most of them are very pleased with the school. St Bernadette's is a friendly place and your behaviour is good. You are very well cared for in school, and some of you have particularly benefited from the work of the family support worker.

You do well at school because of the good teaching you receive. This is especially the case in reception and Key Stage 2. Your teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and enjoyable. They plan lots of different activities for you. Support assistants also help some of you to learn and get as much as you can from your lessons.

Many of you told us how much you enjoy all the extra activities your school offers, especially the sports activities which help you to stay healthy. It was good to see so many of you at the judo club before school had started on the day we arrived. I enjoyed hearing some of you tell me about the science experiments you had done in science week with the help of students from a local high school.

Although yours is a good school we found that there are some things that could be improved. We have asked your Headteacher and all the staff to make the teaching in Key Stage 1 even better, especially in writing, so that you do as well in this as in mathematics. We have also asked all your teachers to make sure that when they mark your books they explain what you can do to improve your work.

We are sure that you will all continue to work hard and do your best, and we wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth James

Her Majesty's Inspector