



St Benedict's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 135085
Local Authority Sefton
Inspection number 294267
Inspection dates 6–7 March 2007
Reporting inspector Mike McLachlan

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Copy Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Netherton, Bootle
Age range of pupils	4–11		Merseyside L30 7PG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 526 6423
Number on roll (school)	343	Fax number	0151 531 9530
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Anthony Short
		Headteacher	Mr Christopher Vaudrey
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 6–7 March 2007	Inspection number 294267
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Benedict's Catholic Primary School is an above average sized school created in September 2005 by the merger of two neighbouring primary schools. It is situated in an area of considerable deprivation. The number of pupils in receipt of free school meals is above the national average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups. Because of the social and economic deprivation the school is designated as part of an Education Action Zone (EAZ) which provides additional funding and opportunities for collaboration between schools and other agencies.

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 a number of outstanding features. The school has made remarkable progress in establishing a distinct ethos, a very stimulating learning environment and outstanding provision for care, guidance and support in a very short time. St Benedict's is a happy school that lives its mission statement: 'with Jesus we learn, love and laugh', and gives good value for money.

Overall, standards are broadly average and pupils achieve well and make good progress given their initial starting points. Pupils start in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) with very low standards in literacy and numeracy, and many have weak social skills. Effective teamwork results in outstanding provision in this stage, and consequently, children make good progress and are very well prepared for the main school. The considerable disruption caused by the building programme and amalgamation led to lower than expected results in the 2006 Year 6 national tests, particularly in mathematics. The school responded robustly to this and has good plans in progress to improve literacy and numeracy skills. The current Year 6 pupils are on track to reach the school's challenging targets, which are close to national expectations. Work seen during the inspection confirms this position. Pupils' personal development is good. They become mature and responsible citizens with a good understanding of staying safe, looking after each other and developing healthy lifestyles. The Year 6 leadership teams and the active school council are fine examples of how the pupils contribute to each other's safety and well-being.

These good achievements are the results of a number of factors. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, with strong support from his senior leadership team, has resulted in the speedy creation of a harmonious, hardworking team. This team has responded well to the demands and disruptions caused by the amalgamation and the massive rebuilding programme, to create a shared vision based on high expectations and a consistent approach to developing a stimulating learning environment. The success of this is evident in the rising standards, the enjoyment the pupils have in learning, their very good behaviour and the good attendance of the vast majority of pupils. The creation of leadership teams for subject coordination and delivery of the Every Child Matters agenda is effective in ensuring that all staff have ownership and responsibility for the success of the school. However, not all staff have sufficiently developed skills in observing lessons in order to share best practice.

The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good with many outstanding features, particularly in the Foundation Stage and in the upper juniors. Good planning leads to interesting, exciting and challenging work. Relationships are excellent. This is a school where staff are keen to embrace innovative approaches to teaching; consequently, the school offers a good curriculum with many opportunities for pupils to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Outstanding care, guidance and support programmes have been quickly established so that pupils feel very safe and secure and the needs of the most vulnerable and those with particular learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well met.

The governing body acts as a good critical friend and its members involve themselves well in the life of the school. The leadership team has a very good understanding of the strengths of the school and what needs to improve, and effective plans are in place to bring about these improvements. There is a good and growing capacity for improvement as the school develops its work in order to build on the good provision currently offered.

What the school should do to improve further

- Fully implement the plans to ensure that standards are raised in numeracy and literacy in order to meet the school's challenging targets.
- Provide opportunities for staff to develop their skills by observing lessons and sharing best practice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall, pupils achieve well given their standards on entering school. Many pupils start in the Foundation Stage with very limited language, communication, numeracy and social skills. Outstanding provision in this stage results in children making good gains in these areas so, although standards reached remain below average, pupils are very well prepared for the challenges facing them in Years 1 and 2. In the 2006 Year 6 national tests, a small number of pupils failed to reach the challenging targets set, particularly in mathematics. The school responded quickly and efficiently to this situation. Consequently, evidence now shows that pupils are on track to reach the school's targets, which are close to national expectations in English, mathematics and science, showing good progress for pupils in Years 3 to 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and particularly those with specific needs make good progress because of the high quality additional support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

There is great emphasis given to the unity of the school; consequently, pupils work and play together well. They enjoy all the school offers, as demonstrated by their good attendance and behaviour. Pupils pay keen attention, they are eager to achieve success and they respond with enthusiasm. The oldest pupils show a very mature attitude to both their work in class and to their responsibilities to others. A very impressive feature is the Year 6 leadership team where all pupils take on whole-school responsibilities such as being coaches or lunchtime monitors. Pupils of all ages are active members of the school council and proud to have a say in school improvements, such as contributing to the behaviour policy. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, based on mutual respect for others. One pupil, reflecting the views of many, commented: 'Teachers are friendly and are polite to us.' Pupils respond well to this, as evidenced by the very good quality of relationships in lessons and the playground. Pupils are keen to talk about their efforts to live a healthy lifestyle, are aware of eating sensibly

and value greatly the many opportunities to participate in physical activities. They demonstrate good understanding of the world of work and have good ideas as to how they are going to aid those who are less fortunate than themselves.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good with many outstanding features. The vast majority of lessons are well planned to meet the needs of all abilities in the class. Pupils find the work interesting, exciting and challenging. Innovative approaches to teaching literacy are consistently used well in all year groups. Pupils genuinely enjoy learning: for example, a pupil responded spontaneously 'that's cool' as he learned new skills in mathematics. Similarly, pupils in a literacy lesson used sounds and movements representing punctuation symbols to great effect to correctly punctuate a complex passage. This gave pupils of all abilities the confidence to have a go in front of their classmates. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is often inspirational. For example, young children worked outstandingly well in teams using construction equipment, having immense fun as they learned about weights and levers and developed their communication and social skills. Where teaching is less challenging, the tasks set are not geared to the differing ability groups in the class, or activities are mundane, requiring few problem solving skills. Teaching assistants are used very effectively and are very skilled in working with pupils with specific needs. A well written teaching, learning and marking policy, used consistently by the majority of staff, ensures that pupils are set challenging targets and are given good advice on how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, complies with statutory requirements and is effectively planned and organised to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those with specific learning needs. The Foundation Stage curriculum is outstanding and very well planned to encourage independent and collaborative learning. Good attention is given to developing pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Information and communication technology is a developing strength: for example, Nursery children take great delight in demonstrating how they are able to access their own work through the interactive whiteboard. The curriculum is enhanced by many visits and visitors, and this contributes well to pupils' understanding of their own and other cultures. Strong links with the local high school extend the range of sporting facilities. Excellent links through the EAZ are used to great effect to promote innovation and opportunities for pupils to develop economic understanding. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities which pupils are actively encouraged to attend by the school's involvement in the 'Children's University'. This scheme is highly valued by the pupils as they are rewarded

at a graduation ceremony for their consistent attendance at a range of interesting out-of-school activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school has quickly established an excellent ethos, and the high level of commitment from all staff very successfully promotes pupils' enjoyment, self-esteem and confidence. Very detailed records enable teaching staff to track and report on children's, pupils' academic, personal and social development and target additional support where needed. Pupils feel very safe in school; they like their teachers, and say they would confidently turn to them if they needed help. The school works very closely with parents and other external agencies to ensure that pupils reach their challenging targets and make good progress. Parents feel extremely welcome in school and are encouraged to become involved in their children's education. As one parent stated, 'The school has made great strides since it amalgamated and I am proud to send my children to St Benedict's.' The school also cares for its parents, who for example, place a high value on the curriculum and other workshops organised for them by the teaching staff. The required child protection and health and safety arrangements are in place. Close attention is given to ensuring that pupils settle very quickly into Nursery and arrangements for their transfer to secondary school are very good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Overall leadership and management are good with some outstanding features. Most impressive is the speed with which the school has achieved consistent routines and shared high expectations. This is due to the hard work of all staff under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. He, with the excellent support of his deputy headteacher and senior team, has created a widely shared vision for the school. His collaborative and consultative approach has resulted in all members of the school community - parents, pupils, staff and governors - feeling they have had a say in the establishment of the new school where both pupils and staff enjoy their working day. The establishment of leadership teams instead of individual coordinators was inspirational and has ensured that all staff feel valued and have ownership and responsibility for improving the work of the school. The team members are now ready to develop their skills in identifying and sharing best practice through direct observation of teaching and learning. The school's self-evaluation is accurate although modest given the rapid progress made since the school was established. Excellent links with external agencies and local schools through the EAZ support pupils' learning well. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school has a good capacity to improve from an already strong position.

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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?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
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?	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?	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	1
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 the way you looked after us when we inspected your school. We were very impressed by how much you enjoyed being at your school and how friendly you were towards us, your classmates and your teachers. You did yourselves, your parents and your teachers and other staff proud.

We think you go to a good school and some aspects are outstanding. We were amazed to see how quickly you had settled down in your new school. Because everything is so well organised and your classrooms are such stimulating areas it was hard to imagine that you had not always been together. This is clearly due to the very hard work of your teachers and staff, the excellent leadership shown by your headteacher and his team and the outstanding care and guidance systems they have established that make you feel safe and happy in your school. We could see that you also play your part by the way you work hard and care about each other. Your Year 6 leadership team and the school council are great.

We think you are taught well and that your lessons are interesting. We think you show great enthusiasm towards learning, particularly when the lessons are very practical. We liked the range of topics you are taught and the way the school gives you lots of opportunities to take part in activities outside school. Those of you who graduated from the Children's University are to be congratulated for your dedication and hard work.

We think you make good progress in your lessons. We have asked your headteacher to make sure you do even better in your English and mathematics tests this year. We are impressed by the way your teachers work together in teams and think it would be a good idea if they could visit different classes to see how well you and they are doing so they can share the best ideas.

We could clearly see why one of you told us that 'this school is great'. Thank you again for looking after us so well and best wishes for the future in your new school.