



Saint Benedict's Roman Catholic VA Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 134706
Local Authority Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number 295468
Inspection dates 12–13 September 2006
Reporting inspector Heather Evans

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mersey Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Redcar, Teesside
Age range of pupils	3–11		TS10 1LS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01642 495770
Number on roll (school)	376	Fax number	01642 495779
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Derek Gittins
		Headteacher	Miss Caroline Garvey
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	12–13 September 2006	295468

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large new school established by the amalgamation of two Catholic schools in 2005 and moved into a new building in April 2006. Whilst the proportion of pupils claiming their entitlement to free school meals is high, the percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and the few with English as an additional language speak English well. Children enter the Nursery with skills that are less well developed than those of most children of the same age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This new school has already established itself as a good, stimulating and important place in the life of the community. Pupils learn well in its bright, attractive classrooms. Parents and children alike celebrate its impact on the aspirations and achievements of all from the youngest in the Nursery to those who provide superb role models of behaviour and hard work in the classes for older pupils. Parents speak positively about how well they have been kept informed during the process of amalgamation of the two closing schools. Pupils of all ages say 'we think this is probably the best school in England.' The good teaching in the Foundation Stage enables children to gain skills and make good progress towards the nationally expected early learning goals. They attain similar standards to children of their age. The new classrooms are well organised but unfortunately there is too little storage space for the high quality resources. This spoils the aesthetic qualities of rooms, especially in the Foundation Stage. Similarly, access to the attractive facilities outside is restricted because the only covered area is not close to any of the classes. This problem inhibits continuous free access for children in the Nursery and the Reception classes to outside learning and frustrates teachers' planned intentions.

Pupils increase their personal skills in all classes where continued good teaching extends learning across every subject. Older pupils take an important part in planning and evaluating their own learning with the help and guidance of talented and enthusiastic teachers. Pupils relish opportunities to shape the way forward for the school. They know that their opinions are valued and that many of their ideas are being built into the developing curriculum. Curriculum provision is enriched by a range of clubs and activities at lunchtime and after school. Through the school's rigorous review and evaluation process, teachers have listed a number of areas for lifting the already good provision to excellent. Teachers indicate that they will constantly seek for higher challenges.

The good teaching seen across the school reaches very high standards in Years 5 and 6 where the push for additional challenge and the highest possible academic standards is setting the pace for the rest of the school. The drive for improved writing, identified in the analysis of test results from both of the closing schools in 2005, is proving to be very successful as shown in the tests in 2006 and samples of pupils' work. By the end of Year 6 in 2006, most pupils left school reaching at least the nationally expected Level 4 in English, mathematics and science. This meant that they made good progress and achieved well. Staff say, and the inspectors agree, that this was a result of effective amalgamation strategies and hard work by skilled teachers and enthusiastic pupils. Teachers share a consistent marking policy that ensures pupils know the quality of their completed work and have clear pointers as to what to do next in order to improve. The match of work to prior attainment derives from meticulous assessment. This ensures that pupils build effectively on their previous learning.

Outstanding leadership and management by the headteacher, ably supported by her deputy, the senior and middle management teams and the governors, ensure a generally accurate view of its effectiveness. In the areas of pupils' personal development and

their care, guidance and support, the school is rather modest. Inspection evidence shows that this part of the work of the school is outstanding. Pupils are growing into confident youngsters who make the right choices about selecting a healthy lifestyle. The school has made tremendous strides since amalgamation in 2005 and since moving into the new building in 2006. Its ambition to be the best that it can be shines out from every part of planning, displayed work, evaluation and provision. Everyone is rightly proud of the journey so far. The school provides good value for money. Saint Benedict's just needs time for the good start to be translated into a permanent feature in order to be where staff and pupils want it to be.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work to enhance the facilities for children in the Foundation Stage to enable constant access to outdoor play.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and attain standards similar to children of this age in most schools. Teachers' assessments in Year 2 and the results of the National Curriculum tests in Year 6 show that good progress is maintained across the school. The 2006 results show that pupils did as well as expected, with the school meeting its challenging targets. They have set equally challenging but realistic targets for 2007. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are spread across all attainment groups and prosper equally well as their classmates. The small group who did not attain the nationally expected levels in the national tests still made good progress from where they started. Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well and also attain similar standards to their classmates. One of the main reasons for this is the very good support they receive from a visiting specialist who helps the pupils learn and understand vocabulary that they will use in their forthcoming lessons. Vulnerable pupils also make good progress in lessons because of the good quality support they receive from teachers and support staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils say they derive great pleasure from the success they achieve in sport, art, literature and music. Pupils have helped to establish the school's aims and make good progress, behave very well and work together harmoniously. Those pupils identified as vulnerable make outstanding progress because of the very skilled support they receive from staff, particularly the learning mentor.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They demonstrate tremendously positive attitudes to their work. Children say that they enjoy school because 'teachers make learning fun'.

Playground activities are supervised well and pupils behave responsibly, safely and sensibly. Pupils benefit from healthy eating options and extensive opportunities to engage in vigorous exercise. Through 'buddy' systems, contributing to assemblies and working with charities, pupils understand how they can best contribute to community life. Good academic standards and working well together equip pupils well for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching and learning are reflected in the pupils' delight as they express their excitement and interest in their work. In the Foundation Stage, everyone has a very secure understanding of how young children learn and make learning memorable and fun. In Year 1, pupils make a good transition into more formal work because the teaching builds upon the pupils' previous learning. Teachers also make sure that time is used carefully so that lessons are not too long. In Years 2 to 6, in class and in the central resource area, known as the Self-Learning Centre, pupils develop into independent learners. They do this by planning learning in small steps that increase in difficulty as they move through the school. Pupils learn effectively by using enquiry and investigation. This way they learn to work independently. The process of evaluating their own work is well established in Years 3 to 6 and the younger pupils are helped with this process. Learning tasks are carefully matched to prior attainment. Teachers share good subject knowledge and are well supported by skilled teaching assistants. For example, the extra help that pupils receive with their reading in Key Stage 1 has helped them make good progress. This is now being effectively extended to Key Stage 2. The good quality of marking helps children to understand how to improve further and become successful. Pupils use skills learned in one area, such as in writing and ICT, across a range of subjects and are developing awareness that learning in one subject can be used in another.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The developing curriculum is good because it offers a rich range of opportunities throughout the day. This stimulates and motivates pupils to want to learn. Children attending the 'Wake and Shake' club before registration, for example, prepare mentally and physically for the day ahead. Judo classes make an excellent contribution to pupils' safe and healthy lifestyles. A wide range of visits, visitors and themed events, including Ugandan dancing, enrich provision and assist pupils to learn more about other cultures, developing a deeper understanding of the global community. Work with artists provides opportunities to enhance creativity whilst studying the themes of anti-racism and celebrating cultural diversity.

Support for children with learning difficulties, those at an early stage of learning English or having specific talents is good. The total commitment to pupils' enjoyment and well-being is laying secure foundations for their learning in the future. The support given by the local authority, parents, skilled specialists and external agencies makes significant contributions to pupils' good achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care and support for pupils. The atmosphere is calm and purposeful. The youngest settle quickly into routines. Staff are fully committed to pupils' welfare, contributing to their good achievement. There are superb systems to set individual targets, monitor pupils' progress and provide necessary guidance. Older pupils speak highly of the arrangements which help them know what to expect from fresh demands and challenges at the secondary school next door. There is excellent support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and any who are vulnerable. Pupils say they feel safe and they trust the adults in school. Child protection requirements and procedures are clear and understood by all staff. Pupils know that they can discuss concerns with staff and that their views are listened to and respected. The health and safety procedures are properly underpinned by risk assessments, enabling pupils to undertake activities safely both on and off the school premises.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher during the process of amalgamation has enabled the staff and the governors to create a successful and harmonious school. Every adult knows the pupils very well and the new team is moving towards excellence with confidence and determination. Parents are involved at every step from when their children start in the nursery to when they prepare for national tests before moving to the secondary school.

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The work of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is exceptionally good. The shared action is rigorous and enables staff to set targets for groups and individuals, so raising pupils' attainment to even higher levels. Governors have an excellent grasp of the school's strengths and there are good plans for further development. The school is clearly committed to strategic planning that reflects the leaders' shared vision. Teachers collaborate with great success. They recognise each child as an individual and promote the Catholic ethos that underpins the work of the school throughout all social, spiritual, academic and creative learning. In this way, they ensure that the value for money is good.

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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	NA

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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

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	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

14 September 2006

Saint Benedict's Roman Catholic VA Primary School

Mersey Road

Redcar

Teesside

TS10 1LS

Dear Pupils

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. Please let everybody know how much we enjoyed sharing your work. Saint Benedict's is clearly a family school where you have made good friends and are learning and working together very well.

There is so much that is very good in your school. We especially liked these things:

- It is good to see that whichever school you used to attend you now get on well with one another in lessons and when playing outside.
- You have an excellent understanding about healthy living, caring for the environment and helping one another.
- Your work in reading, mathematics, science, sport, music and ICT is particularly good.
- We loved sharing your 'Wake and Shake' club and thought your judo lessons and your work in music was very good indeed.
- Your teachers work very hard. They care for you extremely well and plan interesting and exciting lessons and activities. They are helping you to learn very well.
- You did well in your tests last year because you come to school every day, except when you are ill, and work hard. You know you have to keep this up for your school to really excel.

Although your new school is lovely, there are some difficulties that are found in any new building that need to be put right to make it the best. Your headteacher, teachers and governors are talking to the builders about putting these things in place.

Thank you again,

Heather Evans, (lead inspector) and all of the inspection team.