

St Bede's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102845
Local Authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	308138
Inspection date	4 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	471
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Joanna Lopes
Headteacher	Mrs Joan McGrath
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2004
School address	Canon Avenue Chadwell Heath Romford RM6 5RR
Telephone number	020 8590 1376
Fax number	020 8597 7440

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The Inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- What impact are leaders having on raising standards and maximising progress?
- What impact are leaders having on raising boys' achievement?
- What are the strengths in personal development and well-being, care, guidance and support and curriculum?

Evidence was gathered from the analysis of school documentation, observation of lessons, conversations with learners and discussions with teachers and senior staff. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school serves a mixed socio-economic area containing some small pockets of deprivation. It is currently oversubscribed. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is low, but has risen in recent years. Just over half of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Approximately a third of pupils are learning English as an additional language. The percentage identified with learning difficulties is lower than average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational need is higher. The percentage of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times is higher than that usually found. The school has 'Healthy Schools Status', is an 'Investor in Children' and has a 'Sustainable Travel Accreditation'.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Bede's gives its pupils an outstanding education and the vast majority of parents agree. One wrote, 'I feel that my child is getting a great start to his education and his future.' School self-evaluation is highly effective if somewhat modest. The highly effective headteacher, with her senior team, has an unremitting focus on ensuring that all pupils achieve as well as possible. Her passion for excellence is clear. No child is left behind. Leaders and managers at all levels have a firm grip on what needs to be done to sustain the high performance of their school. When an area of relative underperformance is spotted, leaders are quick to intervene. For example, boys' achievement, particularly in writing, was not as good as the school expected. Work done by all staff to improve this has paid great dividends and has made an excellent impact, raising standards markedly in English. There has been excellent improvement since the last inspection and leaders show a remarkable capacity to improve further. Governors are an integral part of school leadership and management and involve themselves fully in all the school does. A small minority of parents have voiced concern about a single playtime for pupils of all ages. This is currently under consideration by the headteacher.

Standards are exceptionally high, particularly in English. This has been the case for the last 5 years and this year standards are higher than at any time since the previous inspection. Achievement is outstanding. An increasing percentage of pupils enter the school with below and sometimes well below average skills, but they consistently leave with significantly above average skills. Learners meet highly challenging targets in relation to their starting points. Many of them make exceptional progress as reflected in the school's excellent tracking systems, during lesson observations and in pupils' exercise books.

Pupils enjoy school very much and speak enthusiastically about the fun ways teachers help them learn. Pupils say, 'Our teachers are really good at it!' This is most certainly the case. Teaching is outstanding. Teachers plan to a high standard consistently. There is always a variety of work to challenge every learner. This is carried out particularly well through highly effective questioning and well organised paired and group activities. Pupils say that 'Problem solving morning tasks get us going.' and 'Teachers are always making us think harder!' Teachers certainly have high expectations of their pupils. Electronic whiteboards are used exceptionally well to enhance learning. For example, a film clip used in a literacy lesson brought the task set to life as pupils discussed the virtues of visual texts. Marking is extremely thorough and pupils appreciate the comments teachers make in their books. Indeed, more than one pupil spoke about, and inspection evidence shows, how they are able to have 'private little chats' with their teachers in their exercise books. They valued this confidentiality and said how much this helped them to improve their work. Another spoke about using editing pens to '...do wishes and stars'. 'This lets us know whether we have achieved our target and what we might wish for next time.' Pupils know their targets, and what they need to do to reach them. The provision for care, guidance and support is outstanding, with assessment and academic guidance being excellent aspects. Pupils' progress is tracked very effectively because the system is clear and consistently used. It plainly indicates which pupils require extra help or challenge. The assessment feeds into planning the next steps in pupils' learning. Checks done on adults to ensure pupils' safety are rigorous and thorough. Child protection procedures are in place and all staff have received training.

Pupils' enjoyment is reflected in high attendance rates and exemplary behaviour. Pupils feel safe and secure and adopt healthy lifestyles, and the school council are proactive in ensuring

healthy lunchboxes and dinners. Pupils are clear about how to approach adults if they have a problem. 'We tell a teacher if we are unhappy and they find us a friend' said one Y1 pupil. Clubs are praised highly by the pupils, particularly the 'X factor club' where they can improve their Spanish by using information and communication technology (ICT) and playing games. The choir sings beautifully. Contributions to the community include raising money for charity and engaging in citizenship activities such as 'silly sock day'. Pupils' preparation for their future economic well being is excellent, because high levels of basic skills equip them well for the future. Visits to local businesses and parents' contributions during 'Aspirations Week', where they share their own individual learning journey and career, offer pupils an insight into the world of work.

Children are offered many opportunities to fulfil their potential because of the excellent curriculum. A wide variety of enrichment activities and special curriculum events contribute very well to learners' achievement. Spanish is offered from Nursery to Y6 and is very successful. Pupils talked excitedly to the inspector about how they had learnt Flamenco Dancing and made 'sangria', minus the alcohol, as part of a 'Spanish Day'. Pupils have benefited from visits by the 'Owl Man', an African storyteller, Redbridge Drama Centre, the fire brigade and many more. Focus weeks, such as Healthy Schools Week and other events, for example having an Artist in Residence, contribute strongly to pupils' personal development. Work in personal, health and social education ensures that pupils make the link between rights and responsibilities. Many children learn to play a variety of musical instruments. The school has recently purchased some new resources and equipment for science. This was because there was insufficient opportunity for the provision of practical and investigative work. The school has plans in place to check that the quality of this aspect of its work improves.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children start school with a range of early learning experiences but most are working at levels which are below those expected for their age, some are well below. This is especially the case in language and literacy and in knowledge and understanding of the world. Children receive a super start to their education and make excellent progress. The population of children changes significantly between Nursery and Reception and over a third leave to attend other schools. Sometimes, the incoming skills of children new into the school are not as high as those who continue from the Nursery. However, because the school pinpoints their needs effectively, children generally finish Reception with the skills expected for their age. Children respond enthusiastically to the activities offered to them in the Foundation Stage. A recent school-wide project about China gave children a chance to practise their motor skills by using chopsticks to pick up 'noodles' made of felt. Because children are active and busy, their concentration develops well and their behaviour is excellent. Teachers encourage independent learning and assessment procedures are well developed and effective. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the new science equipment and resources improves the quality of investigative work as planned.

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Annex A

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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bede's Catholic Primary School, Romford, RM6 5RR

Thank you very much for the lovely day I spent in your school recently. I really enjoyed myself! You told me how much you enjoy going to your school and why. It was very interesting. You said that your teachers are very good at their job and that you like the fun way that they teach you. However, you also noticed that they expect you to do excellent work and to think hard. You have many interesting clubs to go to, and I must tell you how much I enjoyed the beautiful singing by the choir. I think your school is outstanding. That means that it does things very well indeed and ensures that you get excellent results in tests and make lots and lots of progress. Your headteacher and her team of teachers and other adults all want the very best for you. They make sure that you are very well cared for and safe. I agree that your teachers do a super job and make sure that you have lots of chances to learn lots of different things, including Spanish! I heard about how good you are at Flamenco dancing and making 'sangria'. Well done!

Your headteacher is already looking for the next job to do to make sure that your school remains an outstanding one. She decided that the equipment you have in science isn't as good as she would like, because you weren't able to do many experiments or investigations. There has been some new equipment bought now. I have asked your headteacher to check that this is used really well to help you improve your skills in science.

Thank you again for your warm welcome and I wish you every success!

Kind regards

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Lead Inspector