

St Brigid's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103432
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308318
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Rajinder Harrison

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	460
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	49
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Beirne
Headteacher	Simon Dix
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Frankley Beeches Road Northfield Birmingham B31 5AB
Telephone number	01214 642364
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This primary school is larger than average. The school has, in its Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), a Nursery class with 49 children attending part-time in addition to the Reception class. While the majority of pupils are of White British origin, an above average proportion represents a diverse range of minority ethnic backgrounds. An average proportion of pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is average. These pupils' needs cover a wide range but are mainly in speech and language, dyslexia, behaviour and moderate learning difficulties.

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. Pupils' personal development is good. Their above average attendance reflects their keenness to be at school and their enjoyment of learning. The school's supportive Christian ethos helps pupils feel well cared for and valued. Pupils feel safe at school and are confident that staff will listen to them if they have any worries. They develop a mature awareness of the needs of others, form good relationships and behave well. Pupils understand well the importance of staying safe, fit and healthy and participate very enthusiastically in the many clubs and events that the school organises. They show respect for others and take responsibilities willingly. Through numerous links with the local and wider community, their contribution as young citizens is outstanding. Parents are positive about the school and say that it is a welcoming place where their children thrive.

Children start in the Nursery with knowledge and skills at the levels expected for their age, although their literacy skills are generally less secure. These shortcomings are addressed well through the good activities that teachers plan to help children make a good start to their education. Children achieve well and most exceed their early learning goals by the end of Reception. Good quality teaching ensures that pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 6. By the end of Year 6, they attain overall standards that are above average. Current Year 6 pupils are working at above average standards in science and English. Standards in mathematics are not as high but the school is addressing this well through greater emphasis on developing pupils' problem solving skills. Teachers generally plan lessons well so that they meet the learning needs of most pupils. Occasionally, pupils of all abilities carry out the same tasks, resulting in insufficient challenge for the more able and excessive demand on those who are lower attaining. Progress is also not as good when pupils complete set tasks. This is because they limit opportunities for pupils, especially those who are more able, to explore and apply their knowledge and skills to tackle new learning independently. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those who are new to learning English achieve well because they receive good individual support. The curriculum is good overall, with excellent additional activities that enrich learning well. Care arrangements are very good and academic guidance good; as a result, pupils who need extra help are identified early. Teachers monitor pupils' progress closely in order to set individual targets. However, teachers do not always use the information to challenge pupils effectively in all lessons.

Good leadership and management ensure pupils' good achievement. The headteacher involves all staff and governors in evaluating the school's performance and identifying the right improvement priorities. Subject leaders monitor teaching and learning regularly, but are not as rigorous in checking that teachers challenge pupils appropriately in all lessons. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, and standards are higher this year than in 2007. The school is accurate in its self-evaluation and leaders have good capacity to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for the children within EYFS is good. Robust procedures ensure children's safety and well-being are secure, and that all children feel valued. They form excellent relationships and, as a result, are happy and confident in their work and play. Most cooperate well and respond enthusiastically, particularly as they explore and discover for themselves. Liaison with parents

is good. Parents are encouraged to help their children learn at home. They are confident they can discuss any concerns with staff and praise the school for helping their children settle so quickly. Interaction between children in the EYFS is limited because the classes are not close together, but staff plan regular visits to support a smooth transition from one year to the next.

Most children start with knowledge and skills at the levels expected in all but literacy, where a significant minority speak little or no English. Arrangements to support these children are good. Staff manage their needs sensitively, sometimes with additional help from bilingual community members to assist children in their learning and to settle into a cultural environment that is unfamiliar to them. Teaching is good and, as a result, children achieve well. By the end of EYFS, most exceed expected levels in all but their writing. Good teaching of letters and sounds is helping to address this well. Although a good range of adult-led and child selected activities ensure they experience all the areas of learning, outdoor learning is not always as stimulating. Some activities are exciting and entertaining, such as going on a 'Bear Hunt' in the Nursery, but others do not always reflect the children's needs and interests. Good leadership is reflected in the way staff plan, teach and review children's progress together. Staff assess children well by watching and talking to them about their work and identify those children who need additional support early.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities pupils have to explore and work more independently when tackling new learning throughout the school.
- Ensure teachers use the assessment information to match work to pupils' needs in all lessons more accurately.
- Monitor teaching more rigorously to ensure pupils are challenged appropriately.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make good gains in the EYFS and this good achievement is maintained in Years 1 to 6. Teachers know how much progress is expected of pupils in each year group and most plan work to help them make these gains. In the teacher assessments of 2008, pupils in Year 2 attained above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, although writing was less secure. By the end of Year 6, overall standards are above average. Standards are higher in English and science because pupils enjoy the challenges presented through extended writing and investigations. In order to raise standards in mathematics, more attention is being given to developing pupils' problem solving and mental mathematics skills. Through good individual support, pupils new to learning English and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Pupils who join part way through their primary years, often with considerable gaps in their learning, generally make at least satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils greatly enjoy school, behave well and respond enthusiastically in lessons. They know well how to keep healthy and safe. Older pupils look after younger ones sensibly. Many attend the school's numerous sports clubs and select healthy meal options. Through the many responsibilities they assume, they make an outstanding contribution to the community. They lead mass at church and raise money for charities, both at home and abroad. School council members have initiated many improvements in the school environment and have discussed

community issues with the Lord Mayor of Birmingham. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. The school celebrates its rich ethnic diversity through citizens' assemblies where pupils from other countries explain how their traditions and culture differ from those of Britain. Through global awareness studies, pupils gain a deeper understanding of other cultures and develop a commitment to racial equality. Pupils feel very safe and say that although bullying does happen sometimes, teachers deal with this promptly. Through sensitive individual guidance, pupils who lack confidence and resilience gain the skills they need to flourish. Pupils are kind, courteous and polite, and form strong relationships. Their good basic skills and ability to cooperate with others, combined with regular enterprise opportunities that include managing the tuck shop and investing in the school bank, prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are well organised and support staff are used to good effect to help individual pupils and small groups achieve well. Teachers generally involve pupils well in lively question-and-answer sessions and pupils respond enthusiastically. Their response is even better when they explore and discover for themselves. Teachers make good use of computer facilities to present information so that pupils learn more effectively. Improved assessment procedures provide teachers with very detailed information about the progress of individual pupils and groups. Most staff use this information well to plan teaching and learning but, occasionally, all pupils experience the same presentation and complete the same tasks. This results in insufficient challenge for those who could achieve more and lower attaining pupils struggle to achieve enough. Much of the work actively involves the pupils working independently but occasionally teachers direct learning too much rather than allowing pupils, particularly the more able, to tackle new learning on their own, and this limits their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum, enriched extensively through additional activities that include sport, music and languages, is now structured and planned well. The school has addressed well the curriculum issues raised in the previous inspection report and is now developing a more topic-based approach to the planning. Pupils still have insufficient opportunities to select topics and projects that they can explore independently. Effective activities and support are organised to help pupils with specific needs, including the growing number that join the school speaking little or no English. Improved provision for literacy has helped to raise standards in writing at Key Stage 2 but it is too early to realise the impact of the new strategies to develop pupils' word-building skills on standards of writing in Year 2. Provision for information and communication technology is good and teachers plan for its use well. A good programme for personal, social and health education supports pupils' personal development. Many visits and visitors add excitement to pupils' learning. In particular, the residential trips in Years 4, 5 and 6 allow children to explore and experience the wider world.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care arrangements are very good. Staff know the pupils well and pupils feel staff will listen and help them if problems arise. Child protection, health and safety and safeguarding procedures are all secure. Pupils who have specific social or educational needs are supported well and external agencies are consulted when necessary. Pupils new to the school are integrated well and quickly feel a sense of 'belonging'. Good links with the secondary school ensure Year 6 pupils feel confident to move on.

Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and identify early those who need specific help. Pupils know and understand their individual targets well and most have good opportunities to check their work. In some classes, detailed marking explains to pupils what is good about their work and what to do to improve but elsewhere it is too general to have the same impact.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The calm but firm leadership of the headteacher inspires the overall success of the school. There is a strong sense of the school being one big family where everyone is valued. The care, welfare and academic success of every pupil is high priority. The leadership team has a good grasp of the need to use tracking and assessment data to set targets that are challenging. They monitor teaching regularly but do not check closely enough that all pupils have the work they need to achieve their best. The right strategies are in place to raise standards further in mathematics at Key Stage 2 and writing at Key Stage 1. Staff have the support and training they need to carry out their roles successfully. Governors support the school well. Through regular visits, they are involved in monitoring the school's performance and ask probing questions regarding developments. Partnerships with schools, both at home and abroad, local colleges and community groups are good and support curriculum enrichment well. Relationships with parents are good. The school, quite rightly, enjoys high regard in the local area because of the very effective way it embraces equally all the cultures and traditions represented there. Through its excellent support of local and international community activities and events, the school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding.

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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?	2
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

21 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Brigid's Catholic Primary School, Birmingham B31 5AB

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed our visit very much and this letter is to tell you some important things we found out while we were with you.

You go to a good school. We liked these things best.

- You make a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes because everyone looks after you and you have interesting things to do and play with.
- Your behaviour is good. You are very kind to others and really care for people in other parts of the world and do much to raise money for many good causes.
- You get on well with each other and help around the school. For example, the older children look after the little ones and you keep your school neat and tidy.
- You have a good understanding of how to stay safe, fit and healthy. Many of you eat healthy food at lunchtimes and attend many sports clubs at the school.
- You work hard and do well in your work. If you need extra help with your work, teachers make sure this happens, especially if you do not speak English well.
- All the adults in the school make sure you are well looked after.
- Your teachers listen carefully to what you have to say and teach you well. Teachers and all the other helpers support you well with your work.
- The curriculum, that is, all the things that your teachers plan for you to do, including lessons, school clubs and visits, is good. You have excellent opportunities to take part in and learn interesting things through, for example, residential visits, singing at church, celebrating other cultures and linking up with communities both home and abroad.
- Your headteacher and other people who help to run your school do a good job in making sure you are prepared well for the future.

Every school, even one as good as yours, has things that could be better. We have asked the school to give you lots more opportunities to work on projects by yourselves so that you achieve even more. In addition, we want teachers to make sure they plan work that really helps you achieve the best you can and for leaders to check that this happens in every lesson.

With very best wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Rajinder Harrison Lead inspector