

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103460
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308329
Inspection dates	6–7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik 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	660
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Flaherty
Headteacher	Angela Cowings
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2004
School address	Hobmoor Road Yardley Birmingham B25 8QL
Telephone number	01217 837232
Fax number	01217 898306

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Bernadette's is a large Catholic primary school that is located in a socially deprived part of Birmingham. The school is founded on Catholic principles and 70% of its pupils are baptised Catholics. Most pupils are of White British origin. Around 10% are of Asian background and a small number are of Black or mixed heritage. In the past two years, a number of Polish pupils, around 2.5% of the school's population, have been admitted. On entry, all are beginners in English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below average. The percentage claiming free school meals is well above average.

The school has gained a number of awards including the Healthy Schools Standard, Arts, Active and Quality Marks, Leading Aspect and Be Smart awards, Information and Communication Technology Mark and the Investors in People award. The school is the first in the local authority to achieve the International School award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Bernadette's is a good school with some outstanding features. The school's aim is to 'Learn to Love and Love to Learn' and it meets this aim in full. Pupils really enjoy coming to school, form excellent relationships with staff and each other, and enthusiastically join in the excellent range of curricular opportunities on offer. They behave exceptionally well, are keen to learn and give of their best.

Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception (Foundation Stage) classes, where they make good progress as a result of effective teaching and an interesting and worthwhile curriculum that meets their needs well. In 2007, standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 were significantly above average. The oldest pupils made exceptional progress in science and good progress in English. Their progress in mathematics was satisfactory. Data show that pupils' progress in mathematics is inconsistent, and there are some pupils who could do better in reading and writing in some years. This is because teachers are not yet using assessment information effectively enough to plan lessons that are consistently challenging.

The quality of teaching ranges from outstanding to satisfactory and is good overall. There are some inconsistencies in teaching and the pockets of less effective practice mean that pupils do not make good gains in learning in all years. Leadership and management at all levels are good. The headteacher, senior staff and governors are leading the school in the right direction. Regular monitoring of teaching has pinpointed the main strengths and weaknesses in provision. However, the follow-up of variation in teaching quality is not yet robust enough.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Through its Christian ethos, the school is very effective in nurturing and developing pupils' awareness of their own and others' beliefs. Care for pupils is excellent. The school works effectively with parents and other agencies to ensure that pupils achieve well. The school's capacity to improve further is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good teaching and well planned provision combine to ensure that children make good progress in all areas of learning. A good balance is struck between the teaching of basic skills by adults and children learning through free choice and independent play. The structured teaching of letters and sounds is helping to develop children's reading and writing skills at a good rate. Learning is made more meaningful by ensuring topics such as Chinese New Year and Pets run through all activities. This enables children to consolidate and extend their learning in a variety of settings, both indoors and outside. Effective induction procedures ensure that children settle quickly into school routines and develop very positive relationships with adults and each other. Leadership and management are good and staff work effectively as a team. Relationships with parents are very good and they are pleased with the provision and the progress their children make.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 by better using assessment information to ensure work is consistently challenging.

- Improve the consistency of teaching by more rigorously following up variability so that pupils make good gains in their learning in all years.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with basic skills that are below the levels expected for their age. They make good progress in all areas of learning and enter Year 1 at the expected level for their age.

In 2007, the oldest pupils' attainment was significantly above average in science and above average in English. Their attainment in mathematics was close to the national average. Boys' and girls' attainment at the end of Year 6 was about a term ahead of similar pupils nationally. Achievement is good overall. Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics as they move through Years 1 and 2. School data show unevenness in the progress made in mathematics between Years 3 to 6. There is also some inconsistent progress in other subjects too. For example, last academic year, boys of middle ability in Year 5 made good progress in writing but in Year 3 a significant minority of similar pupils did not make the expected progress in the subject. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those newly arrived from Poland are making good progress in acquiring basic skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils very clearly know right from wrong, as demonstrated by those in Year 2 saying, 'You must never tell lies!' Pupils applaud all the recent moves towards a healthy diet. They read packaging to check food contents and go to their own 'Healthy Heaven' tuck shop for snacks. Pupils feel very safe in school. They say, 'We are anti-bullying', and use the many facilities put in place to ensure tranquil playtimes. For example, they see the worry boxes and play mediators as effective support in times of stress. They say, 'You can always rely on the teachers and dinner supervisors to sort things out.' Pupils have a strong voice and have brought about major improvements in school and beyond. Within the community pupils have cleaned up the local recreation ground and river, planted bulbs and trees and produced work for the parish church. Their determination to recycle rubbish and put in place water conservation measures has led to the school gaining Be Smart and bronze Eco-awards. Pupils effectively enhance their financial literacy by investing savings in the school bank, and by managing school council funds and the budget for the tuck shop. Business links with local firms successfully help pupils understand the skills and attributes required in the workplace.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is characterised by excellent relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils that ensure a very positive climate for learning. A key strength is the teaching of science, where the strong focus on investigative work encourages pupils to be inquisitive and to ask questions such as 'why' and 'what happens next?' Such provision has a very positive impact, with pupils making excellent progress in the subject. In the most effective lessons, teaching is lively, enthusiastic and well informed. Teachers have high expectations and provide interesting and challenging activities that move pupils' learning along at a fast pace. Good use is made of

a wide range of resources, including the new computerised whiteboards, to further increase pupils' enjoyment and motivation. Classroom displays are of high quality and are used effectively to support learning. In the satisfactory lessons work is not always effectively matched to pupils' capabilities. This is because teachers do not use assessment information effectively enough to pitch work at the right level.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

A very strong programme of personal, social and health education makes a significant contribution to pupils' outstanding personal development. The very effective international dimension to the school's work means pupils are exposed to a wide range of cultures and lifestyles different from their own. For example, pupils in Years 1 to 6 learn a modern foreign language, either French or Spanish, and the oldest pupils have the opportunity to visit France. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 regularly communicate by email with pupils in India and Newcastle. Such innovative work further develops pupils' social, cultural and linguistic skills. Provision is further enriched by a very wide range of visitors, visits and clubs. Pupils report that these all add to the excitement and enjoyment of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care is exemplary and pupils are well supervised at all times. Staff recruitment and vetting procedures are robust and the records held fully comply with government requirements. The school alleviates possible risks to its pupils by the effective implementation of a range of suitable risk assessments. Academic support is generally good. Pupils understand their targets, what National Curriculum level they are working at and what must be done to reach the next level. However, academic support and guidance in mathematics are not fully effective in ensuring pupils make consistently good gains in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, staff and governors have successfully created a school ethos based on Catholic principles. There is a strong sense of teamwork and the heavy investment in professional development activities is paying dividends. For example, teachers' improved subject knowledge coupled to new teaching methods has led to rising writing standards, particularly in Year 2. Leaders have put measures in place to bring about improvement in mathematics. It is too early to say what impact the changes have made. There has been ongoing monitoring of provision but it has not yet been fully effective in ironing out inconsistent practice to ensure all pupils make at least expected progress in each year and in each subject. The leadership has successfully integrated the large influx of Polish pupils into school life. They are well settled and are doing well. Governors are robust in managing the school's financial affairs. In the recent past the school had a significant budget deficit, but this has been turned into a surplus through prudent financial management. Individual governors provide pupils with effective sacramental preparation.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 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 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	3
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	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?	1
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 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 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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, Birmingham, West Midlands B25 8QL

Hello, I am one of the inspectors who visited your school. I am writing to tell you what we found out. I would like to thank you for making us so welcome and for being so friendly and helpful. We have judged that your school is a good school with some outstanding features.

These are the things that we liked about your school.

- You really enjoy coming to school and enthusiastically join in the excellent range of activities on offer.
- Your behaviour is outstanding and you all get on so well with your teachers and each other. You are keen to learn and give your best.
- The care you receive from adults at school is outstanding.
- It was good to see that your faith plays such an important part in your lives and that you are learning about other cultures and lifestyles different from your own. We were pleased to see governors involved in sacramental preparation.
- You are making good progress, particularly in English and science. The newly arrived pupils from Poland have settled in and are doing well.
- You are highly involved in school and community life and make a real difference. For example, you have cleaned up the local recreation ground and river and raised funds for numerous charities.
- Your headteacher and school leaders manage the school well.

We have asked the headteacher and governors to improve two things.

- Ensure teachers in all subjects, including mathematics, use information on your progress so that they can give you work which is neither too easy nor too hard.
- Ensure all your lessons are good or even better and that you all learn as well as you can.

Best Wishes David Rzeznik Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools

8 February 2008

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West Midlands B25 8QL**

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Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools