

St Bede's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106945
Local Authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	309270
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Philip Jarrett 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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	318
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin McDonagh
Headteacher	Mr John DiClemente
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Wortley Road Rotherham South Yorkshire S61 1PD
Telephone number	01709 740101
Fax number	0

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Bede's Catholic Primary School is a larger than average Voluntary Aided school serving two parishes in the diocese of Hallam. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average and nearly all pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of pupils identified by the school as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, although the school has an above average number of pupils with statements of special educational needs. The school is popular with parents and nearly half the pupils come from non-Catholic families. There have been substantial changes to staffing and five teachers have joined the school in the past two years. The school has achieved a number of awards including Investors in People, the Artsmark Gold and Active Mark Gold.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This inspection confirmed the school's view that overall it provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. However, this is not the full picture. Some aspects of the school's provision are significantly better than that. St Bede's is a school where pupils are happy and well looked after. Pupils enjoy coming to school, form good relationships and behave very well. However, the school's undoubted strengths in promoting good personal development are not matched at present by similarly high levels of progress in academic achievement. Standards are average and have remained broadly static over recent years. The school recognises that there is room for improvement, especially in raising standards in writing and mathematics.

The school is popular with parents who report that their children settle well into the Foundation Stage where they make good progress. All pupils have very positive attitudes towards school and this is shown in the active participation by most pupils in the good range of extra-curricular activities provided. Pupils' personal development is good. They respect each other and work well together. They are polite and courteous towards visitors and develop self-confidence and communication skills. Pupils feel safe in the school and are comfortable in seeking help from adults when necessary.

The school also provides a good curriculum. This supports pupils' personal development well. There is an increasing focus on literacy and numeracy and the school has improved learning in information and communication technology (ICT). Parents are well involved in supporting their children and the school provides a number of extra programmes for pupils who need additional support. The emphasis on sport and the good extra-curricular provision promote the pupils' healthy well-being and other enrichment activities support their social and cultural development.

The good curriculum and pastoral care currently result in levels of achievement that are broadly satisfactory. Standards are in line with the national average. Results in science are higher than in mathematics and English. Pupils make good progress in reading but do less well in writing and mathematics. This is partly because the school has had a significant number of staffing changes in the past couple of years. Teaching observed was never less than satisfactory and some was outstanding. However, the variability contributes to uneven rates of progress.

The headteacher and senior staff have successfully created a caring and inclusive school. Parents are kept well informed and provide good support. There are good links with external agencies. Pupils' personal development is good as a result of the positive climate for learning created.

The school has successfully addressed weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. Marking and attendance have improved and the Foundation Stage is now good. Senior staff recognise the need to raise standards in writing and mathematics. However, while the school is well aware of areas of weakness, there is a lack of clarity and focus in its current improvement plans. It is not clear enough how improvements are to be brought about or how the school will measure success. There is a lack of emphasis in the improvement plans on how to develop teaching and make the best use of existing good practice. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. The school operates two parallel mixed age classes. This is managed well and there is good

joint planning leading to equity of provision across the classes. Teaching is good. Children are happy in school and learn to work independently in a stimulating learning environment. There is good provision for outdoor play and this extends learning well. Children feel safe and are well looked after. Parents are actively involved, for instance, through attending family learning sessions with their children. Children enter the Foundation unit with standards that are below average. Progress is good across many areas of learning, although standards remain below average at the end of the Foundation Stage in aspects such as communication, language and literacy.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in writing and mathematics.
- Extend the consistency of teaching across the school and make better use of existing good practice in teaching.
- Improve the clarity and effectiveness of the school's development plans.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average overall. Results dipped somewhat last year, especially at the end of Key Stage 1, but in general standards have been consistently in line with national averages at the end of both key stages. This remains the case. However, there are differences between the core subjects. Science tends to perform better than English and mathematics. In addition, standards in reading are considerably higher than writing, although the gap mirrors the national picture. The gap between boys' and girls' attainment has narrowed over the past two years, especially in English, and this reflects good progress by some boys.

Achievement is satisfactory. Progress as measured by the end of Key Stage 2 tests in 2007 was below average. However, the pattern in recent years has been of average achievement and this was confirmed by the inspection. The school now sets challenging targets although these are not yet consistently achieved.

Pupils achieve more highly in reading than in writing and mathematics. Progress in lessons observed was variable and reflected differences in quality of teaching. Some pupils make good progress, bearing in mind their levels of attainment on entry. There are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls or other groups such as pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development is seen in their enjoyment of school, the way they cooperate well and their positive attitudes to learning. They relate confidently to adults. Behaviour is very good overall. There is a good start in the Foundation Stage where children make good progress in becoming independent and in sharing and taking turns. The school has been successful in improving attendance and this is now above the national average.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong and this helps to create good relationships throughout the school. Pupils say that everyone in school gets on well and that there is very little evidence of bullying. The inspection confirmed this. Pupils are involved in setting the class and school rules at the start of each year. They learn well about being part of a community. They are encouraged to reflect on their actions and respect their own and other pupils' work. Although pupils become familiar with their own immediate culture and benefit from links with a number of European schools, the school recognises the need to give pupils more insights into the multi-cultural world in which they are growing up. Pupils know how to stay safe. They are well aware of the need to keep healthy, eat sensibly and take exercise, with most making good use of the many opportunities provided for sport and physical exercise.

Pupils enjoy taking responsibility, such as when they supervise younger pupils and act as playground leaders. Pupils understand that they have a voice in school through the school council and they have been able to influence a number of decisions such as choosing playground equipment and developing the outside environment. Pupils' satisfactory progress in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT gives them a sound preparation for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The school's positive ethos helps develop pupils' confidence as learners. For example, in the Foundation Stage children spoke well and clearly about what they were doing. Teachers' good relationships, supported by well organised and bright classrooms, succeed in motivating pupils well.

However, there is variation in the quality of teaching, including some which is outstanding. As a result, the progress that pupils make is uneven and ultimately prevents them from reaching the highest standards of which they are capable. Where lessons are very effective, teachers have high expectations of pupils, there is good pace and pupils have opportunities to work independently. For instance, in a science lesson observed, pupils were taking part in a series of short, focused investigations and this encouraged them to explore and raise questions, leading to exciting and challenging learning. Good use is made of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning, especially those pupils who struggle to keep up. Support staff work closely with teachers to plan and deliver lessons, and this makes a good contribution to pupils' progress.

In lessons where teaching was less secure, there was a lack of clarity in planning, the pace of learning slowed and there was too much teacher direction. Lack of subject knowledge sometimes led teachers to miss opportunities to challenge more able pupils.

The quality of marking has improved since the last inspection. Very good and consistent marking was noted in English, where detailed and effective feedback from teachers enabled pupils to understand how to improve their work. Marking is less detailed in other subjects although helpful comments are still a feature of work across many classes in subjects like religious education and history.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum provided is good and meets the needs of learners. As a result, pupils are happy, motivated, and enjoy their lessons. Children are well provided for in the Foundation Stage. The school's family learning programmes support parents and encourage consistency in children's learning at home and in school.

The curriculum is effective in encouraging pupils' personal development, with good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, the use of mood music in art in one Year 6 lesson encouraged reflection and spirituality. Visits to the theatre, concerts and a well planned Book Week support pupils' cultural development.

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum. Provision is good in a number of foundation subjects including physical education and art. The school is now focusing the curriculum increasingly on efforts to enhance the development of literacy and numeracy. Additional support is provided through a number of intervention projects such as the Reading Partnership and Early Bird Club. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic about reading. For example, a significant number of Year 5 pupils had chosen to review novels for the Rotherham Book Awards. The school has made good progress in the use of ICT to support learning, for instance through the use of video conferencing.

Pupils' personal development is significantly enhanced through an extensive range of extra-curricular activities including, art, photography, drama and links with schools abroad. Opportunities to take part in sport and music are particularly strong and enhanced through good partnership with the local community and diocese.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents recognise that the school has a caring, Christian ethos. The quality of pastoral care is very high, ensuring that pupils know that they are valued and supported. There are good procedures in place to ensure the health, safety, welfare and protection of pupils. The school works effectively with parents and support agencies. Pupils say bullying is very rare, that they feel safe and always have someone to turn to for help. Vulnerable children are given a high level of support from all staff and notably from the learning mentor; this enables them to make the same progress as others in the school.

Attendance has improved and there are now fewer interruptions to learning. Teachers are becoming increasingly skilled in tracking pupils' progress, identifying those not making the expected progress and providing extra support. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support in classrooms, although sometimes the targets in their education plans are insufficiently specific. Although there is very strong care and support for pupils, academic guidance is less well developed. The quality of marking, referred to in the previous report, has improved and now provides good direction, especially in English. There is also good use of specific learning targets for individual pupils in reading and writing and this helps them to know what to do to improve. However, practice is not as secure in other subjects, including mathematics, and this means that pupils are not always clear enough about the next steps in learning beyond English.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and other senior staff have helped to create a very positive ethos for learning within the school and they take credit for high standards of care, guidance and support. This is an inclusive school where pupils feel valued and equality of opportunity is promoted.

The school has successfully tackled the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection in areas like marking, Foundation Stage provision and attendance. However, academic standards have not improved significantly in recent years and this is the main challenge facing the school.

The school's formal self-evaluation document provides an honest and accurate picture of its current strengths and weaknesses. It has identified the weaknesses in writing, mathematics and variability in teaching. However, the school's planning for improvement lacks focus and clarity. The school development plan is extremely detailed but does not identify clearly enough the main priorities for the school over the next year or the key actions that will bring about improvement. Strategies for improving the consistency of teaching, and making good use of existing good practice, are not explicit enough. There is also too little emphasis in the plans on how actions will raise standards.

Tracking has improved and the school now makes good use of performance data to identify pupils for intervention and support. It is increasingly aware of trends and patterns in achievement. The school has a clear programme of monitoring and evaluation. This involves both members of the senior leadership team and subject leaders. Evidence is drawn from observing lessons and work sampling and this process has become more rigorous with a stronger emphasis on giving evaluative feedback to teachers.

The school receives good support from the governing body. Responsibilities are well shared and delegated through the committee structure and the linking of individual governors with aspects of the curriculum. The governing body is kept well informed by the headteacher and through presentations by subject leaders. It questions and challenges, where appropriate, for instance over the impact of the new approaches to writing on the least able pupils and whether the school is doing well enough with its more able pupils.

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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?	3
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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

My colleagues and I very much enjoyed meeting you during the inspection on 27 and 28 February 2007. We had some good meetings with pupils and we were very interested in what you had to say about the school.

You said lots of good things about St Bede's. You like school and especially enjoy all the clubs and after-school activities. You said that behaviour is very good in school and that there is almost no bullying. This is also what most parents said in the questionnaires they completed and sent back to me. We agree. We were very impressed with your behaviour. You all get on well together and behave politely and speak confidently with visitors.

We found that the school succeeds well in looking after you and keeping you safe. Your teachers and other members of staff care for you well. They help you to develop as individuals and to keep healthy. The school gives you an opportunity to contribute to its development through the school council. You enjoy this and it makes a difference to the school.

You are keen to learn and do well especially when teachers have a good understanding of the subject and provide interesting activities that make you work hard and think. There are some very good teachers in the school and we have asked the school to think about how all the teachers can learn more effectively from each other.

Standards are in line with the national average. However, pupils do better in science and reading than in writing and mathematics and we have asked the headteacher and his colleagues to consider how to raise standards in writing and mathematics. The school has got some very detailed plans to help it get better and we have suggested some ways in which it can improve the plans so that it can focus on the really important things that need to be done.

Thanks again for being so friendly and welcoming when we visited your school.