

St Benedict's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108019
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	309570
Inspection dates	15–16 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Fiona Gowers

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	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Colm O'Hara
Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Davis
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
School address	Station Fields Garforth Leeds West Yorkshire LS25 1PS
Telephone number	0113 2146821
Fax number	0113 2877138

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized Catholic primary school serves a socio-economically mixed area. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and a very small percentage of pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and with a statement of special educational need is below average. The school gained recognition by the Basic Skills Agency with Quality Mark in 2006 and has been awarded the Activemark and local authority Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Benedict's Catholic Primary is an outstanding school, which has continued to improve since its last inspection. It amply fulfils its aim to be 'a very caring Christian family that celebrates and nurtures each person's unique potential'. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, sharing comments such as, 'We couldn't wish for a better school' and 'We can't sing its praises enough!' Close links with the church and local community are fundamental to the school. The school's success stems from outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and leadership team form a great partnership and set very high standards in the continual drive for improvement. The school leadership is constantly seeking ways to improve the school. Its understanding of the school's strengths and areas it wants to develop still further is exceptional. The school's governing body has a wide range of skills and is both challenging and supportive of the leadership.

All staff play a significant part in enabling pupils to succeed. The quality of teaching is consistently outstanding. In the Foundation Stage children get off to a flying start because of the excellent provision. Children are able to flourish in the caring, stimulating environment. Learning activities throughout school are purposeful, fun and challenging. Comments such as, 'We enjoy doing this work' and 'That's amazing!' can be heard in all the classrooms. All groups of pupils make outstanding progress relative to their starting points. Standards at the end of Year 6 have risen since the last inspection and are now well above average. The achievement of pupils from entry to the Nursery to the end of Year 6 is outstanding.

The school provides an excellent curriculum. It is planned to motivate and interest all groups of pupils to achieve as well as they can and to practise higher thinking skills. There is excellent provision for English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), enabling pupils to make rapid progress. ICT is very well integrated into all curriculum areas, supported very well by the development of mini ICT suites in classrooms alongside the main computer suite. Imaginative links are made between subjects that bring a relevance and excitement to learning. Younger children enthusiastically practise speaking French in their 'bread shop', whilst older children enjoy being history detectives, using drama activities to help them understand events in the past.

Pupils' well-being and achievement lie at the heart of this school's thinking and this is another reason why it is so successful. Pupils respond very well to the outstanding care, guidance and support they receive. Their attitudes to learning are excellent and they feel very safe and very well cared for. They carry out roles of responsibility with great maturity, with older children readily caring for younger children. The school council works very hard to improve the school environment and in particular is very keen to develop a 'greener' school community. Many parents refer to the very high level of both personal and academic care. Innovative strategies, such as writing mentors and learning conferences to support pupils' achievement, mean that pupils are very well placed in terms of their academic and personal development.

St Benedict's provides excellent value for money. High levels of achievement, the well established caring and supportive ethos of the school and the strengths in leadership and management indicate that the school has outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

When children join the Foundation Stage their skills vary considerably, but they are generally slightly above expectations. Children settle very well into the warm, vibrant environment, which buzzes with purposeful activity. They enthusiastically take part in a wide range of creative and fun activities. Children enjoy programming a computerised toy to follow a route, as well as taking part in exciting writing and art activities about 'Pudsey Bear.' Leadership of the Foundation Stage is very effective and all staff are committed and hardworking. Parents really appreciate the very supportive environment and the exciting learning opportunities provided. Children flourish and are able to develop very high levels of independence. They make particularly rapid progress in the area of personal and social development, which provides a very solid foundation for learning higher up the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- The school has accurately identified its priorities for improvement so there are no further ones to add.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Although there are sometimes variations, by the time children begin Year 1 their standards are above national expectations. In Years 1 and 2 pupils build very well on previous learning and continue to reach above average standards. Standards continue to rise in Key Stage 2 and by the end of Year 6 are significantly above the national averages, particularly in English and science. In the Year 6 national tests in 2006 and 2007 the school exceeded the challenging targets it had set for these pupils. In 2007 around two-thirds of the pupils reached the higher Level 5 in English and science and almost half of the pupils reached it in mathematics. All groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are able to achieve very well because of the very high quality of teaching and learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is underpinned by the strong Christian ethos of the school, where parents consider that everyone is made to feel special. Pupils are extremely well behaved and show a very high level of care and concern for others. 'We welcome new children with open arms,' said a group of older pupils. Pupils feel safe and really enjoy their time at school as shown by their excellent attendance. From a very early age children have practical experience of what makes a healthy lifestyle, by growing vegetables. They throw themselves with equal enthusiasm into fundraising activities, such as setting off balloons to raise money for 'Children in Need', community projects like the Garforth Arts festival and the early morning 'Wake Up, Shake Up!' exercise session. As they move through the school they take a growing responsibility for their own learning, through individual learning conferences and partner work. Pupils' high aspirations are best exemplified in their own words: 'We have high standards in our work because it is vital for us to move on.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding, enabling pupils to make excellent progress. Teachers have very good specialist subject knowledge and have a range of very effective strategies, which enable children to be active in their learning and develop a high level of independence. Lessons have a very clear focus and challenging pace. High quality speaking and listening activities stretch children in their thinking as they are given the chance, in their words, to 'bounce ideas off each other'. Teachers have very high expectations of both work and behaviour and children rise to the challenge! Very effective marking and assessment lead to work being very closely matched to the needs of all groups of learners, with teaching assistants making a huge contribution to pupils who may require extra support. Many opportunities for teachers to share best practice have led to consistently high quality teaching and learning throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is excellent and draws on an outstanding range of enrichment activities. These provide memorable experiences for pupils and greatly enhance their learning and personal development. Themed weeks and topics are carefully matched to areas of learning, so that children gain the maximum benefit and enjoyment. This helps build up a wide range of skills for the future and is fostered by excellent support for pupils when they enter school and also when they come to the end of Year 6. Close community links support extra-curricular activities such as work for the local arts festival. Pupils' personal development and well-being are embedded in the curriculum through initiatives such as 'Here I Am' which draws strongly on the ethos of the school. Cross-curricular links are well developed by the curriculum teams, making learning meaningful and interesting for pupils. The curriculum provides numerous opportunities for enterprise activities, such as designing games to raise money for Catholic charities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The caring and inclusive ethos of the school promotes a very special learning environment. Pupils have a very strong relationship with all staff and feel that they can turn to them for help. 'Meeting and Greeting' by the learning mentor at the start of the school day establishes this pattern, and procedures for child protection and safeguarding cement this. Health and safety procedures and risk assessments are scrupulously maintained. Assessment and tracking of pupils' progress accurately identify where intervention strategies need to be introduced to support pupils' progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language receive excellent individual support and access to well established links with outside agencies. This school is very well prepared to meet the whole range of pupils' needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The extremely strong and effective leadership of the school is very much appreciated by the vast majority of parents. 'The school is very well led and managed by a warm, enthusiastic and encouraging head' summarises the view of many parents. Central to the school's work is its self-evaluation and from this flow improvements which are monitored closely. The school development plan is very well thought out and is focused on raising the achievement and fostering the personal development of pupils. There is a strong team spirit where everyone's contribution is valued. An extremely rigorous tracking system is used effectively to monitor progress and highlight any child not doing as well as expected, those who can be challenged further and those who may require extra support. The work of the curriculum teams is leading to rapid rates of progress. For example, a whole school initiative to raise standards in writing has been highly successful. Mathematics standards are currently above average, but the current school focus to raise achievement in mathematics further illustrates its desire to be better still. Governors know the school very well and are extremely supportive, amply fulfilling their role of 'critical friend.'

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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

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

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school because everyone was so welcoming and friendly.

You told us how much you enjoyed coming to school and we could see how happy you are at St Benedicts. Your school gives you an exceptionally good education and we would like to share with you the reasons why.

- Your headteacher is an outstanding leader and has made sure that all those working in school help you learn and develop as much as you can.
- You should be very proud of how well you behave. Your behaviour is excellent and you look after each other very well indeed.
- The adults at school look after you extremely well and they are very good at giving you the help that you need. Excellent teaching and your hard work enable you to do really well and reach very high standards.
- All the staff at school make learning fun and you are lucky to have so many different and interesting things to do.

The inspection team passes on our very best wishes to each of you.