

St Benedict's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 125705 |
| Local Authority | Warwickshire |
| Inspection number | 315289 |
| Inspection date | 5 December 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | John Eadie |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 161 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Dawn Ford |
| Headteacher | Martin Hammond |
| Date of previous school inspection | 24 January 2005 |
| School address | Church Walk Atherstone CV9 1PS |
| Telephone number | 01827 712320 |
| Fax number | 01827 714078 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the progress pupils make, particularly in mathematics in Key Stage 2; the quality of pupils' personal development; and the effectiveness of assessment and target-setting in helping pupils improve their work. Evidence was gathered from discussions with leaders, managers, pupils, staff and parents; visits to all classes; observation of other aspects of the school day such as break and lunchtime; and analysis of parents' questionnaires and school documentation, in particular data on pupils' progress. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated 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

St Benedict's Catholic Primary School is a smaller than average school set in the Mancetter area on the edge of the town. However, pupils, attracted by the Catholic ethos, come from a wide area. Most pupils are of White British heritage, but in the last couple of years, an increasing number of pupils with little English have joined the school from Poland.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'Our child's educational, social and emotional needs are very well catered for', was a typical comment from a parent in this good school with some outstanding features. In particular, the outstanding care, guidance and support that pupils receive results in their excellent personal development and well-being. Many parents commented on this saying such things as, 'The whole ethos of the school breeds love and respect' and 'As a parent, you feel more than happy leaving your child in such a safe and caring environment.' Pupils are developing extremely well into independent and confident young people, who take their responsibilities as members of the school and wider community very seriously. A particularly good example of the care for all is the initiatives that the school has taken to help the Polish pupils settle and successfully learn English as quickly as possible.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their school life because they feel safe and secure and there are a range of interesting activities planned for them. Pupils say that there is always an adult to turn to if they have a problem, saying such things as, 'The teachers are really nice, you can talk to them really easily.' Most play sensibly and safely, but some pupils think there are too many accidents at playtime caused by the careless play of a few. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The Catholic ethos pervades the school, and pupils and parents appreciate the prayer partners' arrangements which links younger children with older pupils. Cultural development is enhanced by the links with a school in Malawi and visits to Sikh Gurdwaras, Jewish synagogues, Mosques and Buddhist and Hindu temples. However, pupils are not so aware of the full range of cultures represented across society.

Pupils' adoption of healthy lifestyles is excellent. They are very aware of the need to take plenty of exercise and really appreciate the new, and much-used, trim trail. They take healthy eating very seriously. The school has recently taken over the management of its own catering and the take-up for the healthy and very tasty lunches, provided by Ben's Bistro, has increased considerably. Packed lunches also contain few unhealthy snacks. Pupils make a worthwhile contribution to the better running of the school and their ideas for improvement are often acted on. For example, the trim trail was the pupils' idea. They also take the initiative in raising money for charities at home and abroad, the links with the school in Malawi also giving pupils an excellent understanding of the needs of others. Many of these fundraising ideas involve pupils in planning, costing and running stalls at fairs. To quote a typical parent's comment, 'Strong foundations for secondary school and for future life are being laid.'

Pupils make good progress and achieve well through the school. When they start in the Reception class, children have levels of skills and knowledge broadly in line with expectations. They make good progress during their time in Reception as teaching and provision are good. By the time they leave the school, pupils have reached standards that are comfortably above average. These standards are particularly high in English. This is because the school recognised a couple of years ago that pupils' standards in writing were not as high as those in reading. Very good plans were put in place to address this, which have resulted in the present high standards. The school recognises that work now needs to be done to raise standards in mathematics, which although still significantly above average, are not as high as those in English and science. One of the principal reasons for the relatively lower performance in this subject is that not as many pupils gain the higher levels. This is because there are times in lessons when the more able pupils are not moving on to more difficult work quickly enough.

Pupils enjoy their learning so much, largely because of the good quality of teaching and the interesting curriculum. There are many strengths of teaching, but the over-riding impression is one of a purposeful and orderly learning environment in all classes. This is based on the exceptionally good relationships that pupils share with all adults. As a parent accurately put it, 'Teachers and pupils have respect for each other and obviously care.' In many lessons, teachers plan a range of activities that keep pupils motivated and engaged in their learning. However, in a few lessons, pupils sit for too long listening and begin to lose interest. Teaching assistants play a strong part in aiding pupils' progress. They sometimes take small groups of more able pupils to extend their learning and they are also largely responsible for the good progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, whom they support well. The curriculum, as well as planning well for the core subjects such as English, mathematics and science, has been adapted well to deliver other subjects through a topic approach. This linking of subjects is extremely carefully planned and makes lessons relevant for pupils. The school is working to try to fit music and art into this scheme rather than teaching these subjects separately.

There is some very good practice in checking on pupils' progress and giving them guidance on how they can improve their work. For example, regular checks are made of what pupils have achieved to make sure that none is in danger of falling behind. Teachers' marking is often exemplary, particularly when they are marking pupils' writing in English. They give extremely clear guidance on what pupils should be focusing on next. However, pupils are not so clear of where these targets fit in their aim to achieve higher levels or of precisely which targets they are addressing at any one time. This is particularly the case in mathematics.

The success of the school is largely due to the drive and leadership of the headteacher, very ably supported by his leadership team and the rest of the staff. It would have been all too easy, with the good standards being reached, to take the foot off the pedal and lose forward momentum. However, this is far from being the case and all staff have been involved in checking on and evaluating the strengths and areas for development and have built a very accurate picture of the school. This has enabled them to set challenging targets, not only for pupils' progress but also for the school's development. Governors are not so involved in this process and rely too much on what they are told. They are extremely supportive and interested, but are not in a good position to challenge from a position of first-hand knowledge.

A parent summarised the school perfectly in saying, 'This is a lovely school, which encourages all-round development.' With the progress being made and the commitment to further improvement, the school is well placed to continue on the upward path.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Despite staff illness, provision for the children of Reception age has been maintained and is good. They make good progress, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development as this is a focus in their early days. Teaching is good and a good range of learning activities is planned. These include an appropriate balance of activities where an adult is working with the whole class or a group and well-focused activities that the children can choose for themselves. Systems of assessment for these children, though satisfactory, do not measure progress in all areas of learning clearly enough so it is not easy for managers to assess which aspects need more reinforcement. There is a well-equipped outside area, but this is not used to develop children's learning in all areas of the curriculum.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics by ensuring that the more able pupils move on to difficult work more quickly.
- Extend the system of setting targets so that pupils know exactly what they need to learn next.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|---|----------------|

Overall effectiveness

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|---|-----|
| 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

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|--|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |

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? | 2 |
| 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

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| 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 | 1 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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

6 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Benedict's Catholic Primary School, Atherstone, CV9 1PS

Thank you so much for welcoming me to your school. I learnt a lot about your school from talking to you and I thoroughly enjoyed my lunch. So many of you told me how much you enjoyed your school life and I am not surprised, as it is a good school with some outstanding features.

I think the best things about your school are:

- you are developing extremely well into polite, responsible and caring young people and you behave extremely well and work very hard
- all adults look after you exceptionally well
- you are making good progress and, by the time you leave, you reach standards that are quite a bit higher than those of pupils in most schools, particularly in English
- the reason you are making good progress is because you are being taught well
- the plans for what you learn are good and I was particularly impressed with the topic work that you do in the afternoons
- your headteacher and teachers have very good plans to make sure that your school keeps improving so that you can do even better.

I have suggested that the following things might be improved:

- some of you who find maths easy are not making the best possible progress because you are not always moved on to difficult work quickly enough
- the targets that are set for you do not always tell you exactly what you need to learn next.

You can help by asking your teachers what you need to learn next and by continuing to work hard. Well done, and keep it up!

Yours sincerely

John D Eadie Lead Inspector

6 December 2007



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John D Eadie
Lead Inspector