

St Bernard's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103462
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323832
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Sarah Conway

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	388
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Cullen
Headteacher	Patrick O'Leary
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wake Green Road Birmingham B13 9QE
Telephone number	01214 643795

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Inspection number	323832

Fax number

01214 646895

Age group	4-11
Inspection dates	10-11 February 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger-than-average school is situated south of Birmingham city centre. It draws its pupils from a socially diverse area. Generally pupils' socio-economic circumstances are average, although the percentage of children eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Just over half of children are from White British backgrounds but there is a range of minority ethnic groups represented in the school. No children are in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below the national average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. The levels of skills and abilities of children who join the Early Years Foundation Stage in Reception are broadly in line with those expected for their age.

The current headteacher was appointed in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Bernard's Catholic Primary School provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. Provisional test results show that standards are rising and the school is improving. With the increase in monitoring, teaching has improved so that the downward trend in results in Key Stage 2 has been halted, standards are rising and pupils are making at least satisfactory progress in all subjects.

Pupils' personal development is good and attendance satisfactory. The headteacher and staff work hard to establish good relationships with and between pupils and ensure there is a harmonious and secure atmosphere in which to learn. The care, guidance and support for pupils are good. As a result, pupils behave well, feel very well looked after and enjoy their learning. As one parent said, reflecting the views of many others, 'My daughter loves coming to school. Teachers go that extra mile in ensuring children feel safe and well cared for.' Pupils have a well developed understanding of how to keep healthy, as illustrated by their enthusiasm for the range of sporting activities on offer.

Children make exceptional progress in Reception because excellent provision gives children increasing confidence and independence to try new things and ask questions. Standards are now well above average when children finish Reception, and this has contributed to rising standards at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 so that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are above average and especially high in writing. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are broadly average, which represents satisfactory progress for pupils given their prior attainment. By ensuring lessons are engaging and challenging, teachers in Years 5 and 6 accelerate pupils' progress and compensate for the ground pupils lost due to weaker provision in Years 3 and 4. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in line with others. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education and future life because of the good development of their social and team working skills as well as good standards attained in information and communication technology (ICT).

There are some strengths in the satisfactory curriculum and teaching pupils receive, but they are not sufficiently widespread to ensure that all pupils make good progress. For example, while the standard of pupils' writing is exceptionally high in Reception and Key Stage 1, insufficient planned opportunities to practise writing at length mean that progress slows down in Key Stage 2 with fewer pupils attaining the expected and higher levels than in other subjects.

The school has a secure view of its own strengths and weaknesses because of sound self-evaluation and satisfactory leadership and management. It has a number of systems which provide information about pupils' progress against reaching recently introduced challenging targets, together with a wealth of other monitoring information. However this information is not yet used effectively by school leaders and governors to target accurately where improvement is needed. The improvements achieved so far by the headteacher with the help of a restructured leadership team demonstrate that there is satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Adults work very effectively as a team across Reception, developing excellent relationships with both children and their parents who are highly supportive. This helps children to settle in quickly and learn routines which contribute to their confidence in managing their own learning,

for example, by overcoming the difficulties which the building presents in gaining access to the outdoor learning area. Classrooms are bright and stimulating places in which to learn. The varied and exciting activities, both inside and outside, are carefully planned so that children are constantly challenged and always engaged in learning. These activities, combined with sensitive care and exemplary teaching, accelerate children's learning so that they make outstanding progress. As a result, when they enter Year 1, standards are well above those expected for their age and children have highly positive attitudes towards learning and work together exceptionally well. Excellent leadership means that assessment information is used very effectively to ensure the curriculum focuses on meeting the individual needs of all children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 and 4 by ensuring that work is well matched to pupils' abilities, so that pupils in these year groups make faster progress.
- Provide more planned opportunities for writing at length in English and other areas of the curriculum in Key Stage 2 to raise standards in writing.
- Improve the use of monitoring information by school leaders, including governors, to target more accurately where improvement is needed.

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

Pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. They make exceptional progress in Reception and enter Year 1 with standards well above average. Pupils assessed at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2008 made satisfactory progress, attaining above average standards, and particularly high standards in writing.

Since the last inspection, standards in Key Stage 2 have fallen from being well above national averages to broadly average in 2007. Improvements to assessment and monitoring of teaching and learning introduced by the school have halted the decline so provisional test results indicate that standards, although still broadly average, are now rising. The standards attained by those leaving Key Stage 2 in 2008 reflected the average standards they attained in Key Stage 1. Standards attained in reading were particularly high when compared to those attained in writing which were lower. Pupils currently in Years 3 and 4 are now making expected progress. The standards reached by pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 suffered from the legacy of weaker provision. This is being addressed so that pupils are making accelerated progress and those in Year 6 are now on track to attain average standards. The achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and other groups is satisfactory, in line with the whole school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development is good especially in knowing the difference between right and wrong. They are caring, considerate and courteous to each other and adults. Pupils are proud to attend St Bernard's and behaviour is generally good in lessons and around the school. As a result, pupils are attentive and responsive in lessons and enjoy challenges, only becoming distracted when teaching is less engaging. There is a good understanding of the

importance of adopting healthy lifestyles from an early age, as demonstrated by a child in Reception who knows about the recommended 'five a day' portions of fruit and vegetables. Pupils are very aware of the importance of taking regular exercise appreciating the many different sports on offer, including Gaelic football. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe by, for example, avoiding slippery areas in the playground after heavy snowfall and an overnight frost. They say they are free from bullying and know that when they go to an adult with a concern it will be dealt with. Pupils are well prepared for the future because of their competent literacy and numeracy skills, good ICT skills and well developed ability to work in teams. Pupils enjoy many opportunities for taking on responsibility such as running the book sale at break time. The school council is rightly proud of the part it has played in improving play facilities. Pupils support the local community by, for example, helping to clean up the local river.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Sharper monitoring has helped to improve the quality of teaching. Planning provides a clear structure for lessons. The intended learning is clearly shared with pupils, so they know what is expected of them. Pupils are keen to learn and try hard. Teaching is adequate rather than good because, despite the use of setting in English and mathematics, work is not always appropriately matched to the needs of all pupils especially in Years 3 and 4. In one lesson, pupils struggled to read a story about which they were being asked questions and in another lesson pupils became restless because the pace of learning was too slow. Where work is more tailored to their individual needs pupils enjoy their learning, respond enthusiastically to challenge and make good progress. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide effective support, especially to those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the needs of most pupils. It is planned to help pupils build on the skills they have learnt before, however it does not include enough opportunities for pupils to write at length in English lessons or practise their writing in other areas of the curriculum. The very well planned personal, social and health education programme plays an important part in helping pupils understand the need to live healthy lives. It is less well developed in helping pupils to explore the richness of the different cultures and faiths represented in the school and further afield. Pupils enjoy the wide range of activities, particularly sport and music, at lunchtime and after school which contribute to their enjoyment of school. There are additional activities provided for gifted and talented pupils outside the curriculum but their needs are not always so effectively met in lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good care and support provided for pupils are a major strength of the school. It ensures that all pupils feel welcome and secure and develop the right attitudes to learning. Pupils from different backgrounds and cultures get on well together, respect each other and are alert to one another's needs. Adults know their pupils well, work closely with parents and make good

use of outside agencies to secure pupils' well-being. Child protection arrangements are robust and thorough risk assessments are in place. All safeguarding requirements are fully met. While the school makes every effort to improve attendance, including the use of a parent link worker, there are still some pupils whose learning is interrupted because of prolonged absences. Pupils know their targets and what to do to improve. Some teachers are applying the school's recently introduced assessment programme well and involving pupils in checking their own progress. This is less effective when, as happens in some lessons, they are given a long list of things to check which leads to some pupils becoming confused.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, since his appointment, has introduced a range of initiatives to raise standards. These are beginning to contribute to school improvement, most notably in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and have arrested the decline in standards in later years. He is supported well by other senior leaders, whose roles have been restructured so that they can play a major part in school improvement and self-evaluation. The increased monitoring of teaching combined with a range of information about pupils' progress is contributing to a vast bank of information about school performance. However, school leaders are not making the best use of this information to ensure school improvement activities are appropriately targeted, for example there is currently limited analysis of the difference in attainment or achievement of different groups. Governors are supportive and well informed about the school's performance but they are not sufficiently challenging about the standards attained in different subjects or by different groups of pupils. The school has sound policies in place to promote equality and overcome discrimination. It is a harmonious community and welcomes pupils from all backgrounds, but recognises the need to improve pupils' understanding of wider cultural diversity in the United Kingdom and beyond.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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/or disabilities make progress	3

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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

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

12 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bernard's Catholic Primary School, Birmingham, B13 9QE

We would like to thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school before half-term. We enjoyed talking to you and hearing how proud you were of your school. You told us there was no bullying and showed us that you have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe. We loved hearing you sing and some of you playing musical instruments.

We found that St Bernard's provided you with a satisfactory education. Here are some other things we found.

- Children in Reception get off to a fantastic start because they are provided with so many interesting things to do.
- The headteacher, teachers and other adults take good care of you and will always help you if you are worried about anything.
- You make satisfactory progress across the school and reach standards that are expected by the time you leave.
- Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory but you do not have enough opportunities to practise your writing.
- You behave well and work and play well together.
- You know how to lead a healthy life.

We have asked the school to do these three things to make the school an even better place to learn.

- Help pupils in Years 3 and 4 to make faster progress by ensuring that work is well suited to their interests and abilities.
- Provide more opportunities for you to practise your writing in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that everyone with leadership responsibilities uses information well to plan carefully what needs to be done to improve the school.

You can help your teachers by continuing to behave well, working hard and coming to school regularly.

Best wishes

Sarah Conway

Lead inspector