

# St Bernadettes Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106116
<b>Local Authority</b>	Stockport
<b>Inspection number</b>	324335
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jim Kidd

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	186
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs B Fletcher
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr M O'Brien
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 May 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Foliage Road Brinnington Stockport Cheshire SK5 8AR

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 June 2009
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average sized school serves an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. Most pupils are of White British heritage and there are few pupils with English as an additional language. St Bernadette's is an accredited Healthy School, holds the Activemark for its work in physical education and has recently gained the prestigious National Breakfast Club Award. There is a separate childcare provision operating on the school site that is privately managed, and did not form a part of this inspection.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding and fully inclusive school, in which pupils of all levels of ability achieve exceptionally well over time in both their academic and personal development. All those connected with the school – pupils, parents, staff and outside agencies – are of the same opinion about the excellent care, guidance and support it provides for its pupils. They agree with the school motto: 'This is a nice place to be'.

Excellent teaching and an emphasis on ensuring that pupils are fully aware of, and take responsibility for, their own learning lead to them making quite remarkable progress across the school, to reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. Attainment in Key Stage 1 is improving apace and pupils are benefiting from the effectiveness of the 'Reading Recovery' programme. Standards of writing in both key stages are now much higher than at the time of the previous inspection and pupils' stronger skills in problem solving are leading to significant improvements in mathematics.

Pupils love their school, behave in an exemplary fashion and are delighted to support younger pupils and those experiencing difficulty. They feel safe and have the utmost confidence in the adults who work with them. The school council has a high reputation amongst its constituents and does all it can to raise money to improve facilities, in the playground for example. Pupils are not only aware of the importance of healthy eating, they lead by example when growing food in the organic garden. They look after the environment, too, and tend the nature trail with delight.

The school's emphasis on improving the quality of pupils' learning has borne fruit since the previous inspection. Pupils are fully engaged in lessons and have many opportunities in pairs and in groups to act as a learning resource for each other. They benefit from their teachers' extensive use of new technology in the classroom and are always fully aware of what is expected of them.

The curriculum not only fosters pupils' acquisitions of basic skills well, it now meets the needs of all groups more closely and also encourages youngsters to be creative in their thinking. For example, pupils write and perform an opera each year and benefit from the services of a trained opera singer who collaborates with their class teacher during rehearsals. Pupils speak highly of the extensive range of extra-curricular activities, including the nationally recognised breakfast club and the art club after school. However, there are not enough opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to gain more understanding of cultures and traditions, both in this country and abroad, which are different to their own.

The caring and supportive ethos of the school pervades everything it does. Pupils with learning difficulties and those deemed vulnerable receive exceptional support and are very happy in school as a result. Furthermore, pupils of middle ability and those identified as gifted and talented are supported to the utmost too. Academic guidance is a major strength and the quality of marking is excellent.

St Bernadette's is a 'thinking school', in which complacency has no part and where ongoing improvement is the order of the day. The outstanding headteacher provides clear direction for development and this is shared by staff of all levels of experience and responsibility. Teamwork is of the essence: trust and support for all abound. As parents say, 'We couldn't be happier with the school. The care and attention shown to our children is second-to-none.' Without

doubt, St Bernadette's provides excellent value for money and has outstanding capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding and children get an excellent start to their learning in both Nursery and Reception. Children enter Nursery with low age-related skills. Comprehensive induction procedures, full involvement of parents – in the 'stay and play' activities for example – and high quality teaching lead to outstanding achievement in both classes. As a result, children enter Year 1 with much improved skills, particularly in relation to their personal, social and emotional development which is outstanding, but overall with attainment which is still below expectations.

Children thrive in the supportive environment and adults provide outstanding role models. Relationships are a major strength and children feel utterly safe and secure. Their behaviour is exemplary and they engage themselves fully in the wide range of activities open to them, often initiated by themselves. Staff promote children's independence in learning very well indeed and are always concerned to plan activities according to the needs and interests of each individual. Assessment procedures are thorough and comprise both formal and incidental observations of children at work and play. Leadership and management are of the highest order. The outstanding Early Years Foundation Stage leader and her strong, caring team of staff have established an environment where the welfare of children is of paramount importance.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Extend opportunities for pupils to become more aware of cultures different to their own both at home and abroad.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

From low age-related skills on entry to the Nursery, pupils make outstanding progress across the school and reach above average standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Standards in Key Stage 2 have risen year-on-year since 2004. In 2008, every pupil attained at National Curriculum Level 4 or above in English, mathematics and science; the proportion reaching Level 5 was the highest in the school's history. Inspection evidence demonstrates that pupils in the current Year 6 class are on course to reach or even exceed their challenging targets and that the trend of outstanding achievement is being maintained. Similarly, standards are rising in Key Stage 1 and significant improvements in reading, writing and numeracy are there for all to see. High expectations of what their pupils can do, from both teachers and teaching assistants, lead to excellent achievement amongst all groups of pupils. Moreover, an overriding emphasis on raising pupils' self-esteem, often through drama and music, means that pupils with learning difficulties and also those identified as vulnerable develop in self-confidence. As a result, pupils who sometimes find the work difficult make the same exceptional progress as their peers.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of how the school develops their sons and daughters and comment, 'We feel proud to be connected with the school, because every child really does matter at St Bernadette's.' Pupils have the same view. They enjoy their school and can think of no major way to improve it further. They have a keen understanding of how to stay safe and give visitors perceptive advice on the importance of wearing seatbelts in cars and also about the risks of Internet use. They are fully aware of the need for a balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle and the 'Freddy Fit' sessions are one of the highlights of the school week. Spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good overall: although there are outstanding features, pupils' awareness of cultures different to their own is not as extensive as it might be. Older pupils, as 'buddies' and Year 6 helpers, are quick to support younger children and enjoy leading games and making sure that no-one is lonely at breaks and lunchtimes. Excellent relationships in school underpin pupils' impeccable behaviour and attitudes to learning. They thrive on the many responsibilities they have, for example through the school council which is currently hard at work raising money to improve the playground. Despite the school's sterling efforts to promote it, attendance remains broadly average, often as a result of holidays being taken in term time. Pupils' outstanding personal, social and academic achievement ensures that they are exceptionally prepared for their next stage in education and beyond.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

Realistic challenge for all, an emphasis on pupils being fully aware of what they need to do to improve their performance, and strong relationships between adults and pupils are the hallmarks of teaching and learning, which are outstanding across the school. As pupils say, 'Our teachers make the lessons fun and the Steps to Success show us how we can do even better in our work.' In an outstanding Year 6 lesson on persuasive writing, for example, pupils took control of their own learning. They were desperate to answer questions and were able to use complex terminology such as 'imperative', 'compound sentences' and 'subordinate clauses' accurately and in context. Moreover, Year 5 made quite perceptive comments about how they could improve their performance during the rehearsal for *The Highwayman* and younger pupils in Year 2 demonstrated they were fully aware of 'alliteration' as a technique in poetry writing. Pupils have so many opportunities to support and challenge each other's learning in pairs and groups and their behaviour and engagement in class are of the highest order. Pupils enjoy their lessons and benefit from the teachers' impressive use of new technology, including the electronic whiteboard, as a teaching and learning tool.

## Curriculum and other activities

### Grade: 2

The continuous development of the curriculum means that it is much improved since the previous inspection and that it now meets the needs, interests and aspirations of all pupils more closely. It has a profound impact on pupils' personal, social and emotional development, and pupils' self-esteem and belief in themselves continue to rise as a result. Parents are grateful for the school's work in this area and comment, 'The school does so much to increase the self-confidence of our sons and daughters.' Pupils' care for their extensive organic garden and

nature trail, an initiative which has received national recognition, is a joy to behold and they speak confidently about the importance of healthy food and of care for the environment. They are also very positive about the annual opera, written by themselves, which gives them opportunities to develop their creative talents in English, music and drama. There is a wide variety of enrichment activities, including sport, and an increasing number of educational visits which broaden pupils' horizons outside their immediate environment. The school recognises that there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to become more aware of cultures and traditions, both in this country and abroad, which are different to their own.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Representatives of outside agencies and local authority services speak with one voice about the outstanding care, guidance and support the school provides for its pupils and their families. A typical comment is, 'There is no other school we recommend so often to others as an example of excellent practice.' Indeed, pastoral care and support for all, including those with learning difficulties and those identified as vulnerable, are of the highest order and are major strengths of the school. The work of the talented and committed team of teaching assistants ensures that pupils with academic or emotional difficulties are fully included in everything the school has to offer. No group is neglected: pupils of middle ability and those with gifts and talents receive the utmost consideration, also enabling each individual to make excellent progress. Procedures for child protection and safeguarding are fully in place and meet current guidelines.

Areas for improvement at the time of the previous inspection, target setting and academic guidance, are now of exceptional quality. Pupils are fully aware of their current performance, of their targets and of how they can reach them. Marking is excellent and pupils benefit from detailed comment on how they can improve their work. Discussion with pupils and scrutiny of their exercise books demonstrate, also, that pupils act upon this advice and that they have the utmost confidence in their teachers.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Excellent teamwork amongst all staff and a total commitment to equality of opportunity for all are the key features of leadership and management, which are outstanding at all levels. Staff are proactive in asking for more responsibility and they have the highest regard for the senior management team. Middle leaders speak for all staff when they say, 'The head and deputy are an inspiration to us all, set us challenges and targets, support us to the hilt, but hold us most rigorously to account.'

As a result of accurate and honest evaluation of school performance in all areas of its life, the school has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Areas for improvement have been tackled exceptionally well and assessment, marking and target-setting are now strengths of provision. Governors are actively involved, too, in setting clear direction for school improvement. They visit the school regularly to celebrate its achievements and to challenge teachers and the leadership for the benefit of the pupils in their care. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good overall and racial harmony abounds within its walls. Teachers are now planning for the introduction of the International Primary Curriculum during the next academic year, to promote more strongly pupils' understanding of the wider world.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### 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?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	1

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	1
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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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**

Thank you all for giving the team such a wonderful welcome when we visited your school recently. You were so kind, friendly and polite to us and it was a pleasure to meet you and to watch you learn. We are particularly grateful to those of you who came to talk to us at lunchtime on Tuesday and to the pupils in Year 5 who were rehearsing for their next production of *The Highwayman*. We really enjoyed that. We know you are very keen to find out what we think about your school so here goes!

St Bernadette's is an outstanding school and you are right to be so proud of it. The teaching, care and support you receive from the adults who work with you are excellent and you make marvellous progress in your studies. From the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 6, you make great strides in your learning and the standards you reach at the end of your time in school are above the national average. Your teachers and teaching assistants give you really good advice on how you can improve your work and it is wonderful to see that you act upon their advice. It is hardly surprising, then, that standards in your school are getting higher and higher!

Your behaviour and attitudes to school are very good indeed and older pupils enjoy looking after younger ones. The 'Freddy Fit' sessions, the organic garden and the nature trail make you very well aware of how to eat healthily, how to stay fit and just why it is important to look after the environment. You like to take on responsibility and the school council is working so hard to raise money to improve the playground even more.

Your headteacher and all the other staff are always very keen to make sure that St Bernadette's goes from strength to strength and they try out so many things to improve the school. I've asked them to try something else to make the school even better. I've told them it would be a good idea to make sure that you get more opportunities to become more aware of other cultures, in this country and further afield, which are different to your own.

Best wishes to you all and thanks again for helping with the inspection. Please keep enjoying school, working as hard as you can and looking after each other. Please remember, too, that good attendance will help you do even better at St Bernadette's!