

# St Benedicts Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	111323
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	325349
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Allan Torr HMI

The inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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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 (total)	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs T Harrison
Headteacher	Mr J Gallogly
Date of previous school inspection	February 2006
School address	Hall Road Handforth Wilmslow SK9 3AE
Telephone number	01625 520 207
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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out at no notice by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, parents and the school's local authority adviser. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documents including assessment data, improvement planning file, health and safety and safeguarding documentation and 76 returned parental questionnaires amounting to 88 responses (some parents completed a response per child).

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The scope and quality of pupils' work in information and communication technology (ICT) to determine whether standards have improved since the last inspection.
- Improvements since the last inspection to the Reception class and the impact of provision on outcomes for children.
- The quality and impact of the school's monitoring of teaching and learning to determine whether the overall quality of teaching and learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection.
- The learning and progress in all subjects, particularly mathematics, by different groups of pupils to establish whether work is challenging enough.
- The effectiveness of governors in providing effective support so that weaknesses are tackled and statutory responsibilities are met.

## Information about the school

St Benedict's is a smaller-than-average primary school serving three Catholic parishes. Although the proportion of pupils with a learning difficulty and/or disability is slightly lower than the national average, the proportion with a statement of special educational need is slightly more than average. Slightly fewer than the national average are eligible to take a free school meal. Around 8% of pupils do not speak English as their first language; this proportion is lower than the national average. Approximately 18% of pupils have a non-White British heritage, which is also lower than the national average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. There is also a before- and after-school club on site, not managed by the governing body. The school has achieved Activemark. The school has extensive links with initial teacher education and has trained five graduate teachers over the last five years.

## Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

## Main findings

For a pupil, life at St Benedict's is interesting, fun and full of opportunities to be successful in many different areas. Pupils are, rightly, proud of and enthusiastic about their school. They were able to explain with ease many good features, including the support and care from staff and other pupils, interesting lessons that broaden their horizons and knowledge, and trips and visitors that enhance the good curriculum. Pupils new to the school from other parts of the world are highly complimentary about the support, help and friendship offered to them. These strengths are also reflected in the discussions with parents and in the returned parental questionnaires. A typical comment was, 'the school has a friendly and welcoming ambience at all times... The children enjoy a wide range of activities and lessons at school and are full of enthusiasm for their studies'. Pupils are greeted warmly by staff at the start of the day and there is a positive mix of humour, professionalism and respect through effective relationships which provide a good environment for learning. Pupils feel very safe in school and they have a well-tuned view of risks and potential hazards. They also have a very good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle through a mix of active lifestyle, good diet and supportive friendships.

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection, aided by some strategic and effective appointments of new staff. The quality of teaching and learning, governance, standards and provision for ICT, provision in the Reception class and the school's overall effectiveness have improved from satisfactory to good. This track record of improvement, alongside accurate and extensive self-evaluation and a continuing drive to meet challenging targets, indicates the school has good capacity to improve further.

Pupils enter the school with broadly-average skills and knowledge but this alters from year to year. They make good progress, particularly in Key Stage 2, to reach levels at the end of Year 6 that are significantly above the national average. There is little difference between the achievements of different groups of pupils. Progress and attainment is particularly high in English. This is because pupils are challenged and are able to apply their skills across the curriculum. In one very good example, older pupils wrote a balanced and compelling discussion in a geography lesson about whether the building of the Aswan dam was a good idea, or not. The quality of lessons is good overall but there remain some satisfactory lessons and few that are outstanding. This is because, in some lessons, teachers do most of the work and pupils are not always asked to reason through their thoughts and improve their own skills by explaining their methods and their answers. In a majority of lessons,

assessment is used well to match the activities to the different abilities of pupils. This enables them to make good progress year-on-year. In some lessons pupils are not challenged as much as they could be because their thinking is constrained by unchallenging worksheets and they complete work that they have already proven themselves capable of doing. Although marking and oral feedback provides positive praise, not enough attention is paid to indicating what pupils need to do to reach the next level. Consequently, pupils are sometimes vague about exactly what they need to do to improve. The quality of lessons has improved since the last inspection, partly because teachers get positive feedback on their lessons and clear indications as to what needs to be improved. The frequency and quality of monitoring have also improved but there is still some scope to give sharper feedback to staff about the quality of pupils' learning and the progress they make in the lesson.

## What does the school need to do to improve further

- Raise the quality of pupils' learning to overwhelmingly good and more often outstanding by:
  - providing pupils with more opportunities to reason, think and to explain their methods and answers
  - providing teachers with sharper feedback on how to improve pupils' learning and progress
  - providing pupils with feedback so they know precisely what they need to do to improve their work
  - making better use of assessment to ensure all pupils are challenged and build on their prior skills.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2
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Standards by the end of Key Stage 2 are significantly above average, which constitutes good achievement from pupils' starting points. Pupils are articulate, use a good range of vocabulary and are able to write for different purposes using accurately punctuated, spelt and constructed sentences. These skills extend across the curriculum. In one example, pupils wrote compelling diary entries from the view point of a Spartan soldier, having synthesised information they had learnt about Ancient Greece. Attainment in mathematics and science is above the national averages and standards in history, geography, music and ICT are equally high. In a small number of cases, pupils' progress is hindered because teachers use worksheets restricting pupils' ability to think, extend their skills and to explain their thoughts and methods. Similarly, in a small number of lessons, assessment is not used to the maximum, so pupils complete work that they have already proven they can do. In mathematics, for example, some pupils get every question correct and are not challenged as much as they could be, and they complete similar calculations to the ones they got correct a few weeks earlier.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are guided and taught effectively. As a consequence, they make good progress and many achieve the expected Level 4 by the end of Year 6. Similarly, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, pupils eligible to receive a free school meal, and pupils for whom English is not their first

language make good progress. Current and past national assessments indicate these groups of pupils attain better than similar pupils nationally.

Pupils' good behaviour and the warm vibrant atmosphere within the school are also factors enabling pupils to make good progress. They are polite, affable, sociable and respectful. Pupils' understanding of how to stay safe and live a healthy lifestyle is outstanding. Most are very aware of hazards around them and have a very good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet and lifestyle. They are active and are involved in creative play at break times. School meals are nutritious and well-balanced. Pupils make a good contribution to school life, for example as reading buddies, language buddies for pupils who speak English as an additional language, and as friendship buddies with Reception pupils. In ICT, for example, Year 6 pupils produced a multimedia presentation for their Reception buddy. In the wider community, pupils work well to raise money for charitable causes and participate with pupils from other schools on various projects such as the Handforth Jazz Band. Pupils are well-prepared for their future. Their attendance is above average, as is their attainment in basic skills of numeracy, ICT and literacy. Pupils are also active in enterprise schemes and in projects to develop their financial literacy. Older pupils, for example, produced spreadsheets to convert from one currency to another and to calculate a budget for a bedroom. Year 5 pupils met and discussed classroom design with an architect.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

## How effective is the provision?

Approximately two thirds of the lessons observed during the inspection were good. In these lessons:

- teachers monitor and assess the whole class during the lesson and take every opportunity to extend each pupil's skills, vocabulary and understanding
- learning is active and the time pupils spend sitting listening or in question/answer sessions is minimal

<sup>1</sup>The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

- the last part of the lesson is used very effectively to develop pupils' understanding further
- tasks and activities are purposeful, exciting, and based on an assessment of pupils' capability rather than on a published lesson plan
- tasks and activities are pitched slightly above the level that different groups of pupils are working at so as to provide effective challenge and high expectations
- interactive whiteboards and other resources are used well to make learning highly visual and practical
- there are opportunities for self- and peer review and opportunities for pupils to think, reason and to explain their methods and answers to others.

Teachers are diligent in their marking of pupils' work. Some teachers provide pupils with precise tips for improvement, which are followed up in subsequent lessons. This practice is, however, inconsistent and not fully embedded across all classes. As a result, some pupils have only a vague understanding about what exactly they need to do to improve their work. Assessment is used satisfactorily to plan lessons. In some classes, the assessment data are not the drivers behind the planning of activities and, instead, teachers use published schemes of work and lesson plans, which do not meet the needs of all pupils. Most staff use questioning well to gauge pupils' understanding but, in some lessons, the questions are too simple and do not require pupils to think or to reason.

The curriculum is good. It meets pupils' needs and is enriched by a good range of experiences and 'theme days'. There is good provision for teaching Spanish and good consolidation of the language by teachers during other parts of the day. In Year 2, for example, the teacher in a science lesson counted down from five in Spanish, waiting for pupils to be quiet. The pupils joined in her counting, using good pronunciation. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, such as tennis and football. Good use is made of links with other schools, such as the local high school, to extend the curriculum. Year 5 pupils, for example, travelled to a high school to play good quality tunes on different musical instruments.

The support, guidance and care for pupils are good and underpin the progress made by different groups in the school. The school, for example, worked very effectively with other agencies and families of pupils who have very low attendance. As a result, the pupils' attendance increased by over 15% and their achievement rose. Challenging targets and an effective tracking system are used by teachers to identify groups of pupils who would benefit from a carefully selected programme of focused teaching. Consequently, pupils who speak English as an additional language, those with a learning difficulty and/or disability, and those who are slightly under the expected level make good progress.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

## How effective are leadership and management?

The effectiveness of senior leaders' communication and driving improvement is good because:

- they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses
- they track and evaluate pupils' performance carefully and use this alongside the views and perceptions of all major stakeholders to evaluate the impact of the school's provision
- they identify and tackle weaknesses effectively by using a clearly-prioritised action plan, which is known to all staff and governors
- they communicate the school's mission, direction and high expectations effectively
- they set and use challenging targets to identify and tackle underperformance
- they monitor and evaluate teaching more frequently and more effectively than at the last inspection. There is, however, scope to refine procedures further to provide teachers with precise feedback on how to develop pupils' learning and progress further.

In this inclusive school, there are no major groups of pupils that underachieve. This is because senior leaders take time to orchestrate and select intervention systems that have a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Staff promote equality and fairness and they tackle any discrimination and barriers to learning effectively. The school's links with parents, agencies, other professionals and other schools have a positive impact on outcomes for pupils.

The governing body is proactive and acts as a critical friend, challenging and supporting the school. It has a positive effect on raising standards and moving the school forward. Governors have a strategic overview of the school's work and review and evaluate policies and procedures regularly. Government requirements to record vetting checks on adults are in place. The school's safeguarding procedures are satisfactory and the school has a good track record in responding to pupils' concerns and anxieties.

There are good partnerships with other schools, the local authority and with the parish. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good and this has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils benefit from links with non-faith primary schools and from the opportunity to work with different groups in the local community. They have a good understanding of life in India and Switzerland as a result of the school's promotion of links with other countries.

### *These are the grades for leadership and management*

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3



The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Reception class with broadly-average skills and knowledge for their age. They make good progress in all areas of learning, particularly in reading, writing and in their confidence and independence. This is because there is a good mix between focused and child-initiated activities and because activities are planned that relate well to the central theme and enable children to move onto the next step in their development. There is scope to extend this by ensuring there are further opportunities for children to be engaged in purposeful challenges and to think, reason and to explain what they are doing. There is also greater scope to ensure there is a clearer developmental focus in child-initiated activity. By the end of the Reception Year, children have attained skills that are above the national average in reading and writing and slightly above in mathematical, physical and creative development and in knowledge and understanding of the world.

In the observed sessions, children were actively engaged, enthusiastic, knew class routines and systems and enjoyed their learning. There were good relationships with staff that helped to build up children's esteem and confidence. The learning environment and provision have improved since the last inspection. The outdoor area is an exciting, well-resourced space in which children can learn actively and develop. In one lesson, children made good use of a bubble machine to practice catching and jumping skills. There are good opportunities for role-play, indoors and outdoors, and these help to build children's spoken language skills but, in a few cases, activities did not always challenge the more able children.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

The response from parents was higher than the usual number of returns for the school's own questionnaire. Two areas where there was a particularly strong response was to the questions about whether the school keeps children safe and helps them to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Over 60% of parents believe their children always enjoy school, make good progress, and are well-prepared for their futures. A similarly high proportion responded that the school always keeps them informed

about their child's progress, helps them to support their children, takes account of parental suggestions and is always led and managed well. Two questions received responses relatively lower than others. Just over half of parents responded that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour, with 12% replying 'occasionally' or 'never'. Inspectors judged behaviour overall to be good. 14% of parents said the school only occasionally meets their child's needs, with 59% responding 'always'.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Benedicts Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 88 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 150 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	29	6	0

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



8 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of St Benedicts Catholic Primary School, Handforth.

Thank you so much for helping us when we came to your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you and looking at your work. It was particularly helpful to speak to some of you in the playground at lunchtime. You all told us that you enjoy coming to school, that you feel very safe and that St. Benedict's is a good school. We agree with you. It is clear that, because your lessons are mostly good, you all progress and achieve well, particularly in English. You also reach above-average levels in subjects such as history, geography, music, mathematics and science. We think you could reach even higher levels than you do at present if, in your lessons, you had more opportunity to:

- reason, think and to explain your answers and methods
- to know precisely what to do to reach the next step in your work
- be challenged in lessons and have work set that enables you to reach the next level.

Linked to this, we have asked senior leaders to think about giving teachers feedback on their lessons based on how well you learn and make progress. In this way, we believe that the proportion of good and outstanding lessons should increase.

We believe St. Benedict's is a warm, friendly school where you are treated with respect and all are able to succeed, regardless of background or ability. Your parents and carers were also very positive about the education you receive. We think the school has improved well since it was last inspected and it has good capacity to improve even more because senior leaders know the school's strength and weaknesses well and are moving quickly to improve in all areas.

Finally, we found that you behave well and are polite, respectful and sensible in and around school. You have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. It was particularly good to see no unhealthy snacks being eaten at lunch or break times, water being drunk throughout the day and lots of opportunities to exercise and to be active, especially on the new exciting 'trim trail'.

We wish you all the luck for the future.

Best wishes

Allan Torr  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Keith Bardon  
additional inspector

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