

St Bernard's RC Primary School, Bolton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105230
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	336455
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Stephen Wall

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	122
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Phil Ashcroft
Headteacher	Mrs Clare Doodson
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited six lessons. About 70% of inspectors' time was spent observing learning. The inspectors saw five teachers and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's monitoring, self-evaluation, pupils' progress tracking and improvement planning. Inspectors also took account of the 56 questionnaire returns from parents and carers.

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

- the quality of pupils' learning and progress, especially in Key Stage 2
- the quality and impact of teaching, especially in Key Stage 2
- how effective leaders and managers are at bringing about improvement.

Information about the school

This is a much smaller-than-average primary school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Fewer pupils than average have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school recently gained the Financial Management Standard in Schools and has been awarded Activemark.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. However, it is improving rapidly because staffing difficulties that have held the school back in recent years have been resolved. Many aspects of the school's work are now good. Recent appointments to the senior leadership team are proving pivotal in providing the headteacher with the necessary support and expertise to drive the school forward strongly. Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's strengths and the areas where it needs to improve. Previous weaknesses are being tackled rigorously. The improving picture is the result of many factors. These include the rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning; the effective use of assessment; sharply focused planning; effective professional development; and high quality support from the local authority and outside consultants. As a result, the quality of teaching, especially in Key Stage 2, has improved. It is now consistently good and some is outstanding. It is taking time, however, for the much improved teaching to overcome a legacy of average attainment and satisfactory achievement. The school can demonstrate, and inspection evidence shows, that the quality of pupils' achievement and the progress they are making is improving rapidly. For these reasons, the school is demonstrating good capacity for sustained improvement.

This is a happy school. Pupils say how much it has improved. 'School used to be boring but now it's great! Lessons are much more fun and we learn a lot more,' is a typical comment. Behaviour is good. Attendance levels are high. Pupils are welcoming to visitors and show good levels of respect. Good care, guidance and support ensure that pupils feel safe in school. Effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures that their progress matches that of other pupils. The targeted support of a team of dedicated and talented teaching assistants is central to pupils' improving attainment and achievement.

Good teaching is the backbone of pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their improving achievement. Teachers use assessment information effectively to set tasks that are successful in meeting the needs and abilities of different groups of learners. The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets pupils' needs, but presents limited opportunities for pupils to develop their skills as independent learners across a range of subjects. The curriculum also provides too few opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, with the result that pupils' basic skills in ICT are not as developed as they could be.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Enhance the quality of pupils' learning and raise attainment further, by:
 - providing more opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to develop their skills as independent learners across a range of subjects
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to do their best and are eager to contribute in lessons. They work very effectively in pairs and small groups. They take great pride in the presentation of their written work. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills broadly in line with those expected for their age. Over the last three years they have left Key Stage 2 with broadly average levels of attainment. This represents satisfactory progress and achievement. However, the school's own assessment data and evidence gathered during the inspection, show that all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are now making much better progress because teaching is consistently good at all key stages. Pupils' enjoyment of school is clear. They settle to work quickly and enthusiastically. They say how safe they feel in the school's nurturing environment. They know the importance of healthy lifestyles. They can say which foods are good for them and which are best treated with caution. Participation rates in the wide range of sporting enrichment activities are high. Pupils value the school council because it helps make their views heard and 'gets things done.' The school council was recently invited to a full governors meeting to put forward suggestions to improve the school. Pupils' confidence and maturity together with their improving attainment and achievement mean that they are well prepared for the next steps in their education when they leave school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show a firm grasp of right and wrong. They are respectful to each other and the adults working with them.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The school has worked hard and successfully to raise the quality of teaching so that it is now good. Teachers use assessment effectively to match tasks closely to the needs and abilities of different groups of learners. Teachers mark written work conscientiously. Their comments give pupils clear indications of what they need to do to improve their work. Teaching is consistently lively. It is challenging and varied. Pupils comment positively on how much teaching has improved and how much more exciting it is.

Having worked successfully to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching, leaders and managers recognise the need to develop the curriculum to add further to the quality of pupils' independent learning and progress. Pupils say how much they enjoy topic work, such as their recent themed work on the Victorians. Examples of their work show how much pupils gained from this opportunity to develop their own lines of investigation and how much this approach helped to develop their literacy skills. However, opportunities for this kind of investigation are too limited.

Good levels of care, guidance and support mean that pupils work and learn in a supportive environment where every pupil is known and valued as an individual. The effective management of the team of talented teaching assistants ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress in line with other pupils. This is especially apparent in Key Stage 2, where some classes contain a very high number of vulnerable pupils. Strong partnerships with the partner secondary school ensure smooth transition for Year 6 pupils when they change schools.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
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The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership, with the determined support of governors, has rigorously tackled weaknesses in the school. This has taken time, but it is clear that leaders and managers are strongly focused on implementing change and driving improvement. There is a strong sense of teamwork in the pursuit of raising levels of achievement and attainment. The promotion of equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work. It is evident in the good levels of care and support provided for every pupil. The successful focus on improvement has been aimed at all groups of pupils with the result that every pupil's achievement is rising rapidly.

Safeguarding procedures are good. Appropriate checks are carried out on all staff and visitors to the school. Relevant personnel receive regular training to update them on safeguarding and child protection procedures. Risk assessments are carried out on pupils' activities and the school takes care to identify and support pupils who may be at risk.

The promotion of community cohesion is good. The school has a clear understanding of its context and is planning accordingly. The school is a happy cohesive community. Students are active in the local community. There are regular visits to a variety of places of worship. Visitors from a variety of faiths are welcomed into assemblies and to support teaching. The recent visit to the school by pupils from a school in South Africa stimulated pupils' understanding of others less fortunate than themselves and broadened their understanding of other cultures at first-hand. The school accepts the need to evaluate the impact of its activities more formally.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
	2
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

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Teaching is moving from being formal in approach to promoting a wider range of child-led activities. Leadership is keen to see the promotion of even more child-led activities. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Progress is especially strong in the children's social development, their knowledge and understanding of the world around them and in literacy skills, especially writing. Children's attainment has risen steadily since the last inspection and is now generally above age-related expectations Good foundations are being laid, therefore, for children's future learning and progress. Children work and play in a welcoming and stimulating environment both inside and outdoors. Teaching is enthusiastic and supportive. Children's progress is checked on effectively and the outcomes are used to plan activities according to individual children's needs. Parents and carers are informed on a regular basis of their child's progress. There are effective arrangements for ensuring that children settle quickly and smoothly into the Early Years Foundation Stage. In the mornings when they arrive, children are eager to get straight down to work and they interact well with one another. Where necessary, effective use of outside agencies provides support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The inclusion of a small number of Year 1 pupils in Reception is managed sensitively and effectively to enable them to make a smooth transition to Year 1 when they are ready. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Leaders provide a good vision for future success and a strong sense of purpose for its work.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Almost all the parents and carers who returned the questionnaire were supportive of the school. A very few parents and carers disagreed with some aspects of the school's work such as dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found no evidence to support the few concerns expressed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Bernard's RC Primary School, Bolton to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 56 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 122 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	84	9	16	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	89	5	9	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	71	16	29	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	66	18	32	0	0	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	39	70	15	27	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	54	23	41	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	64	19	34	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	33	59	18	32	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	66	16	29	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	66	15	27	1	2	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	68	15	27	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	46	82	10	18	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	82	8	14	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



8 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bernard's RC Primary School, Bolton, Bolton, BL3 4RX

Thank you for your warm welcome during the recent inspection of your school. I enjoyed my two days at your school. It was a pleasure to meet you and the adults working with you.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education and it is quickly improving. You told me how much your lessons have improved and I agree. The teaching you are receiving is now good and is helping you learn and achieve much better. You told me you are enjoying lessons much more because teachers are making your lessons much more fun. I confirmed this in the lessons I observed during the inspection. I was impressed with your behaviour and how well you work and play together. I was also pleased to see that nearly all of you have very good attendance records – well done!

In order to make your school even better I am asking it to do two things:

- make sure you get more opportunities to find out things for yourselves across a range of subjects
- make sure you have more opportunities to use information and communication technology in your learning.

I am confident that you will continue to work with your teachers to make sure the improvements made gather pace in the future and make your school an even happier and more effective place to work and play.

I wish all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Stephen Wall

Lead Inspector

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