

St Benedict's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111308
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	337662
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Diane Auton

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jackie Austin
Headteacher	Mr Kevin McCourt
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and observed eight teachers in their classrooms; approximately half of the inspection time was spent looking at learning, including time spent looking at pupils' work. The inspectors held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and a group of parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including data about pupils' progress and attainment, the school's planning documents, policies, procedures and records. They reviewed information provided by parents and carers in 105 completed questionnaires. They also took into account the views pupils and staff expressed in their questionnaires.

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

- the progress pupils made during the last school year and how well they are progressing in the current year
- the effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum in building pupils' skills year-on-year, helping to ensure that good standards are sustained
- the impact of leadership and management on achieving the best possible outcomes for pupils
- how well provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables children to progress in their learning and development.

Information about the school

The school serves an urban residential area. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average and the proportion who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also below average. Most pupils are White British, with a small proportion from other heritages. The school provides wrap-around care before- and after-school each day through its Link Club. Since the last inspection, the school's leadership team has been restructured and expanded, with the creation of a deputy headteacher post and an additional senior teacher post. A new deputy headteacher was appointed to the school in September 2009.

The school holds the Primary Quality Mark, the Healthy Schools Award and the 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school has built successfully on the strengths identified at its last inspection, providing a good standard of education for its pupils, with outstanding provision for their care, guidance and support. Well-led practitioners work together to ensure that teaching methods and the curriculum are responsive to pupils' needs and interests. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning activities, apply themselves well and make good progress.

Pupils progress well through the school, from their broadly typical starting points on entry, for three-year-olds. A dip in standards in 2009 was related to particular issues for a specific year group rather than a reduction in the quality of provision. The school is now continuing the upward trend of previous years, with pupils in the current Year 6 working at above average standards. The curriculum builds effectively on the successful learning that takes place in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teaching is predominantly of good quality and is underpinned by the effective use of assessment. A small proportion of satisfactory teaching was seen and the school is working to eliminate this through regular monitoring, although more remains to be done in order to achieve this objective. In the great majority of lessons, pupils respond to their teachers' high expectations and show that they are becoming increasingly confident learners. Very careful consideration is given to pupils' welfare and care. Pupils and their parents and carers greatly appreciate the extremely well organised extended provision which represents an effective and flexible response to the needs of families.

The headteacher has created a strong team ethos, with a clear focus on school improvement. Self-evaluation is largely accurate, based on systematic monitoring and rigorous review. Teachers use well the information gained from progress reviews each term to ensure they give all pupils the support they need. This is contributing well to raising attainment. However, the leadership does not share reports of the progress reviews with the otherwise effective governing body, thereby restricting its full overview of learning and progress. The school sets challenging and ambitious improvement targets, although those concerning raising attainment are not spelt out in sufficient detail in the otherwise well-constructed school development plan. Staff and governors are involved throughout the year in reviewing how well the school is doing. All of this, together with the skills and talents of staff and leaders, means that the school has good capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, by ensuring that monitoring includes a sharp focus on the quality of pupils' learning.

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- Enable all stakeholders to share an overview of learning and progress and a full awareness of the improvements in attainment that the school is aiming for, by:
 - providing reports of progress meetings for governors
 - ensuring that the success criteria for actions aimed at raising attainment are set out clearly and precisely in the school development plan.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils concentrate well and make good progress in most lessons, showing interest and enthusiasm. They use information and communication technology (ICT) equipment with growing assurance. Both their responses in lessons and the work in their books indicate above average attainment and good progress. The dip in standards in 2009 followed an upward trend in the two previous years and was related to a higher than usual proportion of pupils with additional learning needs in the year group. The school's tracking information shows that pupils in all year groups, including those with additional learning needs, made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics during the last school year and that this continues to be the picture in the current year. The work of current Year 6 pupils is at above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils show excellent awareness of issues around personal safety. They have a detailed understanding of the factors that contribute to healthy living and can discuss these confidently. They enjoy taking responsibility, for example, as school councillors and play leaders. They form good relationships with each other and with the adults in school and they say they are confident that help is on hand if they encounter any problems. Their good basic skills and good study and concentration skills mean that they are well-prepared for the future. They show an excellent understanding of the sound moral values the school promotes, reflected in their good behaviour and considerate attitudes. They consider and discuss serious issues very thoughtfully in assemblies and in lessons, and they are active fundraisers for local, national and international charitable causes. The curriculum is helping them to develop an increased understanding of cultures beyond their own direct experience. Attendance is currently satisfactory and the school makes considerable efforts to ensure that pupils at risk of poor attendance are identified and supported.

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.

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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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The good overall quality of teaching contributes well to pupils' learning and progress and to their personal development. Teachers set high expectations for effort and behaviour in lessons. Lessons are planned to take the range of learners' needs into account. In most lessons, the pace of learning is brisk, the level of challenge good and teachers use questioning well to extend pupils' thinking. Teachers ensure that pupils are given a clear understanding of what they are expected to do and to achieve. They use target setting and marking well to point pupils to the next steps in learning and to advise them about how to improve their work. Regular assessment ensures a good overview of how well pupils are doing. Well trained teaching assistants make an effective contribution, particularly to the good learning and progress of those pupils who have additional needs. Teaching is less effective in a small minority of lessons where a slower pace of learning results in slower progress.

The curriculum reflects pupils' interests and this ensures they are engaged fully. Good opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their basic skills through work across different areas of learning contribute well to raising attainment. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities for pupils to develop skills in sports, the performing arts, ICT and a modern foreign language. Further enhancement is provided by visiting specialists, themed events and visits to places of interest, including a residential trip for older pupils. Well-planned provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures they enjoy full access to learning and social inclusion.

Pastoral care is excellent and the school works very sensitively to support vulnerable pupils and their families. This is helping to break down barriers to learning and progress

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that some pupils encounter. Pupils with additional needs are identified promptly and this ensures that they are given the support they need. The school works hard to promote attendance, through a range of strategies and with increasing effectiveness. The popular breakfast club gets the day off to a happy start and after-school provision includes a wide range of well attended clubs and activities.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Governors and staff at all levels wholeheartedly share the headteacher's clear vision and resolve to take the school forward and to achieve the best possible outcomes for its pupils. Restructuring has strengthened leadership and management, and senior staff and subject leaders contribute actively to school improvement. The information gained from monitoring and review is used well in setting the ambitious improvement targets which are described in the school development plan. In planning actions aimed at raising attainment, however, the school does not set out its success criteria in sufficient detail. This means that they are not communicated clearly enough to all stakeholders.

The knowledgeable governing body is an effective critical friend to the school and governors have an accurate overview of the end of year attainment outcomes. They do not receive a report on progress each term, however, so they are not as involved as they might be in measuring the details of improvement during the year. Teaching quality is monitored systematically, but without a sharp enough focus on learning outcomes, and so, although the impact of monitoring is largely positive, a small residue of satisfactory teaching has not yet been eliminated. Parents' and carers' very positive views of the school reflect good home–school partnerships, supported by regular communications including the school's website. The school complies well with statutory requirements for safeguarding, health and safety and child protection through well managed procedures and ongoing review of their effectiveness. Its inclusive ethos promotes well equality of opportunity and access to educational entitlement. Its excellent extended provision is very well organised, popular with pupils and valued by parents and carers. The school contributes well to community cohesion through a very wide range of partnerships in its community, including its close links with the high school and with local industry. The school also works effectively with a range of agencies that support pupils' health, welfare, social and learning needs.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery class with skills that are broadly at the expected levels for their age. They make good progress, so that by the end of the Reception Year most children achieve the learning goals expected for the age group and some exceed them. Children do particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development; they gain very positive attitudes and become happy, interested learners. The overall quality of teaching is good. There is a good balance of activities chosen by the children and those led by adults, and children are thereby supported in developing the skills that lead to independence. Staff support the effective assessment by gathering a wide range of evidence through observations of the children in their activities. They use this well to plan the next steps in learning, to meet individuals' needs and to ensure that activities reflect the children's interests.

The outdoor area has been developed to support active learning through playing outside the classroom. Children interact well with each other and enjoy warm, trusting relationships with the caring staff; as a result, they grow in confidence, they are happy and secure and ready to learn. Those at an early stage of learning to speak English are enabled to progress rapidly and soon become confident communicators. Children settle quickly because induction procedures are sensitive. Staff forge the good relationships with parents and carers that prevail throughout their children's time in school, with an increasing range of opportunities for them to become involved as partners in their children's learning. The setting is led and managed effectively and the staff team work well together. Regular monitoring of the provision supports ongoing improvements. Procedures to ensure children's welfare are very good and meet all requirements.

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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

Around half of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. A very large majority of those who responded said they agree or strongly agree that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. This is in line with the inspection team's judgement on the school's good overall effectiveness.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Benedict's Catholic Primary School 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 inspection team received 105 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 240 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	65	62	40	38	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	79	75	23	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	49	47	44	42	7	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	58	55	39	37	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	57	54	43	41	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	55	52	49	47	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	56	44	42	0	0	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)	52	50	45	43	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	58	55	42	40	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	50	48	47	45	4	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	46	44	52	50	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	56	53	40	38	5	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	59	38	36	2	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.



10 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Benedict's Catholic Primary School, Warrington WA2 7SB

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited your school.

As you know, we came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning. You told us how much you enjoy school and we agree with you that St Benedict's is a good school. These are some of the good things we found out about it.

Your school is a happy place of learning and you are extremely well-behaved and polite young people. You work hard in your lessons, you enjoy your work and you get on well with each other and with the adults in school. The Early Years Foundation Stage gets your education off to a good start and the school gives you a good standard of education. Teaching is mostly good, with interesting lessons. The grown-ups in school look after you extremely well. You are all making good progress in your learning, and producing good standards of work. Well done. Keep on trying hard!

There is still some work to be done to make St Benedict's the best school it can possibly be. These are the things I have asked the headteacher and the staff to do.

- Set out, in the big plan that they make each year, exactly how much improvement they hope to achieve in the standards St Benedict's pupils reach. This is so that everyone in the school will know what the school is aiming for.
- Give the governing body a report on your progress each term, so they can see how well each class is doing in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Make sure that all teaching is good or better, so that you learn and progress well in every lesson.

You can help by continuing to do your best and by continuing to be happy learners.

With my very best wishes for the future,

Yours sincerely

Diane Auton

Lead inspector

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