

St Bernard's Catholic Primary School, Preston

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119449
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	339443
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Onyon

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	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Jim Slater
Headteacher	Mrs Mia Barlow
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited seven lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at, amongst other things, the school's data records, policies, minutes of governing body meetings and the notes of the School Improvement Partner's visits. Parental questionnaires were received from 52 parents or carers.

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

- the impact of teaching and the curriculum upon improving standards, particularly in writing
- the quality of provision and children's achievement within the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the use of assessment to support and challenge pupils' learning
- how effectively school leaders are embedding ambition and driving improvement.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average sized school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. A large majority of pupils are of White British heritage with no pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion with statements of special educational needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of a Reception class. The school holds the Healthy Schools and Sports Mark awards.

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

3

Main findings

This is an improving school providing a satisfactory education. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, but their learning and progress are uneven. Standards in writing are below average. The senior leaders of the school are aware of the causes, which relate to the inconsistent quality of teaching. In particular, some teachers do not always use the outcomes of assessment well enough to match work to pupils' different abilities and pupils are not always given good advice about how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. Steps have been put in place recently to improve the quality of teaching from satisfactory to consistently good, though it is too soon for the impact of these measures to be seen in pupils' sustained progress.

Particular strengths of the school lie in its provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the care, guidance and support it provides for pupils. Their well-being, their contributions to the community and their knowledge of the importance of keeping healthy are good. Their above average attendance illustrates their enjoyment of school – the enjoyment contributing to their good behaviour.

Since the last inspection, the school's leadership team has begun to focus upon raising standards and accelerating pupils' progress. Assessment data is evaluated and effectively used to inform school development priorities. Recent changes have resulted in curricular subjects being linked in themes, though some aspects of the curriculum are not sufficiently developed. For example, identifying a wider range of opportunities for pupils to write in different subjects in order to improve their standards in writing.

The school's improvement has been satisfactory overall since the last inspection, and good in some respects; for example, pupils' behaviour has improved significantly. Since the appointment of the headteacher and deputy headteacher the school's self-evaluation process is now good and is underpinning a concerted drive to improve provision and eliminate weaknesses through better monitoring of teaching and setting challenging targets for improvement. The impact is yet to be fully realised. Improvements in outcomes for pupils are evident, but have not been sufficient to overcome a legacy of underachievement. The governing body supports the school well. However, it relies too much on information and evidence provided by senior staff and not enough on its own evidence gathering to verify how well the school and its pupils are performing. As a result, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is judged to be satisfactory rather than good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the standard of writing throughout the school by:

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- identifying regular opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes, across a range of subjects
- regularly checking samples of pupils' writing to help ensure that teachers' judgements are accurate.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is more consistently in line with the best in the school by:
 - making good use of assessment information so that teachers plan thoroughly for the learning of all groups of pupils in their classes
 - encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for and direct their own learning.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to satisfactory
- may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5
- inspection.

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

Pupils' attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6. Given their broadly typical starting points, achievement overall is satisfactory. Recent improvements to children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage mean that pupils enter Year 1 with skills that are above average in most areas of learning. Standards are lowest in personal and social education and writing. Pupils currently in Years 2 to 6 reached average levels of attainment when entering Year 1. Overall, progress by the end of Key Stage 1 is satisfactory and standards are broadly average, with the exception of writing, where standards are below average. A focus upon tracking pupils' progress and ensuring that learning needs are identified and met, is leading to improved outcomes. Year 6 pupils have made significant gains in learning over the last twelve months. With the exception of writing, where standards are below average, they are on track to reach average standards, and they make satisfactory progress overall. The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are generally making good progress because their needs are recognised early and addressed through well planned interventions.

In the lessons where teaching is good, teachers effectively use assessment information to plan learning for pupils of differing abilities and pupils' learning is good. Pupils are usually very attentive, answer questions readily and work with each other very well. During the inspection, good learning was seen in Year 1, with pupils encouraged to use their own ideas to think about characters for a story book. In Year 6, learning was good as pupils were encouraged to comment upon the effectiveness of their writing. Where teaching is not well matched to pupils' different levels of attainment, they are often unsure as to how to proceed. The school has set challenging targets for pupils to achieve at the end of the year and the gap between previous levels of attainment and expected levels is showing clear signs of reducing because of regular monitoring and evaluation by the leadership team, who set challenging targets for learning outcomes. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well. Behaviour in lessons is often good. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe in the community and they

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report that they feel secure in school. They are keen to take the healthy options offered for school lunches and know what they need to do to lead a fit and healthy lifestyle. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and put a lot of effort into raising money and collecting goods for a range of charities. A particular feature is how well they take on responsibilities around school. For example, in addition to the very active school councillors, there are play leaders, working with younger children, who make a good contribution to the life of the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	2
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

In most lessons, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and have good relationships with them. Where teaching is good, for example, in a Year 6 lesson exploring different reasons for writing, the pace of learning is brisk and good use is made of new technology. Teachers' marking of pupils' work builds well on what has gone before, involves pupils in reflecting on their progress and helps them understand how well they are doing and what they need to do next. There is a greater proportion of good or better teaching compared with that at the time of the last inspection. However,

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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eliminating unevenness in the quality of teaching continues to be a focus for improvement. In a few lessons, the different range of attainment among pupils is not addressed well enough and this hampers the achievement of some.

The curriculum has a good emphasis on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology and has recently begun to link subjects to offer a wider variety of learning opportunities. There is insufficient attention to consistently providing opportunities for writing in other subjects, to help pupils improve their standards in writing. There is an overemphasis on teacher-led activities and worksheets in some lessons, for instance, in science. However, there are good opportunities for pupils to be coached by specialists in sports and art and to enjoy visits to places of interest and residential trips to an activity centre. These experiences are valued by the pupils.

Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Parents and carers speak highly of the welcoming environment, especially those whose children have made a fresh start after moving from other schools. There are good links with local Nurseries and associated high schools to help the transition into and out of school. Potentially vulnerable pupils are well cared for and arrangements to provide for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are good.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

The leadership team is strong, and determined to eliminate weaknesses and make improvements to provision and outcomes for pupils. Through a robust system of monitoring the quality of teaching by lesson observations, work sampling and detailed measures of pupils' progress in individual year groups, they have identified weaknesses and given class teachers challenging targets to achieve. The impact of this is evident in current improvements in the quality of teaching, but it is too early to effectively measure how it is improving pupils' achievement over time.

The school has introduced effective support programmes to reduce underachievement. It has satisfactory procedures for tackling discrimination and promoting equal opportunities. All matters of safeguarding, including risk assessments and the safe recruitment of staff, meet government requirements. Staff have taken satisfactory steps to promote cohesion in the community and devised a plan of action for the current year. There are strong links within the parish and between local schools

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and agencies. Plans to widen pupils' understanding of the ethnic diversity in British society and of life in other countries have begun to be put into action.

There is a good range of expertise among the members of the governing body and they meet their statutory responsibilities appropriately.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure that children get off to a good start. They enter the Reception class with the skills expected for children of their age. Good teaching ensures that they make good progress in their learning so that they enter Year 1 having achieved, and sometimes exceeded, the expectations for their age and with good attitudes to learning. The curriculum is effective in providing children with a stimulating range of activities, with direct access to outdoor facilities of good quality, ensuring good opportunities for children to take physical exercise and to explore the world around them. Daily sessions focus appropriately upon letters and sounds and opportunities for writing, but progress in writing is not as swift as that in other areas of learning. The monitoring of children's progress indicates signs of improvement in their early writing. Resources are used effectively to capture children's interest and excitement; for example, the opportunity to write to 'Santa' and to make imaginary cakes in the 'kitchen'. There is a good range of activities led by adults and others chosen by children. They thoroughly enjoyed singing their Christmas songs and were excited about performing their nativity play for an audience. The Early Years Foundation Stage is successful in making sure that children

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develop in confidence and learn to work in cooperation with others. Children are well cared for and their progress is monitored regularly and accurately. Parents are kept regularly informed of their children's progress. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and, where necessary, outside agencies are used effectively to provide support.

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

There were 52 responses to the inspectors' questionnaire and this indicates a good response rate. A very large majority of parents and carers are happy with all aspects of the school's work and its effectiveness. A very small minority felt that they are not well enough informed about the progress of their child. Some parents felt that their suggestions are not acted upon. Evidence indicates that the school provides a wide range of information about pupils' progress. Evidence gathered indicates that many suggestions from parents have been positively acted upon.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Bernard's Catholic Primary School, Preston 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 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 145 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	63	19	35	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	76	13	24	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	50	22	41	4	7	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	52	22	41	3	6	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	32	59	19	35	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	50	26	48	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	54	24	44	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)	18	33	29	54	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	48	23	43	2	4	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	52	23	43	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	46	26	48	3	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	63	19	35	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	65	16	30	2	4	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.



14 December 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Bernard's Catholic Primary School, Preston, PR2 1RP

Thank you all so much for the friendly welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. We enjoyed our visit because of your friendliness and hospitality. We were impressed by the pride you show in your school and how much you enjoy the activities on offer. You and your parents and carers speak very highly of your school.

It was good to learn about the success of your Christmas concert and how much you were looking forward to your disco. We were also pleased to hear that the school teaches you how to keep safe and to stay healthy.

St Bernard's provides a satisfactory education and is getting better.

To improve your school I have asked your headteacher and governors to:

- help more of you make good progress in writing by giving you opportunities to write in lots of subjects that you enjoy and by checking to see if you are doing as well as you can
- make all your lessons as good as the best ones by always giving you work with just the right amount of difficulty
- use the outcomes of assessments to help you understand what can be better and encourage you to take responsibility for how it can be improved.

I am sure that you will continue to help, especially by attending regularly and by making trying as hard as you can to be as good as you can possibly be. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Onyon

Lead inspector

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