

St Benedict's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135085
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	341614
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Stephen Rowland

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	282
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Anthony Short
Headteacher	Mr Christopher Vaudrey
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 19 lessons and 12 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, pupils and governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at relevant policies, the school improvement plan, records of meetings, the school's monitoring records, and analyses of pupils' attainment and progress. The 57 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were also analysed.

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

- how effectively the school ensures that all pupils achieve their full potential
- the degree to which challenging and engaging teaching involves all pupils and ensures good learning for all
- how effective assessment is in helping to promote good outcomes
- whether leaders and managers at all levels work together to contribute to the school's development
- how effective the Early Years Foundation Stage is, particularly in developing children's language and social skills.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is just above the national average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there are a small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language some of whom are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is close to the national average.

Since the last inspection a new deputy headteacher has been appointed.

The school has the Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

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

This is a good school which is greatly respected in its community. It has a number of significant strengths, notably the excellent quality of care, guidance and support it provides for its pupils, including exemplary procedures for safeguarding. This helps pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make outstanding progress and to achieve very well. The staff share a common sense of direction and purpose and a desire to make the school a centre of educational excellence. The school's self-evaluation is thorough and accurate and forms the basis for actions to tackle any areas which require attention. The drive to raise boys' attainment in writing has been a particular focus recently and evidence from the school's tracking data shows that this work is having a positive impact. The very thorough way in which the school has tackled the issues raised at the time of the last inspection, as well as the steady improvement in outcomes for pupils, shows that it has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Partnerships with parents and carers are particularly strong and this contributes to good or better outcomes. This helps the school to provide very specific programmes of support for children whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable or who may find school challenging. The excellent relationships the school has with parents and carers are reflected in the many positive comments received during the inspection. A typical comment is, 'Teachers care for the pupils and this goes beyond the classroom. 'WoW' days are brilliant'. Pupils' learning and well-being are supported by some outstanding partnerships, notably the wide range of external agencies which support the care and guidance of vulnerable pupils.

Teaching is good with some that is of high quality. This means that most pupils make good progress although, on occasion, the more-able pupils are not given sufficiently challenging tasks. Marking is of inconsistent quality. There are examples of very good practice but, at times, marking and written feedback do not help pupils enough to enable them to overcome misunderstandings or improve their work.

The school is a very safe environment in which pupils display exemplary behaviour. Their social and moral understanding are both very strong. However, although the school works very well as a community and provides pupils with many opportunities to promote community cohesion, the full impact of this work is yet to be fully evaluated.

Pupils are very proud of their school. One typical comment, from a member of the school council, was, 'The teachers here are really good. They make working fun.'

Parents and carers strongly agree with this view and are very supportive of the very safe and secure environment the school offers.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, by:
 - ensuring that the more-able pupils are constantly challenged to achieve their full potential by skilful questioning and a brisk pace
 - ensuring that marking and written feedback consistently help pupils to understand how to improve their work.
- To ensure that the strategies the school has employed to promote community cohesion are fully implemented and evaluated.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils work hard in lessons. They are fully engaged in their learning and are keen to learn from the range of tasks and activities offered to them. As a result they enjoy school, make good progress, and achieve well.

Many children enter the school with skills that are well below those typical expected for their ages. This is particularly so for their language and social skills. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although their skills are still below national expectation when they enter Year 1. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have risen over recent years. The most recent test results show that boys did not perform as well as girls, particularly in writing. The school's most recent tracking data shows that the gap in performance has now narrowed significantly. Not as many pupils as expected achieved the higher Level 5 in 2009. Although recent tracking data shows that standards for the more able have improved in mathematics. The school is well aware that there is still work to be done to ensure that these pupils achieve their full potential in English. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. This is due to the excellent support and guidance that they receive.

Pupils say that they feel extremely safe and secure in school and confirm that any problems which may arise are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils display a clear awareness of safety, and their knowledge of how to remain safe is exemplary. Parents and carers strongly bear out this view. Pupils act in a respectful and considerate way towards each other and towards adults. They are active in promoting excellent behaviour and are keen to explain how, for example, peer mentors help to find solutions to conflicts. In this, they display an impressive maturity. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles. All participate in some form of physical activity, in which they are supported by the neighbouring sports college. The school has worked effectively to improve attendance, which is now close to the national average. Through the variety of activities which enable pupils to develop their initiative and through the active role that pupils are encouraged to adopt, the school promotes strong work-place skills. Pupils develop strong spiritual, social and moral understanding through the school's ethos of respect and care for others.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good. In the best lessons, the pace of learning is brisk and pupils move on through different activities that keep them engaged and ensure that they learn as much as possible. Planning is clear and is based on a good understanding of each pupil's current progress. In one excellent Year 2 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils used a mix of games, music and modern technology, as well as more traditional methods, to learn about remainders. Occasionally, the pace of learning is not as strong and hence pupils' progress is not as good. At times, the more able are not sufficiently challenged to extend their learning and to move on at an appropriate pace. The school has developed effective systems for tracking the progress of pupils and for sharing this information with them, so that they can understand what to do next to improve their work. Marking and written feedback, however, are of inconsistent quality and do not always help pupils to make good progress.

The curriculum is well organised and planned. It has a strong and well-founded emphasis on basic skills and provides appropriate experience for pupils to develop their information and communication technology skills. It caters well for the needs of all groups of pupils. The school is developing an imaginative theme-based approach curriculum to broaden the range of experiences for pupils. This includes 'WoW' days, when the normal school timetable is abandoned and pupils take part in a wide range of alternative activities, such as karate and pottery. The school offers a broad range of

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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extra-curricular activities, including sport, music and art. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in a residential visit.

The highly effective pastoral mentor leads a team of support staff who play key roles in providing high quality care, guidance and support. Pupils' needs are assessed thoroughly and interventions are carefully planned to ensure that all are able to make the most of their time in school. Support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is particularly strong and this enables this group to make outstanding progress.

Vulnerable youngsters are also cared for very well and the school works closely with families to overcome barriers to learning. The excellent partnerships established with a number of external agencies support this work very effectively. The school rightly prides itself on its success in keeping pupils, who might be at risk of failing, fully engaged and involved with school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	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?

There is a shared commitment amongst all staff and governors to provide pupils with the best possible education. The experienced headteacher provides very clear leadership and is ably assisted in this by the recently appointed deputy headteacher. Other members of staff with responsibilities are fully involved in the process of evaluating the school's strengths and areas for development, and ensuring continual improvement. All staff say they feel increasingly empowered to play an active role in raising standards and maintaining very strong care and support. Teaching is monitored thoroughly and action taken to improve practice by sharing good ideas and approaches. The improvement in the standards of writing achieved by boys is testament to the effectiveness of these strategies. The governing body provides good support for the school and asks challenging questions when required. It fulfils its statutory obligations effectively.

The school's partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. Informal links are strong and there is a wide range of activities that enable parents and carers to become actively involved in the life of the school, and to support their child's education. For example, there are opportunities for parents and carers to participate in activities, such as cooking, and also sessions which help them to support their child's learning of reading and mathematics. The parent support adviser team has played a central role in this work. The school's parent survival group, which supports parents and carers, has

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gained national recognition. Partnerships with other bodies and agencies are also outstanding. The work the school shares with the local authority's families and children's team is an excellent example of this. Discrimination has no place at St Benedict's and the school works successfully to ensure that the vast majority of pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed. Safeguarding arrangements, including child protection procedures, are outstanding. This is due to the high priority the school places on ensuring that the pupils are safe and secure in school. All safeguarding procedures are systematically reviewed and adapted to maintain their effectiveness.

The school works very well as a community and has a number of worthwhile strategies in place, which promote community cohesion satisfactorily. However, they are not yet fully integrated into a coherent package and their impact is yet to be fully evaluated. Given positive outcomes for pupils and prudent financial management, the school provides good value for money.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enjoy learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress. They develop personal qualities which allow them to function as independent learners and to take full responsibilities for small tasks. They help to decide on daily routines and demonstrate a willingness to keep themselves and others safe. There is a good mix of child-chosen and adult-led activities and every opportunity is taken to make learning fun. Children are considerate towards each other and learn how to share. They enjoy healthy snacks and know how important it is to wash their hands before handling food. There is a well equipped learning environment, both indoors and out, with lots of

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activities for the children to enjoy. Observations are used as a basis to plan for learning, although at times more use could be made of the information relating to the children's skills on entry to Nursery. Adults, particularly the key workers, develop a close and secure relationship with the children. Comprehensive policies are in place to keep children safe and, as in the main school, safeguarding is outstanding. There are effective links with parents and carers. They are told about their children's achievements on a daily basis and can contribute to a record of what their child has achieved outside school. The provision is well led and the Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator and her staff evaluate the effectiveness of its work and seek advice when needed, in order to help to strengthen practice. Staff are appropriately trained and have the skills that are needed to ensure children stay safe and learn effectively.

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

About 20% of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. A large majority of responses were positive. Of the small number of negative responses, 13% of respondents felt that the school did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Comments from pupils during the inspection and observations made over the two days in school, indicated that behaviour during the inspection was very good and that any instances of unacceptable behaviour were dealt with promptly and effectively.

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 57 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 282 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	60	20	35	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	61	21	37	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	49	26	46	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	51	24	42	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	31	54	23	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	53	26	46	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	49	29	51	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)	28	49	25	44	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	53	25	44	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	40	26	46	5	9	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	44	23	40	3	5	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	26	46	28	49	0	0	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	58	22	39	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Benedict's Catholic Primary School, Bootle, L30 7PG

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome during our recent visit to St Benedict's. I am particularly grateful to those who agreed to meet us during their lunchtime: your comments were very helpful. Thank you also to those who completed the questionnaire.

St Benedict's is a good school. There are some things about it which are excellent. Your behaviour is excellent. I was very impressed by the members of the school council who told me about the work of the peer mediators. It is a very safe school and it works very well with parents and carers, and with other partners, to make sure you get the most out of your time there. Many of those I spoke to and wrote to me had good things to say about St Benedict's. It is well thought of in its community.

There are a small number of things I want your school to do to make it even better.

Nearly all of your lessons are good or better but to improve them even more I want your teachers to:

- make sure that they always provide more difficult work for those of you who find their work easier than most
- make sure that their marking always helps you to see how to improve.

I also want your school to make sure that they check all the things they do to help you know about different groups in our country, to see what works best.

You are right to be proud of your school. You can help your teachers by always behaving as well as you did during our visit and by always trying your best and helping each other.

Once again, thank you for your help during the inspection.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Stephen Rowland

Lead inspector

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