

Our Lady and St Benedict Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124317
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	359634
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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	144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Diana Jones
Headteacher	Mrs Debbie Sims
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Abbey Lane Abbey Hulton Stoke-on-Trent ST2 8AU
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Ten lessons were observed and seven teachers seen. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, a governor and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at national assessment data and the school's assessments, school policies, minutes from the governing body's meetings, samples of pupils' work and safeguarding documentation. The inspectors also scrutinised 57 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as 56 questionnaires returned by pupils.

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

- It looked at what the school is doing to raise attainment in English.
- It investigated whether the school has continued to improve attendance and pupils' behaviour.
- It considered what has been done by school leaders and managers to maintain improvements in teaching quality and pupils' learning.

Information about the school

Almost all pupils in this smaller-than-average-sized primary school are White British. About one third of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above the average for schools of this size. Among the awards achieved by the school are the Healthy Schools Award and 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

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Leaders have effectively steered the school through a difficult period of staffing changes. Strengths seen in the last inspection have been consolidated. Teaching is more settled and pupils' learning is gathering pace.

Children get off to a good start in their personal development in The Early Years Foundation Stage because of the school's positive links with pre-school providers and the staff's focus on developing children's social skills and independence. However, learning opportunities are not always planned for effectively in some activities, particularly those in the outdoor classroom. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has improved and is currently average in mathematics and science. While pupils generally reach expected levels in reading, writing levels are below average and this pulls down overall attainment in English. Writing is a focus for improvement throughout the school. Pupils enjoy their learning and all groups make satisfactory progress.

There are good aspects to pupils' personal development. Pupils' attendance shows good improvement and is in line with the national average, reflecting the good care, guidance and support provided by the school. This, together with pupils' polite and thoughtful behaviour and enthusiasm for lessons, makes a strong contribution to their learning and the calm and happy atmosphere in the school. Pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures is a weaker aspect of their personal development.

There are some good strengths in teaching, most notably the way teachers mark pupils' work. In some lessons there are significant strengths. However, recent appointments and changing roles of some teachers means that good practice needs to be embedded. The headteacher has accurately evaluated the school's performance and identified areas for improvement. Astute appointments and focusing of existing strengths have helped her establish a staff team that is committed to raising attainment and quality of provision. Strategies to raise attainment, such as, more regular reviews of progress and the increasing involvement of pupils in their own assessment, are beginning to show positive results. Middle managers are actively reviewing the curriculum and how best to develop opportunities for pupils to have a more creative approach to their learning. The governing body challenges the school's performance and has its best interests at heart. However, members are not yet sufficiently involved in the school's self-evaluation or the process of planning for future improvements. Currently, the school demonstrates satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise attainment in writing throughout the school by:
 - – ensuring that more-able pupils are always suitably challenged
 - – providing a wider range of opportunities for pupils to write purposefully in different contexts and in different subjects.
- Improve the quality of provision for outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - – planning activities which challenge and extend children's learning and development through exploration and play.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about the different cultures and lifestyles of people throughout the world, and how they contribute to their own and others' communities.
- Ensure that the governing body contributes to the school's self-evaluation and develops its role in planning future improvements.
- Up to 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 enjoy school. They generally work hard, make steady progress in line with their varying capabilities and achieve satisfactorily. They know what is expected of them in lessons, behave well and are usually attentive to adults. Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently in their learning. Recent projects have boosted photography and film-making skills. Some pupils are beginning to gain better knowledge of their own learning by assessing their writing and setting targets for themselves.

Children make satisfactory progress in Nursery and Reception classes from generally lower than expected starting points. Writing skills, particularly, are still below expected levels of development when they enter Year 1. One of the school's responses to this has been the early introduction of children to letters and sounds. This boosts confidence in early reading and writing skills and is currently beginning to show impact in improved writing quality in Years 1 and 2. Attainment at the end of Year 6 shows an upward trend in mathematics and science to average levels but this has not been maintained in English, partly because too few pupils reach higher than expected levels in writing. Nevertheless, early signs are that a recently introduced programme for writing and better use of assessment are beginning to pay dividends in that more pupils are on track to achieve the targets set for them. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Provision for their learning has improved because there is a wider range of support both within the school and through external services.

Pupils contribute well to the character and ethos of their school. Relationships are good and they are keen to take on responsibilities. Older pupils, for example, accept caring roles and help younger ones to play safely. Peer mediators are swiftly on the scene to

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calm things down on the few occasions when playground tensions rise. Pupils are confident that their voice will be heard. The school council negotiated with the governing body over school uniforms and a revised behaviour policy. The school allotment generates interest and is a strong contribution to pupils' pursuit of healthy lifestyles. Pupils also understand the benefits of exercise. They are proud to go to a 'Bike-it' school and a 'Fitter families' one. A family cookery club is increasingly popular. Pupils' regular attendance contributes to their satisfactory preparation for their future well-being. Pupils' understanding of the lives of people from different cultures, however, is limited.

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers manage pupils well and relationships are good. As result, pupils are willing to try hard and answer confidently when questioned. Work is usually planned to suit pupils' different abilities but there is some inconsistency in the way this is managed, particularly in respect of writing for more-able pupils. A good feature of teaching is the way teachers mark pupils' work. A consistent method is used which clearly informs pupils of their

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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success and of how to improve on what they do. There is good pace to learning in some lesson and some 'magical' moments which captivate pupils' interest, such as opening the secret box to discover hidden treasures which provide an exciting stimulus for writing. At times, teachers' introductions are too long and not focused sharply on lesson objectives. Consequently, pupils' interest wanes and there is not enough time left for them to finish the practical activity, limiting their opportunity to learn. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to lessons. They work well with teachers and are sensitive to the needs of the pupils they support.

The curriculum meets pupils' needs satisfactorily. It promotes enjoyment through a varied selection of additional clubs and activities outside of the classroom, including a Year 6 residential visit, and the Forest School, which involves pupils in learning to care for their environment. Planning is currently undergoing change with a view to creating opportunities for pupils to practise skills, particularly those of writing, more purposefully in different ways across subjects. A positive start to the process has been the creative partnerships which gave a boost to pupils' ICT skills. Learning for more-able groups is enhanced by links with high schools that offer classes in mathematics, dance and drama.

Parents and carers agree overwhelmingly that good care is provided. Pupils endorse that view. They feel safe in school and strongly oppose any form of bullying or racist behaviour. Clear guidance and consistent adherence to policy have been a major influence in bringing about good behaviour. Trusting relationships exist between pupils and staff, and pupils know that help is at hand when needed. Those pupils whose circumstances make them the most vulnerable, and at times their families, are helped through difficulties so that children can access their learning more readily. Work with families continues to be a positive factor in rising levels of attendance.

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 headteacher has brought stability to the school, following an unsettled period of staffing since the last inspection, and consolidated systems to help the school move forward. More-detailed assessment and regular checking of pupils' progress have made staff equally accountable for raising attainment. A robust programme for monitoring teaching quality brought some improvement. However, new appointments and the relocation of teachers to other classes have reaffirmed the focus on teaching quality and

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the drive for consistently good performance. There is strong support for the headteacher from new senior managers. Although their responsibilities are clear, it is too early to judge their impact. Subject leadership is currently under review but teachers know the strengths and weaknesses within subjects and work as a cohesive team to improve the quality of pupils' learning.

The governing body is well-informed by the headteacher and challenges the school, particularly over attainment. Members, however, do not work closely enough with the headteacher in the self-evaluation of the school and acknowledge that they need to have a strategic role in setting its future direction. Leaders satisfactorily challenge all forms of discrimination and strive to ensure that pupils' individual needs are fully met. Good partnerships with local high school are being nurtured with a view to offering more challenges, particularly for the most able pupils. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. All essential measures are taken to eliminate risk. Leaders' promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has a clear understanding of its context and role within the local community. However, contact with communities beyond its local boundaries have not been productive and have had little influence on pupils' understanding of other cultures or their impact on everyday life.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
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	3
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

Children's personal development is typical for their age when they leave the Reception class but, overall, their skills and understanding in other areas of learning, especially communication, language and literacy, are below expectations. Nevertheless, they make

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satisfactory progress from their earlier starting points. Staff focus well on helping children to develop skills they need to become active learners. Children grow in confidence and some show good levels of independence when choosing activities or playing alongside others. There are satisfactory resources to engage children's interest in the classroom and adults use opportunities to fire children's imaginations and encourage their speaking skills. Letters and sounds are taught well, enabling children to tackle the writing of their 'information books', for example, more confidently. The outdoor classroom is accessible to children but the range of activities is limited and does not fully encourage children to build on what they learn indoors, through exciting independent exploration and play. Provision for children's welfare is satisfactory. Staff are watchful to ensure that children are safe and communicate well with parents and carers to help them support their children's learning. There are good links with pre-school providers. Systems for assessing and recording children's progress are satisfactory. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Leaders have identified the need to update the training of new staff and there is a realistic plan for continued development.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

A large majority of parents expressed very positive views about the school. Some made particular reference to the way in which the school supports their children and helps them to enjoy school and make progress. A small minority is unhappy with the way the school communicates with parents and carers about their children's progress and well-being, and feel that more support is given to some groups than to others. These concerns were discussed with the school's leaders.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Our Lady and St Benedict 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 144 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	51	25	44	3	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	49	29	51	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	46	27	47	3	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	42	27	47	4	7	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	27	47	25	44	4	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	42	25	44	6	11	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	33	35	61	1	2	1	2
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)	17	30	33	58	5	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	42	29	51	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	28	28	49	8	14	4	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	26	33	58	8	14	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	18	32	30	53	5	9	4	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	42	27	47	4	7	1	2

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



20 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady and St Benedict Catholic Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST2 8AU

Thank you for making my colleague and me so feel so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. We both enjoyed our visit. I enjoyed talking to some of you and finding out how much you enjoy school and take pride in what you do. I was particularly impressed with your politeness and your good behaviour. I was also pleased to notice how much your attendance has improved. You must keep that up because it is very important if you are to continue to make progress.

You make satisfactory progress in your work and by the end of Year 6 your attainment in mathematics and science is average. Your reading is satisfactory but you need to reach higher standards in your writing. Your teachers work hard to make your lessons enjoyable and give you a lot of help when they mark your work. All of the adults in school take good care of you and you take good care of one another.

I'm sure you want to make good progress and reach higher attainment levels. To help that happen I have asked your school's leaders and teachers to do four things. The first is to help you to raise your levels of attainment in writing by making sure that you are all challenged to the best of your ability and by writing in different ways in all the subjects you study. Second, I have asked if children in Nursery and Reception can have more outdoor activities which help them to explore new ideas through their play. The third thing is for you to learn more about the lives of different communities throughout the world so you can understand more about how we can share ideas and help each other. Finally, I have asked the governing body to work closely with the school on checking its progress and helping to plan for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Kevin Johnson

Lead inspector

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