

St Bernard's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109246
Local Authority	Bristol, City of
Inspection number	288325
Inspection date	13 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Alison Grainger

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 on roll	
School	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Jewell
Headteacher	Adrian Willson
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2003
School address	Station Road Shirehampton Bristol BS11 9TU
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils in this small school are from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. Most are of White British heritage and have English as their first language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little below average. When children enter the Reception Year, their attainment is broadly at the level expected although there is some variation from year to year. Pupils are taught in five classes all of which, except the Reception class, include pupils from more than one year group.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This satisfactory school is improving and already has good features. Its provision for children starting in the Reception Year is outstanding. A major strength from which pupils of all ages benefit, and which pleases parents, is the warm and welcoming atmosphere. As one parent said, 'It is a small and friendly school, an extension of our family.' Another commented that, 'The school's ethos of care and respect for others is very obvious.'

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. This is one of the main reasons why pupils make significant gains in their personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy school a lot, behave well and form positive relationships with each other and with the adults in school. Parents value the 'buddy' system through which older pupils look after younger ones and help those starting to settle in. Pupils know a good deal about how to keep fit and healthy. The school is successful in developing pupils' awareness of their own responsibilities for looking after themselves and making sensible lifestyle choices. Some good features to the satisfactory curriculum also give good support to pupils' personal development and well-being, including the programme for personal, social and health education and the wide range of activities additional to lessons such as clubs.

Children get off to a fantastic start in the Reception Year. This aspect of provision has gone from strength to strength since the last inspection and the school is still seeking to improve it further! Children are now transferring to Year 1 with standards significantly above those expected for their age. Standards at the end of Year 6 are a little above average. These standards represent satisfactory progress overall. Some individuals move on well but the more capable pupils do not always make enough gains. This is particularly the case in Years 1 and 2, where some pupils of average capability also do less well than they should in writing. The school recognises the need to increase the level of challenge for these pupils.

While teaching is satisfactory in the school as a whole, there are instances of good teaching and most lessons have good features. Teaching is not consistently good, however, because it is not always closely enough matched to the full range of pupils' needs in the mixed age and ability classes. While activities that pupils undertake in groups are often varied according to their learning needs, whole-class sessions are sometimes pitched at the same level for all the class.

Reasonable improvement has been made since the last inspection as a result of satisfactory leadership and management. Teachers are very committed to moving the school on further and this is why some of the teaching is already good. A factor preventing faster progress is that, although the school has a good amount of data on pupils' standards, their progress through the school is not tracked and reviewed systematically or regularly enough. The result is that the target levels set for individuals to reach are not always high enough. Nevertheless, the rate at which the school is moving on shows that it has satisfactory capacity to develop further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children settle rapidly and get off to a tremendous start because of exceptionally good teaching, a highly stimulating curriculum and excellent care, guidance and support. Every moment in lessons is used to the full to move learning on. Children are taught basic skills very effectively and are also encouraged to think for themselves. As they develop knowledge and understanding

of the world, for example, it is not unusual for children to ask questions such as, 'Why is the Antarctic melting?' Exceptionally good attention is given to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development with children responding very well to prayers at the start of the day and valuing the adults who help them in the school 'family'. Children are very well involved in reviewing their progress, through discussing their 'learning journey' records with the teacher. The teamwork of staff in Reception is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the level of challenge for the more capable pupils across the range of their work and for average pupils in writing, particularly in Years 1 and 2.
- Closely match teaching to the needs of all pupils, particularly in whole-class sessions.
- Develop whole-school systems for tracking and regularly reviewing pupils' progress and for setting challenging targets for the levels individuals should reach.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Although pupils' performance in the national tests and assessments at the end of Years 2 and 6 has varied from year to year, standards are a little above average overall. The end of Year 2 standards represent acceptable progress from the beginning of Year 1, although the most capable pupils do not always make the gains they should. In 2007, the end of Year 2 results showed underachievement by some pupils of average capability in writing. Efforts to ease pupils' move from the Reception Year to Year 1 are starting to improve progress although there is still more to be done.

Pupils' results in the end of Year 6 tests in 2007 showed that all groups of pupils made at least the gains expected. This year group made good progress in science and reached significantly above average standards in this subject. There are, however, a few pupils in Years 3 to 6 for whom attainment is stubbornly low. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities move on at a similar rate to others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal attributes prepare them well for the next stage of their education and their future lives. They work diligently in lessons, get on well with others, have good attendance and are punctual in the mornings. Often, behaviour in lessons is exemplary, ensuring that pupils can learn without disruption. All of this begins in the Reception class where children are well motivated, keen to please, show initiative and independence, and have a very secure understanding of the school's expectations of their behaviour and attitudes towards others. Pupils' sensible behaviour does much to help the school to be a safe place.

Spiritual, moral and social development is of high quality. Pupils show good respect for others. This was evident, for example, when pupils in Years 1 and 2 listened attentively as individuals read poems they had written to the class. This is an illustration too of how well pupils develop self-confidence in the school's supportive atmosphere. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community by taking on responsibilities and through the school council. They also contribute positively to the wider community, for example, by raising funds for charities. Pupils' awareness of modern multi-ethnic society, although better than at the last inspection, remains an area of relative weakness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching in the Reception Year is distinguished by very high expectations of the standards all children are capable of attaining. There is a focused drive to move learning on quickly, whilst also supporting children's personal, social and emotional development extremely well. Good features of teaching throughout the school include well organised lessons, clear explanations and supportive relationships. All of these features support learning well, as does the effective use of interactive whiteboards. Teaching assistants are deployed well and usually give good support to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The main reason why teaching in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory overall is that teaching is not closely enough matched to all pupils' needs in all lessons, particularly in whole-class sessions. In the mixed age and ability classes, it is usually the older or more capable pupils who have the pace of their learning reduced as a result. This is particularly the case in Years 1 and 2 where also some average pupils do not realise their potential in writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum ensures that pupils make satisfactory progress overall in Years 1 to 6. A two-year programme is used to cover topics in the mixed age classes. While this generally prevents pupils from covering the same work twice, it does not always ensure that work is demanding enough for all pupils.

Good features of the curriculum include the programme of personal, social and health education, which does much to support pupils' personal development and well-being. The range of activities additional to lessons has improved since the last inspection and pupils now have access to many after school clubs. Visits and visitors are used well to bring learning to life. In the Reception Year, there is an extremely good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Full use is made of both the indoor and outdoor areas for learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is strong and this begins as children are prepared for entry to the Reception class. The school reports that the system of home visits and the welcome provided by staff resulted in no tears at all at the start of the school year. Parents are pleased by the support given to their children to ease their start at school. Many whose children entered the school at a later stage also praise the support given. As one parent observed, 'Although my children have only been at the school a couple of weeks, they have been made to feel part of the "family" immediately.' Pupils of all ages say that they find adults approachable. Parents too value the approachability of the teachers and the ease with which they have access to them. Much is done to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are included fully. The necessary action is taken to ensure that pupils are safeguarded.

Pupils are told clearly what they should do to improve their work. They understand the targets set for them that, for example, tell them what to focus on to improve their use of adjectives in writing or their skills in working with numbers. Marking gives feedback that pupils appreciate

but sometimes comments are not specific enough, for example, to tell pupils what they have done well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Self-evaluation is generally accurate and the school has identified some important areas in which it most needs to improve. The school knows, for example, that with the very high quality start children have in the Reception Year, more pupils should reach the higher levels for their age at later stages. The staff are keen to improve provision to a level that is good overall. However, the lack of a whole-school system for systematically tracking and regularly reviewing pupils' progress is a factor preventing the school's effectiveness and pupils' standards from being better. In setting target levels for individual pupils to reach, not enough account is taken of their prior attainment. For example, there is too little consideration of the standards each pupil attained at the end of the Reception Year when setting targets for the end of Year 2. Even so, data on pupils' performance are analysed well to identify when individuals or groups need extra help.

Pastoral leadership is strong with a high priority given to pupils' personal development and well-being. In this area, in particular, there is strong teamwork of all staff, with clear direction provided by the headteacher. Subject leadership has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory overall. Leadership of the Reception Year provision is outstanding. The headteacher provides governors with many updates on the school's progress. Governors care a good deal about the school, are supportive and are starting to challenge senior leaders over some important issues.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bernard's Catholic Primary School, Bristol BS11 9TU

Thank you for making us welcome and for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and visiting your lessons. Your school is satisfactory and there are some really important things that it does well.

You get off to an amazing start in the Reception Year. You settle in very well and quickly become part of the St Bernard's 'family'. The standards you reach in Reception are much higher than normally found at this age. As you move up through the school you make satisfactory progress overall.

Your personal development and well-being are good. You enjoy school, behave well, have good attitudes to learning, and get on well with others. You show good respect when your classmates contribute to lessons and you listen attentively to the teachers and teaching assistants. You work very well when asked to get on with a task while your teacher works with another group. You know a lot about how to keep fit, healthy and safe. Your good personal qualities and good attendance prepare you well for the next school and for your future lives.

The adults look after you well. You told us that they are approachable and that you can tell them if you have any worries or concerns. You have a good range of activities, such as clubs, in addition to your daily lessons.

- There are three things that we have asked the school to do.
- Make sure that those of you who learn quickly are given enough challenge and that all of you do well enough in writing.
- Ensure that teaching is at the right level for each of you in your mixed age and ability classes, particularly when everyone in the class is taught together.
- Develop whole-school systems to regularly check your progress and to make sure that the standards you are expected to reach are high enough.

You can help by continuing to behave well, work hard and get on with others. Keep doing your best!

Yours sincerely

Alison Grainger Lead inspector