

# St Benedict's Catholic Primary School Hindley

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106494
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	309146
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Eileen Mulgrew HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	203
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Jane Dawes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Janice Taberner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 June 2003
<b>School address</b>	Abbott Street Hindley Wigan Lancashire WN2 3DG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 253522
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

St Benedict's is a smaller than average primary school located in an area of average social and economic advantage. The percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal is below the national average. A very large majority of pupils are from White British heritage. Within the very small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, very few are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national levels whilst the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is similar to the national average. The school received National Healthy Schools Accreditation in June 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

St Benedict's provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has some good features. Since the last inspection the school building has been remodelled and, now on one site, provides an attractive and stimulating learning environment for all pupils. Staff and pupils are friendly and welcoming. Many parents are very supportive of the school's work and speak positively of the progress their children make both academically and personally. Typical views of many parents are captured in the statements 'My child has made very good progress since he started school in September' and 'Our child enjoys coming to school and this is obviously down to the great environment, the teaching staff and all the other people involved in the school. We believe it is a fantastic school with very good ethics'.

Children start school with skills which are overall lower than those expected for their age. Much emphasis is given to developing speaking and listening skills and nearly all pupils make good progress to reach standards which are typical for their age when they enter Key Stage 1. Good and sometimes outstanding teaching in this phase has ensured that standards have improved and that pupils make good progress. In the national assessments taken by pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2007, standards overall were above average.

In Key Stage 2 progress has been much slower over the last two years. Satisfactory progress in English and science resulted in pupils reaching standards which were broadly average in the national tests in 2007. Weaker progress in mathematics caused standards in mathematics to drop in 2006 and decline further in 2007. This was a result of disruption in the teaching pupils received. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some being good or outstanding. The brisk pace and high expectations in some teaching enable pupils to make impressive gains in learning and reach average or above average standards. Refined systems for checking pupils' progress and setting appropriate targets have been introduced this term. However, information about the levels at which the pupils are working are not always used sufficiently well to set challenging targets. Consequently, some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are now making better progress especially in mathematics and reaching standards more in line with the national average. However, those capable of reaching the higher levels still have some way to go. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the very few pupils in the early stages of learning English make as much progress as their peers.

Good care and support underpin the good personal development and well-being of the pupils. Pupils enjoy school. They attend regularly, feel safe and secure, and know who to go to if they are troubled. Partnership with the Catholic Church supports pupils' good understanding of the spiritual aspects of their life. Behaviour is good and sometimes better. The development of the outside area helps pupils develop qualities such as kindness and tolerance within moral, cultural and social issues. Pupils appreciate and enjoy the good curriculum. Activities designed to support pupils' emotional understanding are particularly enjoyed, together with the more practical and lively activities introduced into the mathematics lessons. Pupils take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities and the visits and visitors extend their understanding of the world.

Satisfactory leadership and management, including governance, have led the school through a period of change and disturbance. Over the last two years the school has been remodelled and refurbished. The headteacher has been on maternity leave and various staff members have left or joined the school. Alongside this there has been a change in the membership of the

governing body. Nevertheless, standards in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 improved, and, as a result of a whole school push to increase skills in writing, standards in this area were enhanced. Initially, action was slow in tackling the issue of slow progress in Key Stage 2 and the drop in mathematics standards, but strategies implemented this term are starting to take effect. From having few opportunities of challenging the school's work governors are now starting to take a more active role in checking and evaluating the effectiveness of some of their decisions. Through rearranging the deputy's teaching role, the headteacher and deputy have planned time to check on the effectiveness of the school. Changes in the curriculum together with a revitalised staff and improvement in progress show the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children join the school in Reception with skills below those expected for four year olds, especially in communication, language and literacy. Some have difficulty in relating to other children. Pre-school experience is at several settings including private nurseries. The school spends time in encouraging children to work and play together. The teacher and teaching assistant use accurate assessments to plan a curriculum to meet the needs of all groups of pupils. The wide range of well planned activities, around a central theme, are organised to allow children to develop independent exploration skills as well as to receive direct teaching. However, the outdoor area is under-utilised and there is scope for it to be used more effectively to extend learning opportunities planned for the indoors classroom. Much emphasis is given to developing the skills of speaking and listening. For example, at the end of one session children were asked questions about Christmas and used cards to answer yes or no; children then had to explain the reason for choosing an answer. As a result of this good provision children make good progress so that nearly all pupils reach standards expected for their age in most areas of learning by the time they join Key stage 1.

Partnership with parents is strong. Through the 'inspire' sessions held before children start school, parents and pupils visit the classroom, get to know staff and become familiar with school routines. Consequently, children feel safe and secure and parents know their children will be carefully looked after.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards and accelerate progress in mathematics, especially for the higher achieving pupils.
- Use assessment information more effectively to enable all groups of pupils to make good progress.
- Ensure that school leaders rigorously monitor and evaluate performance and take prompt action to make improvements.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. By the time they enter Key Stage 1, pupils have made good progress because of the emphasis that teachers place on developing their social and literacy skills.

Throughout Key Stage 1 pupils make good progress. Over the last two years a whole school approach to improving pupils' writing skills has resulted in writing standards, in this stage, reaching well above the national average. Standards in reading have also improved to above average whilst standards in mathematics have remained average. The numbers of pupils doing well for their age are similar to the national average although less impressive in mathematics.

In Key Stage 2 pupils' progress has been at a slower rate. Standards in English and science are broadly in line with the national average with the number of pupils who do better than expected for their age similar to the national. However, standards in mathematics have declined over the last two years. This is due to gaps in learning created by uneven teaching. Inspection evidence shows that through effective teaching these gaps are reducing and many pupils are making fast progress towards attaining their challenging targets.

The trend over recent years has been steady improvement in pupils' achievement, including those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, at Key Stage 1 but less so at Key Stage 2. The school has now taken action to remedy this underachievement.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Throughout the school behaviour is good and pupils work and play well together. Pupils enjoy school. They are polite, friendly and welcoming to visitors. Attendance is in line with the national average and the school actively promotes good attendance and punctuality. Rewards are presented to pupils who have maintained good attendance. Spiritual, moral and social development is good. Pupils have opportunities to explore themes in personal, health and social education. Through music, art, and design and technology pupils develop an awareness of other cultures. One pupil explained 'People from different countries have different gods, different beliefs; some things not offensive to us are offensive to them'. Using the traffic light system to choose healthy options at lunchtime and regular attendance at the out-of-school sports clubs show how pupils understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils appreciate the weekly physical education lessons with one pupil stating, 'It keeps your heart healthy'. Elected school councillors take their responsibility seriously, meeting regularly to discuss agenda items and record decisions. They feel part of shaping the school, for example choosing the colours for the decoration of the new building and arranging sponsorship for sports kits. Pupils are willing to take on other roles of responsibility as prefects and contribute to the wider community.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some good and outstanding teaching mainly in Key Stage 1. Effective lessons are based on a clear assessment of pupils' prior learning and tasks that are well matched to their needs. Typical features include precise, confident,

enthusiastic teaching which moves along at a brisk pace and challenges all pupils, including higher achieving pupils. For example, in a Year 2 numeracy lesson no learning time was lost as the teacher introduced a new topic, checked pupils' current understanding, gave clear explanations and moved pupils into well matched, challenging activities. As a result of such lessons, pupils enjoy learning, have fun, make rapid gains and know exactly how to move on in their work. In some lessons, however, these opportunities are missed and pupils, especially the higher achievers, do not make the gains in learning of which they are capable.

Skilful teaching assistants effectively support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who may be underachieving, so they are fully involved in all lessons. Teaching assistants are given clear guidance on how to support groups of learners and give feedback to the teacher on how well the pupils cope with the work. The effectiveness of this support is very strong. Pupils' progress is thoroughly assessed but not all the teachers use the information to plan work which matches the different needs of all learners, especially the higher achieving pupils. Regular marking of work includes very supportive comments and an acknowledgement of the pupils' efforts. Although pupils know their targets in English and science they are less sure of those in mathematics. As a result pupils are not always clear about what they have done well or how they can improve, especially in mathematics.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils find the curriculum enjoyable. In Key Stage 1 areas of the curriculum are effectively linked together to make learning more meaningful for pupils. Activities are exciting and challenging with much practical work. Through a whole school focus on the development of writing, pupils have opportunities to use this skill in other areas of the curriculum. Resources have been purchased to provide opportunities for practical work and problem solving activities in mathematics. Information and communication technology (ICT) equipment has been improved with the investment in personal computers which greatly motivate and engage pupils in their learning. As a result there is now clear emphasis on developing the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT throughout the school.

Pupils' good quality work is attractively displayed and reflects the variety of subjects the pupils cover. One display, for example, showed slippers designed and made by pupils in a technology lesson. Parents and pupils appreciate the themed weeks in art and science which allow pupils to study a topic in depth. The curriculum is further enhanced by the opportunity to learn to speak French which the pupils talk about enthusiastically. Pupils look forward to the assemblies which introduce each theme to develop emotional aspects of their learning and are happy to talk about their feelings. There is a good range of activities which takes place at lunch time and after school such as rugby, football, netball and chess. These contribute markedly to the pupils' enjoyment of school and self-esteem. Good use is made of visits and visitors to enhance learning by giving pupils opportunities for first hand experiences which broaden their knowledge of the world.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Good care, guidance and support for pupils is recognised and valued by parents and carers. This level of care enables children to feel happy and secure. Relevant required procedures for child protection and safeguarding pupils are in place. Health and safety procedures are strictly adhered to with regular checking of the school site and the completion of risk assessments

whenever necessary. Careful attention is given to the needs of vulnerable pupils. An intensive programme of professional development for teaching assistants has led to very effective, focused support for pupils with learning difficulties and, from this term, pupils identified as underachieving. The school has refined its system for checking pupils' academic progress. Pupils now have targets in English, science and mathematics which are reviewed each term. As a result staff are more able to set targets for pupils' learning in lessons, although opportunities are sometimes missed to set challenging work for the higher achieving pupils. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress and school events through regular bulletins. They are encouraged to be involved in supporting their child's learning; for example, parents are invited to welcome meetings as their children join Year 1 and then Year 2. Most pupils transfer to the same high school and arrangements ensure a smooth move for pupils as they leave Year 6.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work as a team to lead and manage the school. Through targeted action to improve provision overall standards at the end of Key Stage 1 now reach above average. However, the decline in standards and lack of progress in mathematics at Key Stage 2 was not identified swiftly enough. Although action to remedy this underachievement was slow it is now starting to gather momentum. The school is working with the local authority to improve teacher subject knowledge and to introduce activities which will engage the pupils in their learning. Opportunities for the headteacher and deputy to work together effectively have been improved this year by the reorganisation of the deputy's teaching commitment. This senior leadership team is well supported by an enthusiastic staff who are energised and committed to raising standards and the personal development of pupils. A period of disruption in staffing has now stabilised. The appointment of new teachers and the reorganisation of existing staff have led to increased strength in teaching and this bodes well for the future. Several subject leaders are new to their roles. Through discussions with the headteacher they are clear about what developments are needed to drive their subject areas forward.

Governance is satisfactory and fulfils all statutory responsibilities. Several governors work in school and have a clear understanding of the day to day running of the school. Most governors attend training to support them in their role and some governors bring specific expertise to areas of the school's work. Governors are supportive of the school and the appointment of some new governors has brought a fresh approach to challenging the work of the school. For example, governors have been into school to monitor the use of ICT equipment and the revised provision for mathematics. Consequently, the school has satisfactory capacity to improve and provides satisfactory value for money.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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	3
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	3

### 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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

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**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Mrs Loughlin and I would like to thank you for the pleasant and cheerful way that you looked after us during our visit to your school. You will remember that we came to check how well it helps you to learn and grow. We think St Benedict's is a satisfactory school with some strengths. You are an important part of that because you behave very well, you are eager to learn and enjoy your work and play.

We also think that your teachers and other adults in school take good care of you and help pupils who are struggling with their work. Pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are getting on very well and get good results. Those of you in Key Stage 2 are getting used to your new teachers and working hard to get better results by the time you leave in Year 6.

Some of you could do better in mathematics especially those of you who like to learn quickly. We have asked the staff to help you achieve this by using information about your levels of learning to better plan your work. You can help by letting your teachers know when you have work which is too easy or too hard. We have asked the school leaders to check what is happening in the school and take quick action if things are not going quite well.

Your school looks set to improve further. We feel sure that you will work with the staff to make this happen.