

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106508
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	309150
Inspection date	5 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Colin Smith

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	201
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs K Winstanley
Headteacher	Mr S.Doyle /Mrs A.Banks
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Lane Shevington Wigan Lancashire WN6 8BD

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	5 November 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The following issues were investigated: pupils' achievement, particularly in writing; teachers' use of assessment in setting challenges and targets according to pupils' different learning needs; and the extent to which leaders check the work of the school to raise standards. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, pupils' work, discussions with staff, governors and pupils and a scrutiny of school documents and questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is average in size. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, although the school serves a mixed community. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small number are of mixed backgrounds of which a very small number speak English as an additional language. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision is made for children aged from four to five. A number of staff changes have taken place recently and the school has been managed by senior staff in the absence of a headteacher since November 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Bernadette's is a good school. It has successfully weathered a difficult period of staff turbulence, whilst the headteacher has been absent. This is because key members of staff have stepped into the breach very effectively with excellent support and guidance from a highly effective governing body. As a result, the school's commitment to raising standards and ensuring equality of opportunity has not faltered and the school continues to provide good value for money. At the heart of the school's work is the good level of care, guidance and support provided for all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable. Good links between teachers, parents and health professionals have helped to ensure that any barriers to learning are removed. All procedures for protecting and safeguarding pupils are in place. The school's warm and vibrant atmosphere is a major factor in pupils' good personal development. Pupils say, 'This is a happy school in which we feel safe.' This is largely why attendance is above average. Pupils show maturity in their roles as play leaders and school council members and behaviour is exemplary. The school provides a diverse and stimulating curriculum that caters well for pupils' different needs and interests. Consequently, pupils enjoy school immensely, acquire a good awareness of the importance of safe and healthy lifestyles and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils' achievement is good throughout the school. After a positive start in Reception, pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Standards in Year 2 are above average in writing and significantly above average in reading and mathematics, as they have been in most recent years. Standards by the end of Year 6 have been consistently above average overall, often significantly so. Standards in mathematics and science are usually higher than in English, which have been average in the past. The school has taken concerted action to improve English by strengthening pupils' reading skills, in terms of accuracy and understanding. As a result, reading standards in Year 6 are now well above average. Senior staff and teachers are currently working hard to raise standards in writing, which has been the weaker component in both key stages. Pupils are now making better progress in writing through effective use of stories, images and drama, which are designed to fire their imagination. This is increasing their desire to write. Targets have been set to raise standards and pupils are being taught to check and improve their work. The most recent assessments indicate that standards in writing are increasing but there is scope for even greater improvement. In some lessons, pupils do not have enough time to write at length because the teachers spend too long talking and their potential to express their ideas creatively is sometimes restricted by limited space on worksheets.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are challenging and well managed. Consequently, pupils are alert, attentive and give of their best. The aims of the lesson are thoroughly discussed to ensure that pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn. Teachers make their lessons interesting, for example, by showing video clips, acting out stories and using cliffhangers to stir pupils' curiosity. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, the teacher used a microphone to interview pupils who took on the roles of different characters in the story by wearing assorted hats. This prompted great amusement but, more importantly, significantly enhanced their understanding of the story. Not surprisingly, pupils are fully engaged and say that learning is 'fun.' Good use is made of assessment to track pupils' progress and provide work that is well matched to their different learning needs. This enables boys, girls, more able pupils, those who require additional help to support their learning and those who are learning English as an additional language all to make equally good progress. However, there are

occasions when the class teaching part of the lesson is too long. This reduces the time pupils have to practise and improve their skills, this is particularly so in writing.

The quality of leadership and management is good. The acting headteachers and senior staff have together made a particularly good contribution in moving the school forward. This has been achieved by rigorously monitoring and evaluating teaching, the work in pupils' books and the assessments made of their learning. This has enabled leaders and governors to make accurate judgements of the performance of the school, identify precisely where improvements are needed and unite staff in driving forwards to achieve their goals. Improvements in assessment, additional support for specific pupils with additional learning needs, and the provision of a dynamic and creative curriculum have all resulted from collective staff endeavour. This has ensured that the necessary curriculum improvements have been made since the previous inspection and illustrates the school's good capacity for further improvement. The vast majority of parents hold the school in high regard and recognise that the school has coped well in the face of staffing difficulties. Comments such as, 'This is a caring school where children are happy and standards are high', typifies the views of most parents. The school is at the centre of an active church and local community, although not yet at the stage of formally promoting and checking its contribution to wider community cohesion.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most intakes of children enter school with knowledge and skills that are typical for their age. Children make good progress and, by the end of the Reception year, their attainment in personal and mathematical development and in most aspects of literacy is higher than expected for their age. Children are well cared for, kept safe and sensitively nurtured. They soon settle into the daily routines and engage in exploring and learning with happy smiling faces. Good provision is made to stimulate their curiosity through an engaging range of activities, inside and outside the classroom. Children are encouraged to make choices and take responsibility, which helps them to become independent learners. They behave well and work and play together harmoniously. Teaching and learning are good, particularly in helping children to acquire important literacy and numeracy skills. By grouping children according to their different needs, staff are able to teach them at just the right level to move their learning on. Their responses are carefully observed, recorded and used to plan the next learning steps. Good leadership is achieved by checking the quality of provision against the local authority 'good practice standard. This has led to significant improvements in outdoor provision and greater involvement of parents. Staff are rightly considering how to improve children's early writing skills, which has been the weaker element in their achievement in recent years.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' standards in writing.
- Ensure that pupils have sufficient time in lessons to apply, practise and improve their skills, particularly in writing.

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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?	2
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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 learners' needs?	2
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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

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

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors to your school and answering our questions so helpfully. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and would like to explain our findings.

St Bernadette's is a good school. Younger children get off to a good start in the Reception class. Older pupils make good progress, particularly in reading, mathematics and science. This is why standards in your school are significantly above average. Your good achievement is largely due to good teaching and interesting lessons. Teachers set work at just the right level, which helps all of you to learn successfully. When we arrived at your school, we were impressed by the calm atmosphere and interesting displays of work. Many of you explained that your favourite experiences came from topics, visits, and out of school activities. We can see just how much you benefit from a good and rich curriculum.

Teachers and support staff are very caring. You told us, 'They are always there to help us.' We believe that this is why your personal development is good. Your excellent behaviour, good attendance and social skills help you to achieve well. Your school is well run and staff are ever watchful to ensure that your progress and education continue to be good.

We have two recommendations to help your school to be even better.

- We have asked teachers to push on with helping you to improve your writing. You can help by trying to reach the targets set for you, using interesting words and checking your work carefully.
- We have also asked your teachers to ensure that the whole class part of the lesson does not go on for too long. We think you need more time to practise and improve your skills, especially in writing.