

# St Benedict's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123840
<b>Local Authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	314736
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janet Simms

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	187
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Stratford
<b>Headteacher</b>	Antony Nicholas
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 June 2004
<b>School address</b>	Charlton Lane Midsomer Norton Radstock BA3 4BD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01761 418594
<b>Fax number</b>	01761 411810

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is a little smaller than average, serving an area outside Bath. About 60% of the pupils are from Catholic families, and they come from a wide catchment area. Few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak native languages other than English, though this proportion has increased recently with entrants from Eastern Europe. A large proportion of teaching staff and governors are newly in post.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It is improving and already has good features, including pupils' personal development. This comes about because of good pastoral care and support which the overwhelming majority of parents greatly value, though a minority of those with children in their final year do not agree. Year 6 pupils themselves confirm that this year has been less successful than other years for some, because behaviour and discipline have adversely affected achievement and enjoyment, though learning has now improved. However, the vast majority of pupils are very happy. They speak articulately of their experiences at school, in particular about their enjoyment in the extensive range of extra-curricular clubs and other enrichment activities. Another strength of the school is the good start that children get in the Reception class.

The range of skills which current Reception children showed on entry matched those expected nationally. In previous years, these had been falling, and those pupils now in Years 1 to 3 joined with weak skills in aspects of mathematics and creative development. Reception children have made good progress and are well prepared to move into Year 1.

Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Year 2 pupils have achieved well, so standards now match expectations, with good progress in writing. Reading has improved because of the effective work on phonics recently implemented in Years 1 and 2. Achievement in different years of Key Stage 2 varies considerably. Standards in Year 6 are broadly average, though more able pupils have not reached the challenging targets set for them. Year 5 pupils are progressing well, and keenly articulate how well they are doing. Progress is satisfactory in other years. Standards in science have fallen, notably amongst more able pupils, partly because a specialist has left the school.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good teaching promoting positive enjoyment and enabling pupils to progress well. This is particularly so for younger pupils, whose achievement is increasingly good. Teaching is much more variable in Years 3 to 6, where the school has met with varying success in its drive to improve learning.

Attendance is high and general behaviour at play and around the school is good. Pupils are fit and healthy, understanding what creates a healthy lifestyle and participating enthusiastically in sports. Most feel strongly involved in contributing to the community, for instance as part of the church locally, and through fundraising for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils appreciate the new school council, which is beginning to provide them with a stronger voice in school life. Pupils mostly know what their targets are, but do not always understand how to reach them because teachers' marking and other guidance is not sufficiently informative.

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The new headteacher has a clear vision for school improvement and is beginning to raise achievement, particularly amongst younger pupils. Staff support each other well, showing good team spirit. Self-evaluation is accurate, including judgements about the quality of teaching. A sound track record since the previous report demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The Reception class provides an interesting balance of child-initiated and structured indoor and outdoor activity. At this late stage in the year, children are good independent learners,

confident to interact with adults and to explain their learning and ideas. Teaching is good, with the teacher and assistant complementing each other's work effectively to stretch children's learning. Personal development is good, so they work and play harmoniously, learning together or taking the lead when appropriate. Indoor space is relatively cramped, but the outdoor space includes a well-utilised, pleasant garden as well as hard-surfaced areas. However, there is no covered outdoor space where activity can occur in inclement weather, restricting what can be achieved, especially in the areas of creative development.

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

- 
- Raise achievement in Years 3 to 6, particularly for more able pupils.
- Improve teaching, especially in Years 3 to 6, so that pupils of all ages and abilities are consistently well motivated to achieve and to enjoy learning.
- Make sure that informative marking and other guidance enables pupils to understand their targets and how they can achieve them.

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**

Progress in pupils' early years at the school has increased, raising fairly weak standards on entry to the levels expected by the end of Year 2. Standards in Years 1 and 2 are better than in 2007 because successful initiatives to improve literacy have resulted in above average standards in writing and have improved reading. More able pupils are achieving higher targets. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is mixed, mainly because the quality of teaching is more variable. Achievement in science has fallen, with older pupils saying they enjoy the subject less than they used to, because they do fewer active investigations or 'interesting experiments'. Work to improve learning has succeeded in raising all achievement to satisfactory, with much that is good. Year 5 are progressing particularly well. Observation showed Year 6 achieving satisfactorily now, and responding to rewards for good behaviour.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social understanding is good. Prayer, together with an awareness of God in their lives, is an important aspect of pupils' developing personal spirituality. Cultural development is satisfactory, but Year 5 commented perceptively on the lack of opportunities to learn about cultural diversity. They welcome these when they occur, for instance on a visit to a racially mixed secondary school, and say they would enjoy more such contacts. Pupils know how to stay safe and healthy, with many commenting on how well they think the school looks after them. By the time they leave, pupils are mature enough to recognise positive and less positive relationships, and can discuss these articulately and frankly. Some are critical of others' immature behaviour and negative attitudes. Understanding of basic workplace skills is satisfactory and the vast majority of pupils work cooperatively in groups or teams. The school acknowledges that the current range of learning about the workplace is not enough to develop a good understanding of the world of work.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Good learning occurs in many classes, including Reception. A significant proportion of teachers are new to the school and those new to teaching commend the good support from all staff which has helped to improve their practice. Monitoring by senior staff accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses, and results in successful support to improve unsatisfactory learning. Staff are striving to iron out recognised inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, but some still remain. Support staff make a good contribution to learning, for example in controlling behaviour. Well focused, small group learning is leading to better achievement for many pupils who have learning difficulties. Written marking and guidance do not usually clarify what pupils need to do to improve work, so many do not understand how to reach targets. Although good practice exists, this area is rightly prioritised for improvement.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum provides well for the needs of most pupils, including successful support for most pupils with learning difficulties. Challenge for more able pupils, for instance some able Year 5 pupils joining Year 6 mathematics lessons, is starting to improve their achievement. This is timely, because the school has recently fallen short of its targets for higher attaining pupils at Year 6. The range, quality and variety of extra-curricular opportunities and enrichment activities are particular strengths of provision. Pupils really enjoy residentials, visits to other schools and visitors such as that from a helicopter and its pilot recently, and they were very keen to discuss their Spanish lessons and the recent, exciting Fiesta week.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

The vast majority of parents comment appreciatively on the good pastoral care and support which their children receive. Safeguarding arrangements are secure, and most pupils agree with parents who feel that they are safe and well looked after. Support for vulnerable pupils is increasingly successful, leading to better achievement. Good procedures ease transition into secondary schools, with Year 5 already buzzing with enthusiasm about their recent visit to one school and plans for another soon. Although a few parents feel differently, most of the Year 6 pupils themselves say they feel properly prepared and ready for this move. The school recognises that the academic guidance provided for pupils through marking does not always help them to understand and achieve their targets.

## Leadership and management

#### Grade: 3

Senior staff and governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are clear about future objectives. New governors are settling into their roles, supporting the school properly and challenging the headteacher increasingly well. New initiatives are starting to raise achievement, but their impact is not fully evident. Interventions to improve teaching, for

instance, have not fully resolved some issues, but action is robust and positive, and governors investigate any concerns very thoroughly.

Data available are used satisfactorily, but are not analysed in sufficient detail to check routinely the achievement of different groups of pupils, such as minorities, to ensure that all progress equally well. Most parents are very satisfied, but a minority would welcome better communication with the school, for instance about pupils' progress. A variety of strong partnerships, such as those with local parishes, other schools or the local hotel for swimming, are used well to extend pupils' experiences.

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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	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	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

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Benedict's Catholic Primary School, Midsomer Norton, BA3 4BD

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school in June. We were really pleased to be there and to talk to many of you, to be in your lessons and chatting with you in the playground. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

Yours is a satisfactory school which is improving. There are already some really good things about it. One of these is your own good behaviour and politeness around the school and in classes. We know there is some less good behaviour, but we think this is improving, so most of you learn properly. Children in Reception make a good start and learn well. Younger pupils among you are progressing well because the way you learn phonics now is making your reading and writing better. We enjoyed hearing about your interesting activities, for instance all about the Fiesta week and hearing you speak Spanish. We think that all the visits you make, such as Year 5's to the secondary school, and visitors who come to you, including the pilot and his helicopter, make you learn really well about interesting things. Staff work hard to keep you safe, and to make your lessons and all the other activities interesting and enjoyable.

To make things even better we have asked the school to do a few things. We have asked them to make sure that teaching is always really good, so that all of you, especially older pupils, progress as well as each other. Some of you are not reaching your targets at the moment, particularly those who need to do harder work and reach higher levels, so we have asked the school to make sure you understand these targets better. We have asked them to give you clearer information about how to improve your work so that you can help yourselves to reach your targets. We feel sure you will be good at helping them to make these things even better.

Thank you again for making us feel so welcome in your school.

We hope you have a good summer holiday.

Yours sincerely

Janet Simms Lead inspector