

St Bernadette Catholic Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100628
Local Authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	323319
Inspection date	11 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Christopher Basden
Headteacher	Ms Deborah Hogan
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2006
School address	Atkins Road Clapham Park London SW12 0AB
Telephone number	020 8673 2061
Fax number	020 8675 7196

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. In addition, the following issues were investigated.

- Why are results in mathematics lower than in English and science?
- How good is the curriculum?
- How well is pupils' progress tracked and how well is the information used to accelerate achievement?

Evidence was gathered from the school's analysis of pupils' progress, samples of pupils' work and observations in lessons. Discussions were held with staff, governors and pupils. In addition, the responses in 96 parents' questionnaires were analysed and their comments taken into account. 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

St Bernadette is an oversubscribed junior school of average size. Most pupils live in the parish of St Bede's, although a few pupils come from other parishes, including some from neighbouring local authorities. Almost all pupils are Catholic and they come from a diverse range of heritage groups. Very few pupils are of White British background and the largest group, representing a third of pupils, is Black or Black British-African. About two thirds of pupils speak English as an additional language and several of these are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these find learning hard or have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school has gained the Healthy School Award and Sports Activemark.

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 is a good school which is on an upward trend. Some aspects of its work are outstanding. This is because pupils achieve well and their personal development is outstanding. Its work is underpinned by its strong Christian ethos to achieve its aim of 'work is prayer'. Pupils thoroughly enjoy being at St Bernadette, as shown by their above-average attendance, and they are proud of its Catholic values. Pupils and their parents were keen to tell inspectors how good they think the school is. As one school councillor stated, 'Our school is very special because we have very talented pupils. We learn something new every day and that's the teachers and the pupils'. The overwhelmingly inclusive ethos underpins excellent pastoral care. Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming. They work and play together harmoniously and have an excellent sense of right and wrong. By the time that they leave school, pupils are becoming secure, confident and mature young people who are very well prepared for their move to secondary education. Behaviour is excellent, with pupils rising to the expectation that they will behave well and act responsibly. Parents are unanimous in saying that their children are safe in school and pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They have a keen awareness of the need to live a healthy lifestyle, understanding the need to eat healthily, and the importance of exercise. This has been recognised by the Healthy School and Activemark awards. There is good promotion of community cohesion. There are varied partnership activities with local and diocesan schools and close links with a number of national and local charities. Although there are no strong links with schools in other countries, the global dimension is supported well by celebrating the diverse culture of the very many nations represented in the school. In addition, the school council has close links with another local catholic school and also a school in Kent and school councillors proudly show the information gained from other school councils and how they have learned from these. Provision is good and, when linked to pupils' positive attitudes and a good range of additional support, it ensures that achievement is good. Pupils enter the school with skills and attainment that are broadly in line with the national average. Progress is steady in Years 3 and 4 but accelerates in Years 5 and 6 so that by the time that pupils leave school, standards are above average, particularly in English where standards are well above average. However, because there has been a legacy of some underachievement in Years 3 and 4 in the past, particularly in mathematics, standards in this subject are average. The school recognised this deficiency and because there has been a well-founded improvement project to quicken learning, progress has accelerated. Evaluation showed that pupils' calculation skills and their skills in applying mathematics needed boosting and these have been strengthened by giving additional focus. In addition, parents' workshops, resources for parents and a homework club have been put into place to enable parents to support their children's mathematical development. This has accelerated progress, though the school is keenly aware that although the gap between mathematics and English and science is closing, standards in mathematics still drag behind. The school's tracking indicates that attainment in Year 6 is not as high this year, although these pupils have made good progress from starting points that were lower than usual. Critically, all groups of pupils, including those that find learning hard and others that are at an early stage of learning English, make good progress and achieve well because their needs are clearly identified and good support is put into place. Compared with the national picture, Black African pupils do particularly well.

The quality of teaching is good. Most lessons are good and some are outstanding. Lessons are characterised by good relationships in which teachers manage pupils well, and the positive atmosphere in all classrooms aids learning. There has been an emphasis on strengthening pupils'

learning since the previous inspection and this is paying dividends. Teachers invariably outline the purpose of lessons and recent work on clarifying for pupils the success criteria for each lesson and unit of work enables them to know what they have to do to succeed. In many lessons these are used well in plenary sessions to check learning. However, this is not always the case and, where there is not a clear focus on what is being learned, the pace of learning slows. The curriculum is of good quality. It meets pupils' needs well and helps them to develop a good knowledge base and also generates excitement about learning. As one parent wrote, 'The teachers put lots of effort into lessons, trips and clubs. Sports are a particular strength'. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in physical education and this has led pupils to thoroughly enjoying sporting activities. 'Have you seen all our trophies?', proudly asked a school councillor. Provision for information and communication technology has strengthened since the previous inspection and pupils also benefit from specialist music teaching. There are particular strengths in the additional activities. This includes many modern foreign languages, sporting and arts activities. However, some work still needs to be done to ensure that subjects are linked together in order to make learning more meaningful. There has been an improvement in the pupils' personal development since the previous inspection. This is due to the excellence of the care, guidance and support provided for pupils. The strong pastoral support is complemented well by a good range of provision for vulnerable pupils including the use of counselling services which the pupils say they find very valuable. The provision of first language support for newcomers speaking Polish, Portuguese and Spanish particularly benefits these pupils and enables them to settle quickly and learn English well. All regulations for safeguarding and protecting pupils' health and safety are met in full. There has been a marked improvement in academic guidance since the previous inspection. There are now robust and clear procedures for tracking pupils' progress and this enables senior leaders to keep a close watch on achievement in each class. These good systems have brought an additional rigour to guidance arrangements because teachers can be held to account for pupils' progress and any potential underachievement. Also, pupils are clear about their targets, marking has improved and now provides good guidance for pupils. Critically, clear success criteria help pupils to be involved in their learning by enabling them to assess their own work against their targets.

All these things do not happen by chance! The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. She is already much admired by the whole school community and she has very successfully built on the many strengths reported in the previous inspection. She has a clear vision for the future of the school that is shared by all members of staff and there is a clear determination to improve the school even further. The headteacher has strengthened staff teamwork and has substantially improved the role of subject leaders in the excellent procedures for checking progress and provision. These enable senior staff to have a clear picture of the strengths and development points and have been key in identifying and evaluating the success of the many improvement projects that have been put into place. The headteacher is supported well by the deputy headteacher and governors, who have a good understanding of the school's strengths and are effectively led by the experienced chair of governors. However, at present, they are over-reliant on the headteacher for information about the school's success and improvements. Nonetheless, the significant improvements in both provision and standards since the previous inspection, demonstrate an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate progress and achievement in mathematics throughout the school.
- Strengthen the consistency of lessons by ensuring that pupils are always aware of lesson objectives and what they have to do to meet them.

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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	1

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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?	1

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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	2
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**

23 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bernadette Catholic Junior School, London, SW12 0AB

I am writing to let you know what I found when I visited your school. Thank you for helping me so well and making me welcome. I really enjoyed talking with you and finding out about your school. I enjoyed listening to you when you showed me all the vegetables and herbs that you are growing and also hearing about your many sporting achievements, particularly when you came third at Old Trafford in the national competition! I can see why you enjoy school so much because yours is a good school and it is getting even better.

These are the things that are best about your school.

- You enjoy school and you all get on very well together. Your behaviour is excellent and you help and support each other really well.
- You make good progress in your learning and want to do your best. Well done for this!
- The staff take excellent care of you and make sure that you are safe and very well looked after.
- Your teachers do a good job. Teaching is good and you thoroughly enjoy learning.
- Your headteacher is doing an excellent job. She is supported well by all the other adults in the school and the governors.

I have asked the school to continue to focus on two things.

- Making sure that you do as well in mathematics as you do in English and science.
- Making sure that you, the pupils, are always aware of what your lesson objectives are and what you have to do to meet them.

You can help by making sure you work as hard as possible to meet your targets. With best wishes, Yours faithfully

Keith Sadler

Lead Inspector