

St Benedict's Catholic Primary School

Copy Lane, Netherton, Bootle, L30 7PG

Inspection dates 3–4 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From low starting points, pupils achieve well so that by the time they leave Year 6 they reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is good overall and some teaching is excellent.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils really enjoy school and like their teachers.
- There have been improvements in the way reading, writing and mathematics are taught.
- Pupils feel safe in school and are kept safe by staff that care for them very well. They are considerate and respectful towards adults and each other.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well and there is a successful programme for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The headteacher is effectively supported by the deputy headteacher and has the full confidence of staff and governors. Together they are a strong team whose members share the ambition to provide the best for every pupil.
- Leaders at all levels, including governors, have maintained the levels of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching through a period of significant change to the senior leadership team.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching.
- During some activities, pupils are not effectively challenged and do not learn as much as they should.
- In the Year 1 check, too few pupils reach the expected standard in matching letters with the sounds that they make. This is because the excellent practice that exists in the school is not always adopted and some pupils are not fully involved in the lessons.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons and also observed sessions taken by teaching assistants. One lesson was observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at lunchtime. They met formally with two groups of pupils and listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with staff, senior leaders and managers, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- A range of documents were considered by inspectors, including the school's analysis of how well it is doing, the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, checks on the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings, and records relating to attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors also examined work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors took account of 19 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke informally to a small group of parents at the start of the school day. They also took account of pupil safety questionnaires recently distributed by the school.

Inspection team

Louise Murphy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Catherine Beeks

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is similar in size to most primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is very near the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is below that usually found.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is slightly below average.
- The vast majority of pupils are from a White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.
- A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching and thereby pupils' progress by making sure that:
 - planned activities build on what pupils already know and can do so that they get on with challenging tasks quickly and make as much progress as possible
 - when pupils are learning how to match letters with the sounds that they make, the most successful approaches to supporting learning are consistently adopted and pupils are fully involved throughout the lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Nursery class with skills that are much lower than those typical for their age. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, they have made good progress. This is because they benefit from the well-resourced indoor and outdoor learning areas that inspire them to want to get involved and persevere with their exciting tasks. Pupils join Year 1 well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- Although the standards reached by pupils by the end of Key Stage 1 in 2013 in reading, writing and mathematics were below those seen nationally, the most recent national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 show that standards are now rising. By the end of Year 6 attainment is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. This confirms that compared to where they started, pupils at St Benedict's make good progress.
- The school's information on pupils' progress and work seen in pupils' books suggest that the current Year 6 pupils who have recently taken the national tests have made even better progress in reading, writing and mathematics than pupils in previous years.
- School leaders rightly recognise that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the Year 1 phonics check (a check to see how well pupils match letters to the sounds that they make) needs to increase. Strategies have been put into place to achieve this, including appointing additional staff. Though there is some excellent practice, especially in the Nursery class, there are times when some pupils get too few opportunities to practise their letter sounds because they have to wait too long for their turn.
- Older pupils who spoke and read to inspectors were very positive about reading and said that the school encourages them to read books regularly, both at home and during the school day. Class novels are used effectively across the curriculum. For example, the book *War Horse* inspired some excellent writing and artwork.
- The school provides a good level of support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. These pupils learn well and make good progress.
- The most able pupils are well provided for, their needs are quickly identified and effective support is put into place to help them meet their targets.
- In Year 6 in 2013, pupils eligible for free school meals and supported through the pupil premium funding achieved results that were approximately one term behind those of their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. Current school data show that any gaps between eligible pupils and others are quickly addressed. This reflects the school's commitment to making sure that everyone is given the same chance to succeed.

The quality of teaching is good

- Overall, the quality of teaching is good and there are some examples of outstanding practice. Consequently, pupils are well supported to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Most pupils are clear about what they have to do because teachers explain what they expect pupils to achieve. A good range of resources are provided to support learning, including prompts around the classroom that pupils can refer to when they need to.
- There has been a successful focus on improving the quality of pupils' writing. For example, pupils watched a production of *The Three Little Pigs*, then each class concentrated on developing a different form of writing based on the same, well-known, fairy tale theme. This event, and others like it, provide interesting experiences that motivate pupils and give them a reason to want to write.
- There has also been a drive to improve the teaching of mathematics. For example, assessment information is used to identify gaps in learning. Pupils of similar abilities are then taught together once each week. These sessions are well planned to accurately meet pupils' learning needs.

- Pupils are making good progress overall. However, there are times when the work given is too easy for some pupils and too difficult for others. As a result, pupils are not always accurately challenged. This stops progress from getting any better than good.
- School leaders have put systems in place to improve the impact of teachers' marking. Teachers' comments help pupils to make their work even better and completing corrections helps pupils to learn from their mistakes.
- Teachers question pupils carefully to check their level of understanding and pupils regularly assess their own level of learning so that staff can provide help quickly when pupils are not sure about what to do next. Pupils also have opportunities to share their ideas and learn from each other.
- Effective teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants guarantees a good level of support for pupils. It contributes well to the learning and progress of all groups of pupils, including the most able and pupils with additional needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They show respect for each other and the adults around them. They say that they want to learn and enjoy coming to school. Year 6 pupils who spoke to inspectors remarked that they really did not want to leave.
- The school environment is well looked after and attractive; impressive displays of pupils' work are evident throughout the school. One pupil said to her friend that she loved walking through the 'art corridor' as she pointed out a piece of her work that she was extremely proud of.
- The school councillors gather suggestions from pupils on how they can make their 'perfect school' even better. As a result, they helped to raise money to buy a 'buddy bench' and painted it themselves. This bench is used to provide a quiet place in the playground and to make sure that all pupils have someone to play with.
- There are pupils at St Benedict's whose circumstances make them vulnerable. They are very well supported by the school and their behaviour rarely prevents learning from taking place. However, there are times when the work provided is not of an appropriate level of challenge and this leads to some pupils becoming distracted from their learning.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils feel safe because they know that adults will keep them safe in school. Pupils know about various forms of bullying and the difference between bullying and falling out. They agree that bullying is rare and school records confirm this.
- All parents who spoke to the inspectors and the majority of those who responded to the online questionnaire believe that behaviour is good. They think their children are kept safe and commented on how happy children are at St Benedict's.
- Pupils' attendance has been low in recent years. However, school has worked well with pupils and their families to improve attendance, which is now at an average level and reflects the pupils' enjoyment of school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is highly ambitious for the school and is clearly focused on continuing to improve standards. He is well supported by the deputy headteacher, staff and governors. School leaders have the skills and expertise to make sure that the school continues to improve.
- Targets set for teachers are closely linked to the priorities set out in the school's planning documents and both are focused on improving standards. The school's analysis of how well it is doing is correct because it is based on regular evaluation of the work that it does.
- Senior leaders check the quality of teaching and learning and put actions into place to address identified areas for development. For example, staff are supported by a programme of training and peer coaching to meet their individual needs and school priorities. However, school leaders

recognise that the impact of these actions has not always been checked quickly enough and they are making appropriate plans to check the impact of actions more rigorously.

- Middle leaders are knowledgeable about all aspects of their areas of responsibility. They are well supported by senior leaders to develop their skills and work well with other members of staff to share their expertise.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs; it is enhanced by a range of after-school activities and visits and visitors carefully linked to topic themes. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is well developed. For example, most classes have had the opportunity to enjoy watching dancing from countries across the world and all pupils attend the service to celebrate the achievements of those pupils who graduate from the Children's University.
- The primary school sport funding is used to pay for additional equipment and sports coaching from experts who work with pupils and staff. Pupils are also able to use the facilities at the nearby high school, which means that they have access to a wide range of sporting activities to help them stay healthy and promote well-being.
- Home-school links are strong, especially for vulnerable pupils and their families. The pastoral mentor has developed very good relationships with parents. School leaders and governors are committed to continuing and developing family work still further.
- The local authority provides an appropriate level of support to this good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly committed to the school and make sure that school leaders are both supported and challenged. They know about the quality of teaching because they are trained to analyse pupils' performance data, visit school regularly and receive comprehensive reports from the headteacher. Governors check that the pupil premium funding is spent wisely and has a positive impact on the progress of eligible pupils. They make sure that teachers' pay is linked to how effective they are, that pupils and staff are kept safe and that statutory duties, including sound financial management, are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	135085
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	444214

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Dunne
Headteacher	Michael Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2010
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