

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	114546
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	378885
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2012
Lead inspector	Chris Grove

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Stone
Headteacher	Jacqueline Lance
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 February 2007
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Chris Grove

Additional Inspector

Lynda Welham

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 12 lessons taught by nine teachers, and heard reading by some pupils in Years 1 and 2. In total, this amounted to more than eight hours of observation. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the school's staff and the Chair of the Curriculum Committee of the Governing Body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at analyses of pupils' attainment and progress, the school's development planning and documents relating to monitoring, safeguarding and the curriculum. Inspectors analysed inspection questionnaires returned by 157 parents and carers, as well as those completed by 119 pupils from Years 3 to 6, and 15 members of the school staff.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British, and others come from a mixture of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, principally speech, language and communication needs, is below average. Among a range of accreditations, the school has gained the Artsmark Gold and the International Schools (Intermediate) awards, and holds Healthy Schools Gold status. The school has a breakfast club and an after-school club which are managed by the governing body and which formed part of this inspection. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. A new headteacher has been appointed since the school was previously inspected.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. The very large majority of parents and carers would recommend it to another parent or carer. It is not yet an outstanding school because the quality of teaching results in good rather than outstanding achievement by pupils.
- Children in the Reception class attain well and make good progress. In Years 1 and 2, progress is good in reading, writing and mathematics, resulting in above average attainment. In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to make good progress. Attainment is significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. School data indicate that current attainment in all three subjects remains above average.
- The quality of teaching is good, and results in pupils' good progress. However, the tasks set for some pupils are not consistently well matched to their prior attainment and different needs so as to provide good levels of challenge. The pace of learning could sometimes be more brisk. Target setting does not always help pupils to understand the next steps in their learning to the extent that it should.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they display consistently positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are attentive to teachers, and cooperate well with one another. They feel very safe at school. Incidents of bullying or racism are few, and are effectively handled by the school. Pupils' attendance is high.
- Senior leaders and the governing body share an ambitious vision for the school. The headteacher provides a strong lead and other leaders provide good support. Effective procedures to track pupils' progress and to monitor the quality of teaching have led to consistently above-average attainment and have ensured continuing good progress. Good self-evaluation underpins improvement planning. Very effective arrangements for the professional development of staff help to maintain good performance. The curriculum has strengths. It ensures that pupils are well prepared for secondary education and meets their interests well.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that all is good or better, by:
 - providing consistently good challenge to pupils' reasoning and thinking through a better match of questions and tasks to the different groups of pupils in each class
 - making sure that all lessons proceed at a good pace.
- Ensure that pupils develop a clearer understanding of the next steps in their learning in writing and mathematics by sharpening target-setting arrangements so that teachers indicate more precisely to them the improvements necessary to reach higher levels of attainment.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children's attainment on entry to the school varies. It is typically as expected for their age, though lower in reading and calculation. They make good progress so that most meet or exceed expectations for this age group at the end of their Reception Year. They enjoy the activities which are well organised by adults, such as discussing with their teacher the significance of Pentecost, or role-playing the story of Jack and the Beanstalk.

In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress and by the end of Year 2 standards in reading are above average. In a very effective lesson, all pupils in Year 2 made excellent progress as they practised how to retell a story. They responded enthusiastically to the teacher's engaging approach and the lively pace to learning. They undertook enthusiastically and successfully a challenging task which involved the inclusion of a variety of adjectives and similes in role play. In their reading, more hesitant pupils in Years 1 and 2 applied their understanding of phonics (knowledge of sounds and letters) to good effect to sound out correctly less familiar words, such as 'climbed' and 'everyone'. In discussion, they showed good comprehension of their reading. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs progress as well as others because teaching assistants give them effective additional support.

Pupils continue to make good progress so that in recent years their overall attainment, including reading, has consistently been significantly above average by the end of Year 6. School data indicate that in Years 3 to 6, attainment in mathematics and English by current pupils is above average. The progress of all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, is good. In an English lesson about planning and writing a biography, pupils in Years 5 found their tasks motivating and produced good work. This was because the task was appropriately adapted for the different groups. Pupils in Year 6 responded well

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to the high expectations set for them and made rapid progress with the task of producing a piece of writing that involved creating an atmosphere of tension.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers feel that their children make good progress, and inspection evidence justifies their view.

Quality of teaching

The relationships between adults and pupils, and among the pupils, are especially good. This reflects the school's positive ethos, and provides a good basis for classroom learning. School staff set high expectations for pupils' conduct and attentiveness, which promotes their moral and social development well and leads to their evident readiness to learn.

Most teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding. This enables them to plan their teaching logically so that pupils learn sequentially. For instance, in a lesson focusing on the letter combination 'igh' (as in 'high'), one teacher skilfully used the terminology of phonics (knowledge of sounds and letters) well. She asked searching questions which challenged pupils to put into words their understanding of spelling rules, and helped them to link the new learning to their existing knowledge about the spelling of words containing the same sound, as in 'like'. Inspection evidence from discussion with pupils and hearing some read, as well as school and national data about pupils' attainment, also shows that reading is well taught.

Teachers make good use of technology, including interactive whiteboards and visualisers, to support pupils' learning. Where teaching is most effective, the match of questions or tasks to pupils' different prior attainment makes for good levels of challenge for all groups. However, this is not the case in all lessons, with the result that the extent of challenge is not consistently good. Much, but not all, teaching is well paced, and this maintains pupils' interest well. Pupils are, however, good at remaining attentive and on task, even if the pace of learning is not consistently brisk. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

The use of marking to extend pupils' learning has improved. Pupils like the school's policy where red is used to indicate what pupils have done well, and green indicates possible improvements. They appreciate the regular opportunities to respond to teachers' marking and so to improve their skills and understanding. There are instances where target setting is well used to guide pupils towards the next steps in their learning. Elsewhere, however, inconsistencies in the use of target setting mean that it is not always clear to pupils what they need to do to reach a higher level of attainment.

Almost all parents and carers consider that teaching is good. Inspection evidence shows that, although most teaching is good overall, there are ways in which its impact could be improved.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' conduct in classrooms and around the school is good. In lessons, they are very attentive to teachers, and work well with other pupils. They apply themselves diligently to their tasks, and are keen to respond to teachers' questions. Pupils are polite towards adults and are particularly courteous to visitors. Their mature behaviour is testimony to the high expectations of staff about behaviour, and to the school's calm and supportive ethos. In the playground, pupils show cooperative and safe behaviour towards others. Relationships between pupils of different ages are noticeably good, in part because of opportunities for contact through the weekly mixed-age pastoral care sessions. Levels of adult supervision are good. As a result, pupils say that they feel very safe in school, and are confident to speak to an adult where necessary, or to use the worry boxes in each classroom, if ever they feel concerned. The great majority of pupils who took part in the survey judge that behaviour in school and in lessons is good. They say that the school teaches them about risks, for example of drugs and smoking, and they learn about safe use of the internet.

Nearly all parents and carers who completed a questionnaire agree that their children feel safe in school, and judge that standards of behaviour are good. In their observations in lessons and around the school, and in discussion with pupils about typical behaviour, inspectors did not find evidence of poor conduct. Scrutiny of behavioural records and discussions show that behaviour is also good over time. The school has little recourse to exclusion. Pupils say that instances of racism or bullying in any form are rare. Most parents and carers, and all respondents to the staff questionnaire, agree that the school deals effectively with instances of bullying. Pupils judge that the elected roles of 'Happy to Listen monitors' in each class are effective. Attendance has been high for the last two years. The well-organised breakfast and after-school clubs provide a safe and secure environment and are enjoyed by those who attend.

Leadership and management

Leaders' ambitious vision for the school is shown in the thorough self-evaluation leading to well-judged improvement planning. The headteacher provides a strong lead in setting the school's positive ethos, and in the drive for continued improvement. In this, she is well supported by other members of the senior team. Leaders have been particularly successful in their engagement of parents and carers as is evident from the high rate of positive responses to the survey, and the many positive comments, such as the parent who judged that the school had 'gone from strength to strength' and another who described it as, 'a wonderful place to grow and learn'.

The governing body has a good understanding of the school's many strengths and few weaknesses, and provides appropriate challenge for improvement. The headteacher has introduced greater accountability through regular tracking and

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review of all pupils' progress, leading to additional support where necessary. In this way, the school promotes equality of opportunity. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Middle leaders have clear responsibilities, and have a positive impact in evaluating provision and pupils' outcomes. Members of staff are appreciative of the school's provision for their professional development, which one characterised as 'exceptionally supportive'. There is evidence of its impact in the improvements seen in teaching.

The school has developed a broad and balanced curriculum that pupils describe as 'fun', because it meets their interests, and also prepares them well for secondary education. Good contributions are made by specialist teaching, for example of French, and by specialist coaching in tennis. The Christian foundation leads to good opportunities for pupils' spiritual development, and for reflection in the school's Prayer Area, and in the display space devoted to religious education in each classroom. The school fosters pupils' understanding of global issues, for example through the social justice committee of the school council. Good cross-curricular links between subjects help to make learning meaningful. For instance, displays show the linkage between literacy, art and history. However, the opportunities for pupils to practise numeracy skills in other subjects are less well developed. The curriculum is enhanced by visits, for example to the Butser Hill Iron Age site, and by specialist events such as International Week and Enterprise Week. Extra-curricular provision extends pupils' cultural understanding well, and includes a good range of sports, peripatetic tuition in keyboard, strings, flute and guitar, activities such as Spanish, and gardening in the dedicated area of the spacious grounds.

The school's capacity to improve is demonstrated by improvements which ensure consistently above-average attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 and by pupils' good progress. Pupils' high attendance, good behaviour and readiness to learn attest to the effective impact of the leadership. Middle leaders play positive roles. Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and very effective. Action has successfully been undertaken to improve the impact of marking, and to ensure effective evaluation of provision.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, Brighton BN1 6UT

Many thanks to you all for your help during the inspection. We enjoyed seeing you in your classrooms, talking to you at playtimes and lunchtimes, and hearing some of you read. We particularly thank those of you who filled in the pupils' questionnaire and those who came for a discussion with an inspector. The inspection judgement is that you go to a good school.

These are the main things that we found out about your school.

- You have very good relationships with teachers and other adults.
- Your behaviour at school is good; you listen attentively and work well with others.
- You feel very safe in school.
- Your attendance is high.
- The teaching and the curriculum in your school are good.
- The headteacher and the other leaders know what to do to continue to improve your school.
- The great majority of your parents and carers would recommend the school to others.
- Your attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 is significantly above average, and your progress across the school is good.

We have asked the headteacher and the governing body to make the school even better by doing two things.

- Increase the amount of good and better teaching by ensuring that questions asked and tasks set are suitably challenging for all of you, and that the pace of learning is consistently good in all lessons.
- Help you to understand more clearly what you need to do to improve your work through better use of target setting.

You can help by continuing to work hard so that the school can improve even more. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Grove
Lead inspector

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