

St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134318
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	341456
Inspection dates	4–5 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Alison Cartlidge

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	329
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Brandon
Headteacher	Maxine Clewlow
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 May 2007
School address	Tewkesbury Lane Milton Keynes MK10 9PH
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors saw 12 teachers at work in 20 lessons. They held meetings with governors, parents, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, information on pupils' progress, safeguarding and other documents. Questionnaires from 111 parents and carers and 122 pupils were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the learning and progress of more able pupils
- the evenness of teaching and learning across the school
- the impact of all leaders on improving provision and progress
- how well care, guidance and support strengthen pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Information about the school

The school opened in 2005 and has been increasing in size year- on- year. The school has a highly mobile population, with new pupils constantly joining the school or leaving to return to their countries of origin. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has a low number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most, but not all, of these pupils have speech and language or learning difficulties. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic minority backgrounds, with the largest group coming from Black African heritage. The proportion of pupils learning to speak English as an additional language is high, with about a quarter of these pupils being at the early stages of speaking English. The main home languages spoken are Akan/Twi-Fante, Polish and Shona. The school has received several awards, including the Healthy School Award. The headteacher joined the school in April 2010.

The after-school club is run by an external provider and was not part of this inspection.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Pupils settle quickly into this successful school and appreciate its exceptionally strong community spirit. The very thorough system for assessing pupils' individual needs enables members of staff to ensure that there is no discrimination and that all members of the constantly changing school population are supported equally well. Outstanding care, guidance and support enable pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds to work and play together harmoniously and to flourish academically. Pupils were right when they told inspectors: 'This is a school that really does care for you'. Children make a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where speaking and listening skills are especially well promoted. In Years 1 to 6, teachers provide interesting activities, enabling pupils to make good progress at the same time as enjoying school. As one pupil put it: 'You get to learn and there are lots of fun events in school, including work.' During whole-class activities, there are occasions when not all pupils are fully involved, leading to a slight drop in their attentiveness. Pupils are very friendly and polite. They behave well and develop good personal skills. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and equips them very well for life in a culturally diverse community.

By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is broadly average. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds achieve well, given their starting points. Pupils learn quickly in most lessons, although teaching is satisfactory in a few. Occasionally teachers across the school do not expect enough from a few pupils who could potentially be working at higher levels. When this happens, the learning of these pupils is slower than it could be. In addition, teachers do not consistently use marking to show pupils how to do even better next time or give them enough opportunity to follow up advice.

There are good procedures for self-evaluation that enable the headteacher and senior managers to know what needs to be done next to improve the school further. Areas identified for development are tackled swiftly, ensuring that all groups of pupils, including those learning English as an additional language, achieve well and want to learn. Leaders' adaptability in meeting the school's constantly changing needs demonstrates a good capacity to continue improving.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the challenge for a few pupils so that they are consistently working above age expected levels across the school.
- Improve teaching so that it is always good or better in all year groups by:

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- making sure that all pupils are involved throughout lessons
- ensuring that pupils are always given advice on how to improve their work and that they are allowed time to respond to suggestions made.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The pupils in each year group are constantly changing, but despite this, pupils from different ethnic minority backgrounds, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and learn quickly in most lessons. Pupils enjoy working together. For example, in a literacy lesson in Year 5, pupils were enthusiastic about discussing and labelling objects to help plan a story. Information and communication technology (ICT) supports learning well. In Year 1, pupils’ ideas about settings and characters were shared well on the interactive whiteboard. Pupils of all abilities generally achieve well during their time at the school and attainment is broadly average by the time they leave. In a few lessons, pupils with the potential to work at the higher levels do not make as much progress as they could when tasks lack challenge. Pupils’ sound literacy and numeracy skills and good ICT and personal development prepare them well for the next stage of education and later life.

Most pupils feel safe at school and behave well. They show their enjoyment of school by attending regularly. They take responsibility for various tasks around the school. For example, the school councillors formed the ‘Bernadette Buddies’ scheme, where older pupils help younger ones to play games at playtime.

Pupils have excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. They respect one another and reflect on the world around them during their visits to ‘forest school’. They are keen to raise funds for good causes. Pupils support each other well and empathise with those who are finding life challenging. Pupils regularly demonstrate why the school has achieved the Healthy School Award. They greatly enjoy taking part in physical activities such as ‘activate’ and mostly choose healthy options for their packed lunches.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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

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The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers are positive and encouraging, ensuring that behaviour is managed well and learning is enhanced. Tasks are interesting and match the needs of most pupils well, resulting in enthusiastic learners. Resources, including ICT, are used well to make learning meaningful. For example, in Year 3, pupils used laptops to help draft formal letters. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for small groups of pupils, including those with English as an additional language. Occasionally when working together as a class, there is a slight drop in pace because some pupils are not actively involved in the learning.

Links between subjects are being developed well and pupils appreciate the broad range of experiences provided. Visits are linked in with class topics, and music and 'forest school' are especially well promoted. These activities contribute well to the pupils' personal development and enjoyment of school. The curriculum is being fine-tuned so that it provides constant challenge for the potentially more able pupils. Members of staff provide excellent care and support for all pupils, particularly in promoting their spiritual development. Exceptionally well-organised care ensures that the ever-changing population of pupils is welcomed and supported. Pupils' various languages and cultures are often referred to and celebrated. Assessment procedures are firmly in place and are used to set individual targets. Work is frequently marked but teachers do not always give pupils enough time to reflect and act on advice given.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders are exceptionally good at promoting equal opportunities. This is at the heart of the school’s work. As a result any form of discrimination is eliminated. Leaders effectively ensure that the continual expansion of the school and the frequent influx of pupils from the local area and abroad is managed well. There is a clear shared understanding of what works well and what needs to be developed next. Information on pupils’ progress, together with whole-school evaluation, is used effectively to embed ambition and to drive improvement. Teaching and learning are monitored well by various leaders and good individual support is given to help teachers extend their skills. The school is not yet doing enough to share good practice so that teaching is consistently good.

Governors are well informed and involved in driving the school forward. They are increasing their impact now that the school is more established by ‘digging deeper’ in their questioning. At the time of the inspection, the school’s safeguarding arrangements were found to be good. Pupils are kept safe and report that they feel safe. There are detailed plans to make these arrangements even better, for example by helping pupils to have a better understanding of comparative risks. Leaders have close relationships with external agencies, parents and carers, enabling them to provide excellent support for all pupils, including those who are finding life difficult. The school promotes community cohesion well. Pupils from a wide range of cultural backgrounds are nurtured well. There are harmonious relationships because all pupils feel valued. The school has suitable plans to extend pupils’ understanding further by increasing links with schools in contrasting locations.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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

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Early Years Foundation Stage

The majority of children are working below the expected levels for their age when they join the school. They make good progress in all areas of learning and attainment is broadly average by the time they enter Year 1. Children benefit from particularly good opportunities to develop speaking and listening, especially when they are working on tasks they have chosen for themselves. For example, a group of children were keen to name model animals they might see during their forthcoming Safari Park visit and another group of children playing with animals in a tray of ice were keen to explain why polar bears can cope with the cold. Good support from all members of staff enable children, including those with English as an additional language, to gain confidence in talking about their experiences. Close relationships between staff and parents enable children to settle quickly into class routines. Members of staff work together well with the children to plan an interesting and varied curriculum, particularly indoors. Leaders are working well to expand purposeful outdoor activities so that they are just as comprehensive as those provided indoors. Assessment arrangements are thorough and children enjoy reflecting on their learning by looking through their 'learning journals'. Children are well behaved and work together happily with those from other cultures. Leaders are working on sharpening lesson plans to provide constant challenge for the more able children.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a high response to the parents' and carers' questionnaire. Most parents and carers are very pleased with the work of the school. They are particularly pleased that their children are happy and are kept safe. A few parents and carers who replied to the Ofsted questionnaire expressed concerns over their children's progress and the information they receive on this, and how well the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team agrees with parents and carers that pupils are safe and happy. A very few instances of unacceptable behaviour were dealt with well during the inspection. Leaders have advanced plans to extend communications with parents and carers so that they have more information and are consulted more fully. They already provide an open invitation to parents and carers to discuss any concerns and provide information on the school website.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 111 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 329 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	77	69	31	28	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	61	55	48	43	1	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	50	45	50	45	10	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	41	54	49	10	9	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	51	46	49	44	8	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	49	44	57	51	5	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	45	53	48	4	4	2	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	30	27	56	50	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	32	60	54	6	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	23	68	61	8	7	5	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	22	71	64	10	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	48	43	48	43	7	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	58	52	43	39	7	6	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



6 May 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, Milton Keynes
MK10 9PH**

Thank you for being so helpful during our visit. We are pleased that you enjoy coming to this good school.

These are the best things about your school

- You learn quickly and enjoy school.
- You are right when you tell us that you have 'kind, caring teachers'.
- You behave well and are polite and friendly.
- You are very good at respecting the needs of others and are considerate towards new pupils at your school.
- Your headteacher and other leaders know what needs to be done to make the school even better.

These are the things we have asked your school to do next to make it even better

Your headteacher and staff know that there is still work to be done to make the school even better. We have suggested two things that we think will help.

- Increase the challenge for those of you who find work easy, so that you can do even better.
- Make sure that you are all involved throughout lessons, given advice on how to improve your work and are allowed time to read what the teachers suggest you need to do next.

Thank you once again for talking with us about your school and showing us your work. We were very impressed with the way you work and play together so well. You could help your teachers further by making sure you always take notice of their advice on how to do better work next time.

Yours sincerely

Alison Cartlidge
Lead inspector

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