

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, Lancaster

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119584
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379845
Inspection dates	23–24 February 2012
Lead inspector	James Kidd

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	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lucia Macari
Headteacher	Gerard McKevitt
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2006
School address	Bowerham Road Lancaster LA1 4HT
Telephone number	01524 63934
Fax number	01524 63934
Email address	head@st-bernadettes.lancs.sch.uk



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Introduction

Inspection team

James Kidd

Michael Blaylock

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 15 lessons or part-lessons, taught by nine members of staff. Meetings were held with parents, three groups of pupils, three members of the governing body, support staff, subject coordinators and the senior leadership team. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' workbooks, internal and external pupil progress data, school improvement planning and documentation in relation to attendance, safeguarding and child protection. Inspectors also analysed 93 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as those completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school, but its intake is increasing. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free schools is well below average. The percentage of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below that usually found. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there is a below average percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language. St Bernadette's is a nationally-recognised Healthy School and holds Eco School (Bronze) status. It is also a Lead Assessment School for the local authority and holds the Learning Excellence Award for its creative curriculum and for transition arrangements from reception to Key Stage 1. The school exceeded the government floor standard in 2011, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

The St Bernadette's Out of School Care Club shares the school site but is not administered by the governing body. It is, therefore, subject to a separate inspection and receives a separate report which is available on the Ofsted website.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- This is an outstanding school, in which continuous improvement in all aspects of its life is the order of the day. There are high levels of teamwork amongst staff and a clear, shared vision for how the school is to move forward.
- The results for the Year 6 cohort in 2011 were the highest in the school's history and maintained the high levels of attainment noted over the past six years. This represents outstanding achievement across the school, and for all groups of pupils, given their broadly expected age-related skills on entry to the Reception class.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding and is characterised by curriculum planning, which provides pupils with activities which meet their learning needs closely and which challenge them to do their best. Teachers' questioning is sophisticated, encourages pupils to think deeply about the subject-matter and requires them to justify their answers with extended comment.
- Pupils comment that they feel very safe in school and that their teachers and teaching assistants are always there for them when they need help and advice. They have a profound understanding of the dangers of bullying in all its forms and members of the school council have been instrumental in establishing 'friendship stops' in the playground and also the 'Safety Charter', on display in all areas of the school. Attendance is continuously high and pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school site.
- The exceptional impact of the perceptive headteacher and senior team is clear: teaching is managed expertly and the creative curriculum now has an outstanding impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Self-evaluation is accurate and leaders are aware that, if pupils' achievement is to remain high, the further development of the leadership skills of subject coordinators, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics, is of the essence.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the leadership skills of subject coordinators in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils are most enthusiastic about their learning and are both delighted and proud to show visitors their work. They take care over their assignments and are not afraid to redraft their work if they do not believe it is good enough; their handwriting and presentation are very impressive indeed. They enjoy learning collaboratively in pairs and in groups and they are pleased when their classmates succeed, often bursting into spontaneous applause when an answer in class is particularly well expressed. Pupils in a Year 4/5 literacy class, for example, were delighted when a pupil read aloud a piece of her writing which included, 'Tumbling deserts, breathtaking lagoons, mountains cascading down in search of the glistening deep, blue sea.'

Pupils' reading skills at the end of Key Stage 1 are well above average and they are high by the end of Year 6. Pupils in all years demonstrate impressive levels of fluency, express reported speech like actors and actresses and enjoy reading independently and for pleasure. Children in the Reception class enjoy their phonics sessions and they pronounce letters and combine them to pronounce words with a skill which belies their years. Indeed, after just one year in school, Reception children enter Year 1 with skills above those expected for their age, demonstrating outstanding progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Achievement in all years is outstanding and parents and carers are accurate in their positive views on the progress and attainment of their children. Children enter the Reception class with skills which are broadly in line with those expected nationally. By the time they leave school, pupils' attainment in both English and mathematics is high and significant numbers of pupils continue to reach the higher National Curriculum Level 5 in both subjects. Scrutiny of pupils' work in books, lesson observations and the school's own tracking documentation demonstrate that pupils currently in school are on track to maintain and possibly exceed these high levels of attainment. Close and accurate tracking of the performance of individuals and groups leads to very well focused intervention by teaching assistants. As a consequence, gaps in the performance of different groups, those with English as an additional language and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, for example, are narrowing compared to all pupils nationally.

Quality of teaching

Strong relationships between pupils and between pupils and the adults who work with them, and exceptional curriculum planning to provide activities which meet the learning needs of pupils very closely are just two elements of teaching. Its quality is outstanding across the school. Indeed, during the inspection, outstanding teaching was seen in each class. Teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve and questioning in class is of a high order, requiring pupils to think deeply about the topics they are studying and to give detailed reasons for their answers. Pupils are, therefore, often surprised at what they

can do and this motivates them to even higher levels of attainment. They make an exceptional contribution to their own learning as a result. Challenge is realistic for all groups of pupils and excellent, sensitive support from the talented team of teaching assistants ensures that individuals who are experiencing difficulty are able to take full advantage of what the lessons have to offer. Almost all parents and carers who returned questionnaires were positive, and accurate, about the quality of teaching their children receive

Lessons are hives of activity, for example, when pupils in Year 6 worked in pairs to explore the attitudes to money of different characters in Frank Cottrell Boyce's *'Millions'*. Similarly, children in the Reception class collaborate exceptionally well with their peers when constructing using wood and when experimenting with paints to decide what happens when different colours are mixed together.

Teaching has an outstanding impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils write poems and play scripts, thoroughly enjoy drama and music and recommend new books to their peers, after writing reviews on their latest reads. Their moral and social development is promoted exceptionally well by the many opportunities they have in class to work in pairs and in groups.

Assessment is thorough, comprehensive and unerringly accurate, enabling teachers to identify rapidly when any individual is falling behind. As members of a local authority Lead Assessment School, teachers are now embedding assessment practice normally in place only in English and mathematics, into all subjects of the curriculum. Marking is exemplary and provides pupils with focused advice on how they can improve their work. Moreover, pupils have plentiful opportunities to assess their own performance and that of their peers; they take, therefore, exceptional responsibility for their own progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Almost all parents and carers who returned the questionnaires believe that the school keeps their children very safe and, in their words, 'Is a warm, caring, supportive and welcoming setting in which our children are nurtured as valued individuals.' Pupils are of the same view and add that their safety is assured not only by teachers and teaching assistants, but also by their peers, who are always concerned to make sure that everyone is happy. Pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable speak highly of the 'Chill Out Zone' and comment, 'Our school teaches us to be kind to everyone.' Pupils also value the visits from the Police and fire service, which emphasise the importance of personal safety, of how to recognise danger and of how to keep themselves secure. They are fully aware of the dangers of using the Internet and point out the 'Internet Rules OK!' display in the computer room. In the Reception class, children, at such an early age, are taught to respect each other's feelings and they share and play happily together as a result. Indeed, pupils' behaviour in all areas of the school is outstanding and their engagement in lessons is excellent. Attendance is high and pupils are invariably punctual to school.

Pupils are proactive in their support for others and also in their work to highlight the dangers of bullying and to prevent it occurring. They have an excellent awareness of the many different forms bullying can take and produce posters entitled 'Verbal bullying: stop and think – words can hurt!' Members of the school council also advise their constituents on the evils of bullying and comment, 'Racist or homophobic behaviour is not tolerated here.' Pupils in all years are adamant that bullying is very rare in school and that both staff and

pupils take it seriously if it occurs. For example, pupils value the regular anti-bullying weeks and say that the activities teach them about why such behaviour should never happen.

Parents and carers speak positively of how effectively the school develops the confidence, self-esteem and emotional well-being of their children. For example, small group and one-to-one sessions delivered by very well informed teaching assistants, provide outstanding support to promote both personal and academic development.

Leadership and management

Staff of all levels of experience and responsibility express their high regard for the headteacher and senior leaders who, they say, 'Lead by example and listen to what we have to say. We are a team and we feel privileged to work here.' Honest and accurate self-evaluation and subsequent action plans designed to enhance the learning experiences of the whole school community have ensured significant improvements since the previous inspection and the maintenance of high attainment. Furthermore, as a result of regular lesson observations, often undertaken by senior leaders in conjunction with members of the governing body, and detailed feedback on classroom performance, teaching is now outstanding. The school does not rest on its laurels, however, and continues to emphasise the importance of professional development as the key to ongoing improvement. The subject coordinators for English and mathematics lead their subjects very well but the role is less well developed in other subjects. The governing body is exceptionally well informed and provides high levels of support and challenge for the school leadership. The school has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

The creative curriculum is popular among pupils. It is broad and balanced and parents and carers are accurate in their view that it helps to develop their children's skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. It has an outstanding impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils write their own newspapers, 'Local Girl Finds Roman Pot at Conder Green' being the headline in one. In addition, they recognise the damage which humans have done to the planet and compose their own prayers with the words, 'We have not taken care of our planet we have ruined our world please help the endangered animals survive in the habitat we have taken away from them.....'

The school promotes equality of opportunity exceptionally well and rejects discrimination in all its forms. Safeguarding and child protection procedures and practice are outstanding, are recognised as such by pupils, parents and carers and fully meet national requirements.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	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 2010 to 31 August 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.
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.
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 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, Lancaster, Lancaster, LA1 4HT

Thank you for your warm welcome when we came to inspect your school last week. We are particularly grateful to those of you who came to talk to us on Thursday and on Friday. We enjoyed talking to you and found your comments most helpful. We would now like to tell you what we think about your school.

St Bernadette's is an outstanding school. You receive excellent teaching, work very hard and the standards you reach in English and mathematics are high. Your reading is very impressive and many of you read for pleasure at home. You behave exceptionally well too and you enjoy looking after your classmates and also the younger children in Reception and in Key Stage 1. Those of you who are school councillors have so many ideas about how to make sure your school keeps on improving. For example, their suggestions about the 'Friendship Stops' and the 'Safety Charter' were very effective and you feel very happy and safe in school as a result. You speak highly of the grown-ups, too, and you are quite right when you say that they are always there for you when you are feeling unhappy. You know that bullying is wrong and you have an excellent understanding of all the different forms bullying can take. You say that bullying is very rare indeed and that the school always takes it seriously if it occurs.

Your headteacher and all the staff are always trying to make sure that St Bernadette's gets better and better. We would like to help them in this and so we have asked them to continue to develop the leadership skills of the teachers who have responsibilities for different subjects.

Thank you again for being so polite and so kind to us and well done on your excellent attendance.

Yours sincerely

James Kidd
Lead inspector

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