

St Bede's Catholic Primary School, Weaverham

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111341
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	310571
Inspection date	11 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Diane Auton

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 on roll	
School	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Burgess
Headteacher	Mrs E Livesey
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2004
School address	Keepers Lane Weaverham Northwich Cheshire CW8 3BY
Telephone number	01606 852149
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards and achievement in the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2 in the current year; the impact of teaching and the curriculum on progress and standards, with particular focus on the more able pupils' writing in Key Stage 1 and the progress throughout the school of the less able pupils; the impact of leadership and management on improving the school's effectiveness, with particular focus on the more able pupils' writing, the less able pupils' general progress and the management of transition between the key stages. Evidence was gathered from: national published assessment data; the school's self-evaluation, assessment records, policies and minutes; observation of the school at work, including lessons; discussions with governors, members of staff and pupils; the questionnaires returned by parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector 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

This small school serves its parish and the surrounding area. Its pupils come from a range of backgrounds, although general socio-economic indicators are above average. The proportion entitled to free school meals is very low. A very small number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with none at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is smaller than found in most other schools. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are currently taught in three mixed-age classes, based on age bands. The school building is small and numbers on roll are scheduled to rise in the coming school year.

The school holds the Inclusion Quality Mark, the Healthy Schools Award, the Investors in Children Effective Early Learning Quality Mark for the Foundation Stage, the Artsmark (Silver) and the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding school enjoys the full and deserved support of parents. Children join the Reception class with skills that are broadly typical for their age; they go on to make excellent progress throughout the school and high standards are consistently achieved at the end of Year 6. This impressive academic achievement is matched by pupils' outstanding personal development. Parents place high value on this, commenting, for example, that the school 'expands its pupils' horizons' and provides them with 'excellent opportunities to develop a sense of responsibility'.

In 2007, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were well above average in all subjects; in Key Stage 1 they were above average in reading and mathematics and broadly average in writing. As the result of highly focused teaching methods introduced during the current year, standards in writing have begun to rise. Although it is too early to judge the full impact of the new initiatives through test results, the current work of pupils across the ability range in Key Stage 1 provides very good early evidence of improving progress and standards in writing. Across the school, the less able pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well in relation to their abilities and starting points, in response to the good provision the school makes for them. In the current year, high overall standards have been successfully sustained across the classes in Key Stages 1 and 2.

These very positive outcomes for pupils are the result of a combination of important factors: teaching is excellent throughout the school; the curriculum matches pupils' needs and interests extremely well; high quality pastoral care helps them to feel secure and ready to learn; generally effective academic guidance enables them to move their learning forward effectively. Pupils say they find their learning interesting and fun. This is clearly evident in lessons, where they quickly become engaged and absorbed in their activities. They respond very positively to opportunities to collaborate and develop ideas with a partner or in teams, and these experiences help them to grow in confidence as learners. The pace of learning is brisk, and teachers balance the elements of challenge and support in lessons very well. Their planning is based on very careful assessment and tracking of progress, and a thorough awareness of pupils' individual learning needs. Skilled teaching assistants, working in partnership with class teachers, make a valuable contribution to pupils' successful learning. Pupils know and understand their individual learning and personal targets because they help to draw them up and review them regularly in discussion with their teacher. They are given good quality guidance in lessons and their work is marked supportively, often with helpful advice on how to improve it. They are not always told how well they have succeeded in meeting the objectives of the lesson and this is an inconsistency in a generally very effective area of provision.

Pupils' excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning mean that lessons run smoothly and playtimes are happy. Their spiritual, moral and social development is nurtured well. They have a growing awareness and understanding of world faiths and cultures. The school's strong emphasis on praise and valuing every individual ensures that pupils grow in confidence and form very good relationships with adults and with each other. Transition between Key Stages 1 and 2 is managed smoothly; the school's recent review of its practice has ensured that effective curriculum continuity supports pupils well at transition from the Reception class into Year 1. Procedures are in place to promote child protection and health and safety. Pupils have a good awareness of healthy lifestyle issues and the importance of being physically active for good health. The school encourages them to eat and drink healthily. The before-and-after-school

club is popular, as is the very good range of sporting and performing arts clubs provided for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. A well designed programme of visits and visitors enriches the curriculum. Residential trips are provided for pupils in Key Stage 2, including regular and reciprocated visits to meet pupils from the school's partner school in Italy. French is taught throughout the school and pupils also have opportunities to learn Italian during Key Stage 2. Pupils readily take on responsibility and are keen to make a contribution to the school community, for example by acting as school councillors, road safety officers and recycling officers and by taking charge of setting up audio-visual equipment for assemblies. They also take part in a range of business and enterprise activities, developed through the school's good links with the nearby high school and with higher education providers. The skills they develop in school prepare them very well for the future.

Excellent leadership and management ensure that the school runs very effectively. The clear-sighted headteacher, supported by well informed and effective governors, leads a strong team, united in its resolve to provide the best possible outcomes for pupils. All staff contribute to planning for continuous school improvement. Challenging whole-school targets are set, based on accurate information gained from regular and rigorous monitoring and evaluation. The school's capacity for continued improvement is excellent.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children get off to an excellent start in the Reception class. When they enter school, most children have skills that are typical for their age. Very careful planning of creative and interesting activities, which take account of children's different needs, leads to rapid learning. The learning environment, both indoors and in the outdoor area, supports the children's progress well. They have fun and are enabled to make choices and decisions in their learning activities. Because teaching is excellent, children make excellent progress, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development, their physical and creative development, and their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Newly introduced methods to support early learning of sounds and letters are having a very positive impact and children are eager to practise their new skills in their play activities. Continuous close checks on individual progress celebrate the milestones achieved by the children. As a result, most achieve the expected learning goals for their age and many far exceed them by the start of Year 1. Children have excellent relationships with each other and with the adults in the class. Their welfare is promoted very well, based on very good links with parents and very effective leadership and management.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that marking explains to pupils how well the learning objectives for the lesson or activity have been met.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

Inspection of St Bede's Catholic Primary School, Weaverham, Northwich, CW8 3BY

Thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school. As you know, I came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning. I discovered that St Bede's is an outstanding school and that you are receiving an excellent standard of education. These are some of the outstanding features of the school:

- standards are very high
- the excellent Foundation Stage gets your learning off to a great start
- the school is extremely well led and managed
- your behaviour is excellent, you work hard and try your best - well done, all of you, keep up the good work!
- teaching and the curriculum are both excellent and this is what makes your lessons so interesting and enables you to do so well - well done, teachers!
- the grown-ups in school look after you very well.

I've asked the headteacher and the staff to ensure that marking in your books always tells you how well you've done in achieving the learning objective in your lessons, as I think this will help you to carry on doing well. I hope you'll all continue to be happy learners.

With my best wishes for the future.