

# Inspection of a good school: St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Hobmoor Road, Yardley, Birmingham, West Midlands B25 8QL

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Inspection dates:

11 and 12 January 2023

## Outcome

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Staff and pupils are proud to be part of this forward-looking and hard-working school community. Pupils talk excitedly about their school and look forward to attending each day. Staff and pupils model the school values of 'respect, kindness, resilience and unity' at every turn. Together, everyone contributes enthusiastically to a culture founded on mutual respect and care. Pupils are safe at school. If bullying should happen, adults resolve any issues.

Leaders want the very best for each pupil and set high standards. They have recognised the challenges of the pandemic and continue to support all pupils. To do this, leaders have brought everyone together to restate and reaffirm their high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Consequently, pupils behave well and are eager to learn. Staff celebrate pupils' hard work and commitment, and pupils strive to earn their 'totally trusted' badges. One parent typically summed this up by saying, 'The teachers are extremely professional, caring and have all the children's interests at the core of everything they do'.

The curriculum extends well beyond the classroom. Pupils experience a range of activities that build their awareness of the wider world. These include international week, vocational day and visits to the Houses of Parliament to learn about democracy.

## What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are ambitious for pupils. They do not rest on their laurels. Instead, they work together to improve things further. Staff reflect this ambition. They know that leaders value their efforts and care about their well-being. Leaders and governors listen to staff and are mindful of their workload, for instance by giving staff dedicated time to plan lessons together. This collegiate approach ultimately benefits pupils, as all work together with a common purpose.

Leaders have put reading at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils begin to learn to read in their Nursery Year. This builds through Reception as children develop their phonic

knowledge. Leaders have made sure that staff are experts in teaching reading. Teachers provide pupils with books that match the sounds they have learned. This helps to develop pupils' reading fluency and accuracy. Leaders check pupils' learning to identify pupils who have fallen behind with their reading. Pupils get effective support from staff and trained volunteers to help them catch up. Beyond this, leaders have fostered pupils' love of reading. For instance, sending home 'story book bags' with hot chocolate so that parents and children can huddle around a good book. Pupils read a range of fiction, poetry and non-fiction texts that challenge their thinking and broaden their horizons.

Leaders continue to develop a demanding curriculum. Pupils work towards ambitious objectives in all subjects, including in mathematics. In the strongest areas, leaders have detailed the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn. Teachers then use their strong subject knowledge to adapt resources to help pupils learn this content well. They check pupils' learning regularly in a variety of ways, for instance using a system of 'flashbacks' at the start of lessons. However, in some years and some foundation subjects, there is further work to do. This is because the curriculum does not set out the detailed knowledge that pupils will need to draw on in their future learning. This means that teachers do not always know exactly what pupils have previously learned.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They have made significant changes to help identify and support pupils with SEND, for instance reviewing support plans to ensure that targets set meet pupils' needs and providing teacher training. Leaders listen to parents and act on their feedback. Pupils with SEND have benefited considerably from these changes. Teachers use information about pupils to provide effective support in lessons. However, provision for a small number of pupils with more complex needs is still being developed. Leaders recognise this and have robust plans in place.

Children enjoy their time in the early years. They listen attentively and respond to adults positively. Leaders have implemented an effective new Reception curriculum. A new Nursery curriculum is under construction. This curriculum sets out the intended learning for each activity that children undertake. However, teachers do not always check children's learning effectively. This means that they do not always know if pupils have learned what was planned.

Leaders promote pupils' wider development in a multitude of ways. Pupils participate in an array of activities, from raising money for a nominated charity to taking part in school productions. Pupils willingly take on leadership roles. The range of clubs, trips and visits is extensive. Pupils talk avidly about the residential trips, from Paris in Year 6 to camping in St David's in Year 5. Leaders also enhance pupils' social and cultural development through the academic curriculum. For example, pupils learn about equality by studying female scientists who overcame historical cultural barriers. This outward facing ethos permeates through the whole school.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff do their utmost to safeguard pupils. Leaders have ensured that staff and governors are trained well. This means that they are alert to the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff understand the local safeguarding issues that could affect pupils. They know how to report concerns and do this swiftly. Leaders are proactive in ensuring that pupils and families get the help they need. They make timely referrals to other agencies. Pupils learn about a range of relevant safeguarding risks. This includes how to stay safe online.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not defined in sufficient detail the most important new knowledge pupils need to learn. In these subjects, it is too often left to teachers to determine the specific knowledge that pupils need to acquire. As a result, in these areas, teachers do not have a secure understanding of what pupils have learned before and what will come next. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum provides teachers in each subject with a clear, shared and detailed understanding of the important building blocks of knowledge that pupils need to draw on in their future learning.
- Leaders have not fully ensured that the curriculum for a small number of pupils with SEND is appropriately adapted and expertly delivered. This means that the specific complex needs of these pupils are not being fully met. Leaders should ensure that they action their detailed and comprehensive plans so that all pupils with SEND benefit from an ambitious curriculum that is implemented effectively.
- Leaders have not ensured that all early years staff accurately gauge children's learning as they participate in the planned activities throughout the day. As a result, some adults are not able to identify and address emerging gaps in children's learning in some areas of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that staff check children's learning in the early years precisely and accurately so that they know how well children have understood the intended curriculum.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2018.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## **Further information**

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103460
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10257018
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	650
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	John Lenihan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Angela Cowings
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stberns.co.uk">www.stberns.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10 and 11 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school has a Catholic ethos.
- The school's last section 48 inspection was in March 2018. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors spoke with members of the local governing body, representatives from the local authority and a representative from the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in art and design, modern foreign languages and science.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's extra-curricular activities with leaders.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. They took account of responses to a staff survey, as well as Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to behaviour, bullying and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with safeguarding leaders.

### **Inspection team**

Ian Tustian, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Emma Titchener

His Majesty's Inspector

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