



St Berteline's Church of England Primary

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 111383
Local Authority Halton
Inspection number 288943
Inspection dates 13–14 December 2006
Reporting inspector Sarah Drake

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of School	Primary	School address	Norton Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Norton
Age range of pupils	4–11		Runcorn
			Cheshire
			WA7 6QN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01928 719847
Number on roll	293	Fax number	01928 711336
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Rev. Stephen Artus
Date of previous school inspection	May 2002	Headteacher	Mrs Julie Barron

Age group	Inspection date(s)	Inspection no.
4–11	13–14 December 2006	288943

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is slightly larger than average. It serves an area of predominantly owner-occupied housing that has grown up around it over the past twenty years. The overwhelming majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A slightly smaller proportion than average has learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need. The school is part of the local Education Action Zone (EAZ) and involved in the Primary Leadership Programme – Sustaining Success (PLP). It holds the Halton Healthy Schools Standard and was Halton Sports Partnership Primary School of the Year in 2006. The headteacher took up her post in January 2006 on the retirement of the previous long-standing headteacher. The deputy headteacher was appointed in March 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an exceptional and happy school that is greatly loved by its pupils, parents and staff. As one parent commented, 'It is more than a school, it's the hub of the community.' It provides its pupils with an outstanding, all round education, at the end of which they leave as mature young people with a positive outlook and very high academic standards. Such standards have been sustained over many years because all pupils make excellent progress during their time at 'St Bert's'. The school operates as a vibrant community in which every member is valued, encouraged and supported to reach their potential. Pupils' outstanding personal development is a product of the great commitment that each staff member shows to them as individuals and the imaginative curriculum that caters exceptionally well for their different interests and needs. In the words of a parent, 'They each get a chance to shine because their talents are recognised.' Strong relationships among all members of the school, and pupils' excellent behaviour are the foundation on which their high academic standards are built. Outstanding teaching ensures that pupils develop a thirst for learning and the self-confidence to understand that, if they work hard, they will succeed.

Because of the rich environment in which they work and play, pupils greatly enjoy school. Their mature independence and awareness of others mean that they act safely and show respect for the world around them. Their interest in sport and knowledge of how food affects their bodies, ensure that they live healthy lives. The whole essence of the school is one of teamwork so pupils develop a real sense of the value and joy to be gained from contributing to the community. Strong collaborative skills, high academic standards and an understanding that work can be fun, prepare them well for their future lives.

Good leadership and management have successfully guided the school through its recent period of change. All staff members have a strong vision of the quality of education they hope to provide for pupils, and immense dedication to ensuring that the school sustains its excellent all round standards. However, much evaluation, monitoring and future planning are currently too informal. The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are good, rather than outstanding as judged by the school, because the children here do not have suitable access to an outside area in which to develop their skills. The school benefits from its many partnerships, particularly those with parents and grandparents which lead to many willing voluntary helpers who enhance the provision for pupils and contribute strongly to the sense of community. The school knows itself well, provides excellent value for money and has good capacity to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Devise systems for future planning so that there is a clear framework for checking the school's work and on which to base priorities and judge progress.
- Create a secure outside area so that children in the Foundation Stage can benefit from a full outdoor curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

On entry to the school, children's skills are broadly average. They make good progress in their Reception year so that the great majority enter Year 1 with the expected skills for their age and many exceed these, especially in mathematical development. Year 6 pupils reach overall standards that are, on average, three terms in advance of those expected for their age. The school is amongst the highest achieving in the country. Pupils of all abilities make exceptionally good progress, particularly throughout Key Stage 2, and reach high standards in far more than the tested subjects of English, mathematics and science. High quality artwork in a range of media creates an inspiring learning environment. Pupils of all ages demonstrated impressive poise and performing arts skills in their Christmas performance. Their thirst for knowledge, pride in their work and exceptional standards of presentation mean they reach high standards across the whole curriculum.

Personal development and well-being

Grade 1

One pupil's poem:

We all fit together at our school
like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle.
We all learn and play like one big family.

ably exemplifies the feeling of well-being created by pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They show great enjoyment in all that they do, form excellent relationships and behave in an exemplary fashion. The strong emphasis placed in the Foundation Stage on personal development means that from an early age, pupils are self-reliant while at the same time well aware of how to share a worry, confident that help will be at hand. Older pupils choose to care for and play with younger ones and they eagerly take on responsibilities as road-safety officers, librarians and play leaders. School council members are proud to be chosen to represent their peers and have played an active part in improving the quality of school dinners. Pupils show great respect for and readily include all members of the

community, understand the fairness of rotas for playground games and are generous charitable fundraisers. Their strong knowledge and appreciation of other cultures is particularly well promoted through the arts which also nurture their ability to reflect on life. Attendance levels are very high. Pupils' mature self-esteem has a major influence on their exceptional academic achievement.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding achievement is evidence that the school was too modest when it judged the quality of teaching and learning to be just good. It is one of its many great strengths. Teachers skilfully use their secure subject knowledge and the information gained from assessment of individuals' work when planning the stimulating lessons that pupils enjoy so much. They give very clear explanations, making excellent use of subject specific language and interactive whiteboards, and have high expectations. The activities invite interest and challenge pupils' thinking while high quality support ensures that those of all abilities can succeed. Warm relationships between pupils and all staff mean that pupils have very positive attitudes and are eager to learn more. They explain their work with real enthusiasm and understanding, inspired by the many opportunities that they have to learn from first hand experience and investigation.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is delivered in a unique and creative way that develops pupils' skills through a wide range of different experiences. The intricate linking of subjects, with pupils working mostly in hard-backed 'process books' rather than separate ones for each subject, means that they feel they are learning for a purpose. Excellent attention to the development of the basic skills includes the use of information and communication technology as a tool for learning and also flexible booster support for those who need it. However, children in the Foundation Stage do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their skills outside as well as inside the classroom. Educational visits, a wealth of visitors and annual residential trips from Year 2 upwards, really bring learning to life for the pupils who take delight in recording their experiences in their journals. Excellent provision for physical education, much community involvement and a wide range of extra activities coupled to the rich everyday curriculum mean that pupils' different needs and talents are served exceptionally well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school places the highest priority on providing top quality care, guidance and support for its pupils. The result is a virtually bespoke service that, as one parent commented, offers, 'excellent support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities – for everybody'. This is underpinned by the strong relationships that so typify St Bert's. Staff put the well established procedures to ensure child protection and health and safety into daily practice. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and, together with parents, praise staff's swift action when there are any difficulties. Great care is taken to prepare and support the whole family both before children enter the Reception year and prior to their transfer to secondary school. Staff know the pupils exceptionally well and, through discussion and helpful marking, ensure that they understand fully what steps they need to take next to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's strong sense of direction is firmly founded on its mission to have happy children who reach their potential. A palpable spirit of teamwork runs through the school in which leadership is very inclusive. Year group leaders oversee pupils' progress in the mixed age classes while the headteacher regularly reviews class targets with individual teachers. Subject leaders provide good support for colleagues while the termly sharing of planning files and pupils' process books means that everyone's work is open to scrutiny. Governors are knowledgeable, very supportive and prepared to challenge when necessary. Effective financial management, good use of the extra resources available through the EAZ and PLP initiatives, and the important roles played by support staff and volunteers mean that the school is well organised, clean and runs very smoothly. The school knows itself well and is far from complacent. Analysis of data leads to adaptations in provision such as booster classes for mathematics or an extra concentration on spelling. However, much monitoring and planning is informal. Subject leaders develop individual plans, but there is no whole-school plan with agreed priorities into which these link. The only recent formal observations of lessons have been of newly qualified teachers. With the full support of all staff, the headteacher has successfully sustained the unique quality of the school. She fully recognises the need to establish more formal structures on which to build its future developments.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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

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.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
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 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

The School Council
St Berteline's CofE Primary School
Norton Lane
Norton
Runcorn
Cheshire
WA7 6QN



15 December 2006

Dear Pupils

Ms Kenna, Mrs Sadler and I really enjoyed visiting your school recently. Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome and for being so willing to share with us your enjoyment of being pupils of St Bert's. I feel particularly lucky to have been able to share your Christmas Showstoppers production with you. Our visit was part of the inspection system for the whole country that assesses how well pupils are learning. We agree that yours is an outstanding school because it helps you all to make excellent progress and achieve high standards in both your work and your personal development. All staff provide you with exceptional care and support so that you feel comfortable in school and ready to try your best. Teachers organise very interesting lessons and explain them clearly so that you want to learn more and are sure that you can succeed. You present all your work beautifully and your high quality artwork makes the school a pleasure to work in. All the visits you make and visitors to the school really help to bring your learning to life. Your headteacher and other staff work together unusually well and have helped the school keep its unique atmosphere during a time of change. Everyone in the school pulls together and greatly enjoys each other's company.

In order to help ensure that your school keeps up its high quality, we have asked your headteacher and other staff to:

- develop clear systems so that when your school decides to make improvements everyone knows which development is most important and how they can judge its success
- make a special area where Foundation Stage children can learn through playing outside.

Your job will be to continue to enjoy learning as much as you do at the moment.

With my best wishes for the future

Mrs Sarah Drake
Lead Inspector