

Inspection of St Basil's Catholic Primary School

Hough Green Road, Widnes, Cheshire WA8 4SZ

Inspection dates: 11–12 September 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at the school. Almost all those we met described the school as 'fun' or 'great' and said that their work in class is usually challenging. Pupils enjoy lunchtime games and extra-curricular activities, including football, rugby, cricket and gymnastics. They enjoy demonstrating that they are good citizens in their various roles, including as school captains.

Pupils relish their termly educational trips. They told us that they like to participate in residential learning and adventure activities.

Pupils are creative. They hone their singing skills in school, read poetry to visitors during charitable events and visit local care homes to sing to the elderly. Pupils in Year 2 and key stage 2 receive music tuition. They enjoy performing at concerts, playing various brass and woodwind instruments, such as the clarinet, trombone, cornet and recorder, and the guitar.

Pupils behaved well during the inspection, moving around the school sensibly between lessons and with due consideration for others. Pupils told us that behaviour is usually good, indicating that their peers abide by the rules and act responsibly. Pupils also said that they always feel safe at school. They said that they would not hesitate to talk to an adult if they had a concern, secure in the knowledge that any such concerns would be dealt with swiftly. Pupils are adamant that bullying rarely happens. They say that this is because people get on together and respect each other.

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

The headteacher and senior leaders have improved the quality of education since the previous inspection. They ensure that their well-designed curriculum is implemented by teachers and teaching assistants with purpose and enthusiasm.

Pupils' learning in reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects, including science and history, is strong. Teachers organise the curriculum carefully to ensure that pupils' knowledge develops over time. However, pupils' programming skills are not as good as in other areas of computing. In addition, the leadership and management of the computing curriculum and teachers' subject knowledge is not as strong as in other subjects.

Leaders give a high priority to reading. Pupils in key stage 1 and children in the Reception class study phonics daily. Most pupils read fluently and with confidence. Pupils in key stage 2 read with great expression. They are familiar with the work of different authors and poets, including Shakespeare and T. S. Eliot. Pupils routinely read and write about well-known scientists and important historical events.

Teachers are skilled at bringing learning to life. They engage pupils in practical activities, including in the science curriculum, whenever possible.

Pupils enjoy studying history. Teachers plan the curriculum carefully to ensure that pupils know and can remember important facts and events in chronological order. Visits to places of interest, including stone-age settlements, aid pupils' understanding of the topics that they study.

Leaders and teachers know exactly how well pupils are learning. They identify which pupils need help and provide them with good support. Teachers adapt the curriculum successfully for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In English, mathematics and other subjects, such pupils make strong progress, as shown in their well-presented workbooks.

Children have just started in the Reception class. They are well behaved, familiar with school life and settled. These children are curious and enjoy learning and finding out new things.

Staff make skilled use of highly stimulating indoor and outdoor learning areas, exciting resources and a purposeful early years curriculum, to develop children's knowledge in subjects including early mathematics and reading. Children learn rhyming songs, which helps them to remember the names and order of numbers. Children are also building their knowledge of the sounds of letters linked to the names of various animals and objects.

Senior leaders describe St Basil's as 'an inclusive school'. As such, the school admits pupils with emotional, behaviour, social and mental health needs throughout the year. Occasionally, pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour disturb the calm and purposeful nature of the school.

While senior leaders have resolved most of the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection, pupils' attendance remains below average. Leaders' work to develop pupils' personal and social skills is good. Pupils regularly demonstrate that they are good citizens in their various roles, including as school captains. They engage in charitable activities and commemorate important events such as Remembrance Day.

Staff morale is high. All those who completed the inspection questionnaire, including those new to the profession, said that they are proud to work at the school and their training is good. All agree that the school has improved since the last inspection and said that leaders are mindful of their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils say that they always feel safe in the school. Safeguarding and pupils' welfare are highly prioritised by all staff, who are vigilant and expert at spotting possible signs of neglect and/or abuse.

Designated safeguarding leaders are highly trained to execute their roles. They work closely with various agencies to ensure that children, including the most vulnerable, receive the support they need as and when this is necessary.

Through the personal, social, health and citizenship aspects of the curriculum, staff ensure that pupils are aware of the dangers and risks of using the internet, including child exploitation and radicalisation.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is delivered effectively overall. This is because most subject leaders are trained well. However, the leadership and management of the computing curriculum, and teacher knowledge, are not as strong as in other subjects.
- Pupils know how to manipulate various computer hardware. Older pupils are familiar with different software packages and have well-developed word processing skills. However, pupils' programming skills are limited, as is the training and development available to increase staff expertise. Some teachers lack confidence and/or competence in teaching computing.
- The behaviour of most pupils is consistently good. This includes when in class, during break and lunchtimes and when moving around the school. However, a small minority of pupils find it difficult to manage their own behaviour. Pupils told us that such pupils occasionally disrupted lessons. Building on their success of changing the challenging behaviour of others on roll, leaders should continue to enhance their work in this area.
- The attendance of a small minority of pupils is not good enough. Senior leaders and pastoral staff should improve pupils' attendance by working more closely with parents whose children are persistently absent.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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

Unique reference number	111390
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10087833
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	344
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Christine Wilson
Headteacher	Angela Sheppard
Website	www.stbasilsprimary.halton.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	7–8 March 2017

Information about this school

- Several members of staff have been appointed since the previous inspection, including an assistant headteacher, early years leader, teachers and teaching assistants.
- In May 2018, the school was inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate the quality of religious education and the Catholic nature of the school.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body and with a representative from the local authority and the archdiocese. A telephone conversation was held with the school's improvement partner.
- We also met with various school leaders, including those responsible for reading, mathematics, history, computing and science. In addition, meetings were held with leaders responsible for the early years provision, disadvantaged pupils and provision for pupils with SEND.

- We took account of 40 responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, and considered the school’s own surveys of parents’ and pupils’ views. Responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by 34 members of staff and 72 pupils were also considered.
- The subjects considered as part of the inspection were reading, mathematics, history, science and computing. This involved, in each academic area, meetings with subject leaders and teachers, observing teaching, scrutinising pupils’ workbooks and talking with pupils about their learning.
- We scrutinised the school’s safeguarding policy and related policies. We checked the school’s records of the suitability of staff to work with children and talked with leaders and governors about training and development linked to keeping children safe. We met with pupils, teachers and other staff, holding focused discussions on safety, safeguarding and behaviour. We also talked with parents about safeguarding and safety matters.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Aspinwall	Ofsted Inspector
John Littler	Ofsted Inspector

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