

St Benet's Catholic Primary School

Ringsfield Road, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 9PQ

Inspection dates

10–11 July 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- There is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching across the school. In some classes, adults give a lot of instructions rather than focusing on extending pupils' learning and identifying what pupils should learn next.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Teachers do not consistently plan and set tasks that are well matched to the different abilities and ages of pupils in their class. Too few pupils throughout the school achieve well in writing or mathematics.
- Pupils say the work that teachers plan for them in writing and mathematics is often too easy. They welcome challenge and know that this helps them to learn and make better progress.
- The pockets of effective teaching that exist within the school have not been used to influence practice that is less effective.
- Standards in reading have risen across the school due to the emphasis that leaders have placed on this area during the current school year. However, there are other priorities that leaders have been slow to respond to. Pupils' progress in most subjects is slow.
- The school offers a broad curriculum, but it is not well balanced. The progress that pupils make in subjects such as history, geography and science is not checked carefully.
- A number of subject leaders are new to their roles. They show promise, but their work is still at an early stage. The impact of the decisions they make on pupils' progress is not yet evident, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have taken steps to improve pupils' attendance. However, it is still not good enough and the proportion of persistent non-attenders is above the national average.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher has worked hard with her team to restore the confidence of parents and carers in the school in recent years.
- Children get off to a good start in early years and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is strong.
- The behaviour and conduct of pupils are good. Pupils say that they are happy and safe and enjoy coming to school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, and thereby the progress and attainment for all groups of pupils, by ensuring that:
 - teachers have the highest expectations of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who are most able
 - teachers plan learning that matches the age and stage of pupils in their mixed-age classes
 - teachers guide pupils as to the next steps in their learning effectively and how they can improve their work, particularly in writing and mathematics
 - pupils are offered appropriate challenge routinely so that they make as much progress as they can, particularly those who are most able
 - the proportion of pupils who achieve as well as they can in writing and mathematics increases throughout the school
 - teachers regularly plan opportunities for pupils to practise their basic English and mathematical skills in subjects such as geography, history and science
 - teachers cover the whole of the national curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders and governors regularly monitor the quality of teaching and sharply focus on how this has an impact on pupils' progress so that they identify accurately emerging priorities
 - leaders check on how well teachers adhere to the school's policy on feedback to pupils so that it is consistently applied across the school and in all subjects
 - leaders responsible for English and mathematics are given the time and support to monitor and evaluate standards in the school and prioritise the areas for improvement
 - the role of subject leaders is embedded, so that they have a greater impact on the progress and attainment of pupils in the subjects they lead
 - leaders keep a close eye on the balance of the curriculum offered to pupils across the school
 - leaders effectively use the pockets of good practice that exist within the school and the trust to develop teachers' skills and improve pupils' achievement
 - the attendance of pupils, including those pupils who are frequent non-attenders, improves so that it is in line with the national average.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school's self-evaluation gives an honest and accurate account of what the school does well. However, the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning has not been sharply focused on the impact that actions have had on pupils' achievement. As a consequence, the progress of pupils is too slow and too few pupils have attained as well as they are able.
- The school development plan covers most of the school's priorities for improvement, although not all. It also lacks clear, measurable targets in some areas. This makes it more difficult for governors and senior leaders to monitor the progress that the school is making towards achieving its goals. Governors have recognised that they have not always used their time wisely, and they have reorganised how this time will be used more effectively in the next school year.
- Middle leaders of English and mathematics work across the federation. They are beginning to make a valuable contribution to improving teaching. For example, a more structured approach to reading has ensured that pupils' achievement is improving across the school. However, these leaders are unfamiliar with the progress and attainment of pupils in St Benet's. They do not have a completely accurate view of whether the decisions they make have had an impact on some pupils' learning.
- The curriculum is interesting and makes good use of learning through first-hand experiences. Subject leaders, some of whom are new to their roles, are beginning to gain an understanding of their responsibilities. Some subject leaders demonstrate strong subject expertise and effective leadership, so that their subjects are taught better than others. For example, the teaching of art and design is very effective, and has gone some way towards the school being awarded the Artsmark award. The quality of artwork in and around the school demonstrates good outcomes. However, some subject leaders have not yet ensured that there is clear progression in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in the subjects for which they are responsible. Subjects such as geography, history and science are not taught in sufficient depth and arrangements to check the quality of teaching and learning are not embedded.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Every opportunity is taken by most staff to thread these aspects through other subjects. For example, during the inspection, a teacher read a book about a koala who worries about change and whether he can do what is expected of him. Pupils were encouraged to think about what they feel anxious about when they move to their new teacher in September. In another class, pupils took part in a day that re-enacted preparations for the Second World War. They became pupils of this era for the day. They listened to the impact that bombs had on families through the eyes of a 'siren warden' and used Morse code, the technology of this period in history.
- Governors hold leaders to account for the use of additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. Despite being in post for a short period of time, the SEN leader knows the pupils well, ensures that the support they receive addresses their often complex needs, and checks carefully to see that they are making progress.

- Pupil premium champions have been appointed to monitor the provision of this vulnerable group of pupils and how this improves their outcomes. The funding has been used wisely and where teaching is most effective, pupils make good progress, including those who are most able.
- Careful consideration has been given to ensure that the physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is spent well to help pupils to become more active and develop a healthier lifestyle. Specialist coaches work with teachers to help them develop their confidence in delivering effective PE provision. As a result, pupils have access to and success in inter-school competitions.
- In the last two years, the school has been through a period of significant change and instability. The executive headteacher was appointed in 2016 and has re-established the confidence of parents and the community. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of leaders and the school. Those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, say that they would not hesitate to recommend the school to others.
- The executive headteacher, who retires in August 2018, and the governing body have not shied away from making some difficult decisions since the school became part of the trust. Some historical poor teaching and concerns about pupils' behaviour have been tackled. Leaders are now in a stronger position to address the school's priorities, some of which have already been identified to address under the leadership of the new executive headteacher who takes up post in September 2018.

Governance of the school

- There have been significant, positive changes to the composition of the governing body. Several governors are new to their roles and are being well supported by experienced governors and the trust.
- Governors have worked closely with the executive headteacher in overseeing the considerable work that has had to be undertaken since she took up her position in the school. They recognise that the school is on a journey from a very low starting point. They have supported the executive headteacher in the often tough decisions that she has taken in the quest for the best teaching and learning in the school.
- The quality of the relationships between St Benet's staff, the federation, governors and the trust is very strong. The chair of the governing body works closely with the chief executive officer and trustees to ensure that when a priority emerges, support is offered to the school to improve provision and outcomes.
- Governors are developing their ability to challenge school leaders in relation to pupils' attainment and progress. The committee delegated to examine closely pupils' performance asks leaders pertinent questions. However, governors have relied too heavily on information that the executive headteacher and external advisers have provided them with.
- Governors have begun to check for themselves through visits to the school. However, they acknowledge and recognise that the focus of their monitoring has not been sharp enough. As a result, they have not always gained a full or accurate understanding of the quality of teaching or standards in the school. They have astutely designed a more robust process for checking on progress which will be in place for the next school year.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are trained and have a good awareness of the indicators of abuse and procedures to follow should they have a concern about a pupil's welfare. Staff are aware that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and use the school's developing systems effectively.
- The school supports vulnerable families well. The executive headteacher works well with parents and families and ensures that the appropriate support is identified. She has gained the confidence and respect of many of the most vulnerable families and pupils. However, sometimes the detail of actions taken is not always as clearly documented as it should be.
- There are comprehensive procedures in place for the recruitment and selection of staff. Pupils' safety is assured, because no new member of staff is allowed to start working at the school until all appropriate checks have been completed.
- Parents are confident that their children are safe and happy at school. They value their easy access to the executive headteacher and staff in order to sort out any problems. As one parent said, 'Transferring my children to this school was the best decision I made. Not only do they enjoy coming to school every day, but they are flourishing.'
- Leaders work closely with an attendance officer to support and encourage parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time. Some pupils, however, are not in school regularly, enough despite considerable support. This area of the school's work remains a priority that leaders are confident they will improve.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is uneven across the school. This has resulted in some pupils not making the progress of which they are capable, from their starting points. Consequently, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement.
- Where teaching is most effective, pupils are given opportunities to extend their learning. Teachers ask probing questions to encourage pupils to think hard about what they are learning and to discuss their learning with their classmates. However, in some classes, teachers interrupt the flow of pupils' work because they spend too long explaining what pupils need to do. As a result, pupils are not given sufficient time to think about their learning or to deepen their thinking. The quality of work is not as good as it could be. Consequently, too few pupils across the school achieve as well as they can in writing and mathematics.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Work that teachers plan does not meet the needs of the mixed ages within classes. As seen in books during the inspection, too often pupils in different year groups do the same work, be they higher-, lower- or middle-attaining pupils. As a result, progress is too slow and not consistently strong.
- Subjects in the wider curriculum are not taught in sufficient depth or regularly enough. Too often, pupils are given the same activities, irrespective of their age or ability. Despite a range of different experiences, visits out of the school and visitors to the

school, teachers do not provide a rich skills- and knowledge-based curriculum in science, geography and history. Evidence during the inspection shows that there is effective development of knowledge and skills in art and design, PE and religious education.

- Recent initiatives and the swift action taken by the leaders of English are improving the quality of teaching in phonics and reading across the school. Pupils, including many lower ability pupils, use their phonic skills to read with accuracy and fluency. Pupils say that they like reading. As one pupil said, 'If I could read all day, I would', while another commented, 'Reading lets me escape to other places.'
- Most pupils are keen writers. They write for a variety of purposes. However, some teachers do not plan learning that enables pupils to practise their basic English skills in subjects other than English. Where pupils are given these opportunities, writing is well developed, and pupils use the techniques of well-known authors in their writing. For example, in one class, pupils discussed the characteristics of Roald Dahl's writing and then emulated them in a character that they invented. One pupil wrote, 'He is SO horrid! Even the grass on his lawn is enough to scare an adult.' In another class, a topic on the rainforest elicited some very effective descriptive language, such as, 'The playful chimpanzees laughed up in their treetop houses' and, 'Fine fish swim in the mysterious depths of the river, to places where the humans can't go'.
- Owing to historical poor teaching of mathematics, many pupils are still catching up in their learning. The leader of mathematics has identified that there are considerable gaps in pupils' learning in such areas as fractions, problem solving and some aspects of number. In some classes, teachers still focus too much on calculation to the detriment of other areas of the mathematics curriculum. As a result, opportunities for pupils to deepen their reasoning skills, for example, are limited. In other classes, though, pupils apply their knowledge and skills in solving problems such as, 'Sally has written the coordinates for a hexagon. Explain any mistakes she has made.' However, such examples are not typical across the school or throughout the school year, as evidenced in pupils' books. Opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical skills in subjects such as science and geography are also limited.
- Teaching assistants are generally well deployed. They work closely with some class teachers to support pupils in their learning. However, in some classes where the teacher has not planned activities that meet the needs of pupils, teaching assistants do not know how to support pupils effectively.
- The development of the school's policy on how to support pupils to move on in their learning and to improve their work is not yet implemented consistently.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils who spoke with the inspector say that they enjoy coming to their 'fun, friendly and welcoming school.' They are keen to learn and know that they learn from making mistakes.

- Pupils feel safe. Leaders have considered the position of the school on a main road, and offer cycling proficiency training to older pupils. Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive and supportive. Pupils are confident to share any worries or concerns that they have with their teacher, another trusted member of staff, or the school's peer mediators.
- Pupils have a good awareness that, 'when someone constantly picks on someone', it is bullying behaviour. They know the various forms bullying can take. Pupils take care of each other and know what they would do if they saw any bullying.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of risks to their safety when online. They know that they should protect their passwords and their personal information and never respond to strangers.
- Pupils are learning to become aware of the needs of others as they raise money for charitable causes or to raise awareness. For example, 'say no to exotic pets – you don't need them', formed part of pupils' work on animals' habitats.
- Pupils have an active voice in this school, for example as elected members of the school council, peer mediators or ambassadors for the school. They enjoy being given responsibilities and understand the importance of being able to 'make the school an even better place', or 'listen to other people's thoughts to resolve their problems if we can.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around school. They are polite and well mannered and warmly welcome visitors to their school. For example, one pupil asked the inspector, 'Have you had a good visit to our school so far?'
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons. They are proud of their school and enjoy the different experiences they have inside and outside the school. However, pupils say that work is sometimes too easy for them. Pupils have high aspirations of what they want to do when they leave school, including being a teacher, police officer or author.
- Pupils conduct themselves well during break- and lunchtimes, playing with others, taking turns on play equipment or just chatting over their lunch. The variety of play equipment and the extensive field allow pupils to develop skills which they take great pleasure in demonstrating to visitors or competing with their classmates.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. The school is taking effective action, and some pupils' persistent non-attendance is reducing. There is still some way to go until attendance is in line with the national average. Leaders and governors are committed to working with parents and external agencies to ensure that pupils attend as regularly as they should.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In key stage 1 in 2017, attainment in writing was below the national average. Attainment in reading was in line with the national average, while mathematics was above. However, the proportion of pupils who attained at greater depth was below average in writing and mathematics.
- The published results at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 showed that the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard was below the national average in writing and broadly in line in mathematics and reading. Progress was also broadly in line in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who attained the higher standard was below average in reading and mathematics. Few pupils attained greater depth within the expected standard in writing. The progress of some middle- and higher-attaining pupils from the end of key stage 1 was not good enough.
- All of the pupils attained the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2017.
- Early indications of results at the end of key stages 1 and 2, and the achievement of pupils at the end of Year 1, are set to improve in 2018. This includes the proportion of pupils who achieve greater depth.
- The school's own assessment information, work in pupils' books and learning seen during the inspection confirm that current pupils across the school do not make consistently strong progress in writing and mathematics. In a minority of year groups, teachers ensure that learning matches the needs of pupils and challenges them to think hard about their work. As a result, pupils' progress is stronger. The emphasis that leaders put on improving reading outcomes during the last year has paid off. Progress of pupils in reading, including those who are disadvantaged or most able, is strong.
- Progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is similar to that of their classmates, taking into consideration their various starting points and individual needs. The SEN leader works closely with teachers to ensure that teaching assistants support pupils to be successful in their work. However, where teaching is less effective, progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is less consistent.
- Assessment information shows that outcomes of the pupils who are disadvantaged across the school show some signs of improvement. However, they are not as rapid as they could be in some year groups where teaching is less effective. The pupil premium champion is beginning to scrutinise more closely the provision that this group of pupils is offered.
- In Years 1 to 6, pupils do not achieve as well as they are able in subjects such as science, history and geography.

Early years provision

Good

- Children in early years behave well.
- Children come into early years with knowledge and skills that are often below those typical for their age. Communication, language and literacy are particularly low for a number of children.

- In 2017, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception was in line with the national average. This represents good progress from children's starting points.
- Leadership of early years is effective in addressing the needs of children as they arrive at the school and throughout their time in the Reception class. Leaders evaluate the provision within the Reception and Year 1 class and ensure that children in the Reception class have a successful transition into Year 1.
- Children's learning journeys and the school's own assessment information show that children, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, make strong progress from their individual starting points. This is because adults build on pre-school assessments and plan learning that takes children's interests and needs into account.
- Children seen during the inspection showed that they play well together and independently. They are curious and initiate their own learning. For example, one child was building a boat for dogs out of crates and bricks. When the inspector asked him how the dogs were going to be safe while they were at sea, he said, 'They are in their cages and I have put water under each cage so that they don't get thirsty.'
- When working directly with adults, children take part in a variety of meaningful activities, including singing songs to tell the time and then using a clock to see what the time actually looks like on a clock face. Adults record carefully children's responses which are then added to well-maintained and up-to-date learning journeys. Progress can be clearly seen in photographs and quotes from children.
- Children are given many opportunities to practise their early reading, writing and number skills. Because of sensitive and astute questioning, children are well used to rehearsing their responses, which helps them to write with confidence. During a story read by the teacher, she encouraged the children to think about how they might feel if it were them in the story, listening to interesting responses.
- All aspects of the early years welfare requirements are adhered to. Children are encouraged to take risks and know how to keep themselves safe. Staff constantly remind children about being careful, for example, when they are building large structures, when driving the play vehicles along the 'road' created within the outside area or when using scissors, 'which we hold like this when we walk', demonstrated the teacher.

School details

Unique reference number	142786
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10046653

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	John Harris
Executive Headteacher	Veronica Short
Telephone number	01502 712012
Website	www.st-benets.suffolk.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@cpswv.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- It converted to academy status in 2016 and is part of the St John the Baptist multi-academy trust.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities or who have an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- Most of the pupils are of White British heritage. No current pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school met the government's current floor standards in 2017.
- The school consists of four mixed-age classes, two of which bridge two key stages.
- The head of school takes up her role as the new executive headteacher of the

federation in September 2018, alongside a new assistant headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all classes, often with the executive headteacher, and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, the chief executive officer, a representative of the trust and governors.
- The inspector talked to a group of pupils to ascertain their views of the school.
- The inspector listened to pupils read from Years 1 and 2. A range of work in pupils' books was scrutinised with the head of school, and the inspector viewed work on display around the school.
- The inspector spoke to parents in the school playground at the start of the school day.
- A wide range of documentation was considered during the inspection, including that relating to safeguarding, the school development plans and the assessment information on the progress of current pupils in the school.
- The inspector took account of the 21 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire and of parents' free-text responses.

Inspection team

Ruth Brock, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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