

Inspection of St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Tewkesbury Lane, Monkston Park, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK10 9PH

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 May 2022

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to belong to this highly inclusive, happy school. They greatly value everyone's unique qualities. Pupils explained to inspectors that everyone is welcome at this school and that difference is to be celebrated. Relationships across the school are warm and supportive.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and behave exceptionally well. They live up to leaders' and staff's high expectations. Pupils are particularly kind and respectful of each other. They struggle to recall any incidents of unkindness or bullying, and feel safe and very well cared for by staff.

Personal development is of exceptional quality. Values such as service, respect, compassion, justice and friendship are golden threads that knit this community together. Pupils understand and demonstrate these important school and Christian values.

Pupils learn that, through their actions, they can help to make the world a better place. They are eager to take on extra responsibilities and be one of St Bernadette's community, prayer or eco 'Mini Vinnies'. Older pupils reflect maturely on issues related to social justice and fairness. As one pupil explained, 'People should not be excluded from this world if they are different, poor or don't have food to eat.'

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

Leaders' work is founded on their strong moral purpose for every pupil to thrive. They have been unwavering in their determination and work to improve this school. As a result, they have secured much improvement and the school now provides a good quality of education.

In recent years, leaders have overhauled the curriculum. This is now shaped around themes that help pupils to connect with the world around them. In most subjects, leaders have made sure that staff know what to teach and when. This is helping pupils to learn well. However, a few subjects in the wider curriculum are not so well developed and curriculum content is not so clear. In subjects such as geography and history, leaders have not yet identified or sequenced content well enough. This means that pupils are not able to build on previous learning as well as they do in other subjects. Leaders also know that there is not yet enough clarity and precision in the English writing curriculum.

The curriculum is taught well. Teachers engage pupils well in discussions and use these to check pupils' understanding. Lessons start with a recap to help pupils reconnect with previous learning. Teachers are skilled at explaining new concepts in subjects such as mathematics. They are quick to spot and iron out any misconceptions.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included in the life of the school. Additional needs are accurately identified and extra help is swiftly put in place. Leaders work in close partnership with parents and carers, staff and other agencies, so that pupils receive the right support.

From children's very first days in Nursery, staff focus strongly on developing their communication and language skills. No opportunity is missed to engage children in discussion. In early years, and across the school, pupils get to know and love many rhymes, stories and good-quality texts. These texts form the backbone of the school's reading and writing curriculum.

Phonics teaching gets under way promptly and most pupils get off to a good start to learning to read. Staff are skilled in teaching phonics and step up support for any pupils not keeping up. However, occasionally the books for pupils who have fallen behind are not well matched to their reading abilities. When this happens, adults sometimes encourage these pupils to use picture clues. This limits opportunities for them to practise and apply their phonics skills and risks pupils not catching up quickly enough.

Many pupils benefit from the numerous and varied extra-curricular activities. Opportunities abound for pupils to get involved in supporting other communities through charitable events, including for their partner school in Ghana. The links with this school give pupils a window into life and education in another country.

Governors bring considerable expertise and skill to their roles. They fulfil their responsibilities well. They have strong processes to enable them to have a well-rounded and accurate understanding of the school. They make sure that safeguarding and the well-being of pupils and staff are always under the spotlight.

Staff enjoy working at the school, feel supported and are proud to be on the staff team. The school's partnership with parents and carers is strong and parents are full of praise for the school. One parent commented, 'Sending my child to this school is the best decision I have made.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding and pupils' well-being are everyone's responsibility. Leaders' work to identify and support any pupils at risk of harm is top notch. Safeguarding arrangements, including recruitment processes, are robust. Leaders have a very good understanding of the community and the contextual safeguarding risks in the locality. Staff are trained well and updated regularly about specific aspects of safeguarding. They know what to be alert to, how to spot anything that may be a concern and the procedure to follow. The slightest worry is brought to leaders' attention without delay and followed up swiftly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils who are behind with their reading are occasionally given books that are not well matched to their reading skills. Sometimes, adults encourage pupils to use picture clues rather than apply their phonics. This limits opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their phonics skills and risks them not catching up quickly enough. Leaders should take action to address these few inconsistencies in the school's reading provision.
- In a few foundation subjects, leaders have not specified with enough precision the important knowledge or concepts they want pupils to learn and remember and the order in which pupils learn new content. As a result, some pupils find it difficult to make meaningful connections with previous learning and build on this. Leaders should ensure that they identify and sequence the most important concepts and content they wish pupils to learn and remember.
- In some aspects of the English writing curriculum, leaders have not identified with complete clarity the component knowledge that pupils need to secure in some units of learning. This risks some important knowledge being inadvertently overlooked. Leaders need to implement their plans to further refine the English writing curriculum and identify more clearly the component knowledge that pupils need to learn.

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.

If you are the school and you are 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	134318
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10227471
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	438
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mary McGowan
Headteacher	Jane Zamora
Website	www.stbernadettesschool.com
Date of previous inspection	17 and 18 October 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Catholic voluntary-aided school within the Diocese of Northampton. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in November 2021. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place in the school year 2026/27.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 carried out deep dives in reading, English, mathematics, physical education and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, sampled pupils' work, visited lessons, spoke with teachers

and spoke with pupils about their learning. Inspectors also heard some pupils read.

- Inspectors sampled the curriculum in other subjects. This included French, design technology, geography, art and design, and music.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the inclusion leader. They also met with a group of support staff and staff who have recently joined the school, including an early career teacher.
- The lead inspector met with six members of the governing board, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector also met with a representative from the local authority.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors also spoke with pupils and staff and considered a wide range of safeguarding documents and records, including the school's record of recruitment checks.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views through meetings with them and visits to lessons. Inspectors also spoke with pupils during morning playtime and lunchtime, and took account of their responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors gathered the views of staff through meetings with them and through their responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through their responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and parents' free-text comments. An inspector also talked with some parents on each day of the inspection.

Inspection team

Sue Cox, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alan Derry	Her Majesty's Inspector
Debbie Bennett	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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