

Inspection of St Catherine's RC School

Vale Drive, Barnet, Hertfordshire EN5 2ED

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 June 2022

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

This school was last inspected 13 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be a member of the school community. They value everyone and feel that differences should be celebrated. The relationships between pupils, staff and families are strong, including in the early years. Pupils are kept and feel safe because staff know them well. Pupils understand what bullying is and trust their teachers to deal with it if it does occur – which they do.

Pupils produce work of a good standard in a range of subjects. This is because teachers expect them to work hard and do well. Teachers have thought carefully about how the classroom environment enables strong learning. For example, in key stage 2 there is 'shoeless learning'. Pupils explain that this aids their concentration.

Pupils are happy, polite and articulate. They love learning and try hard in their lessons. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to share their ideas about improving the school through the school council. They benefit from opportunities for learning outside the classroom, which include an extensive range of clubs and visits. Pupils told us that they love these experiences as they help them to make sense of their learning.

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

Pupils learn to read fluently. This is because teachers are well trained. Teachers check pupils' progress regularly. If pupils are falling behind, they are given support to catch up. Pupils read books that are well-matched to the sounds they have learned. Leaders recognise that pupils need a broad vocabulary to become fluent readers and succeed in other subjects. Teachers focus on developing pupils' language and communication from Nursery through to Year 6. Pupils get every opportunity to practise these skills through regular discussion.

Teaching programmes match the scope and ambition of the national curriculum. In some subjects, such as history, mathematics and music, leaders have considered the important knowledge pupils need to learn. This is well sequenced. Pupils understand more complex ideas by building on what they have learned before. For example, in history, pupils develop their knowledge of how Britain has changed over time and their skills to weigh up historical evidence. Careful sequencing in these subjects allows teachers to check pupils' understanding in lessons so that misconceptions are addressed quickly.

However, in other subjects, such as science and geography, leaders have not identified the important ideas pupils need to learn and remember. This means that sometimes teachers give pupils work which is too difficult and not focused on what pupils need to know.

Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) thrive. This is because teachers and support staff know them well and understand what helps them to learn.

Staff quickly build strong relationships with the children in the early years. This makes children feel safe and happy. Teachers and early years practitioners give children lots of opportunities to play, explore and talk about what they are learning. As a result, children talk confidently to adults and with each other. However, teachers are not always clear about the vocabulary children need to develop. This creates some gaps in the knowledge that children need to tackle the curriculum later. Leaders have identified this as a priority and have plans in place to ensure teachers develop the vocabulary children need to know.

Strong focus is placed on pupils' personal development. Pupils learn to respect and value other faiths and cultures. Leaders plan experiences for pupils that develop their understanding of the wider world, for example in the newly developed forest school. Pupils are also given opportunities to develop their own leadership skills through the roles of house and sports captains or as a 'Rights Respecting Ambassador'.

Pupils conduct themselves well, and they are keen to do their best in lessons. They are rarely disrupted from their work because everyone is engaged in their learning.

The school is well led. School leaders, including governors, understand the strengths of the school and have appropriate plans to help it improve further. Staff enjoy working at the school and are proud to be part of school community. They feel well supported by leaders who are considerate of their workload. The school's partnership with parents and carers is strong and most parents are fulsome in their praise of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained to spot signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. They know what to do if they have concerns. There is a thorough training programme for staff which keeps them up to date on issues pupils might face. Leaders work well with external agencies and the local authority to make sure that pupils and families get the support they need. Leaders have worked closely with pupils and parents on the issue of online safety to keep parents up to date and make sure that all pupils are safe when using all types of electronic devices.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not identified the knowledge pupils need to learn. As a result, teachers do not focus sufficiently on important concepts. Leaders should ensure that teachers understand the precise knowledge pupils need to learn so that their understanding builds cumulatively over time.

- In some subjects, leaders have not clearly identified the vocabulary early years children need to learn and practise. This means that pupils cannot always easily access different areas of the curriculum in key stage 1. Leaders should ensure they identify this vocabulary in all subjects so that children are well prepared for the curriculum in Year 1.

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	101333
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10229306
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	454
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alessia Errico
Headteacher	Maureen Kelly
Website	www.st-catherines.barnet.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	April 2009

Information about this school

- The school has a Nursery provision for two-year-olds which has opened since the previous inspection.
- The school is a Catholic voluntary-aided school within the Diocese of Westminster. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in September 2019. The next inspection is due to take place in the school year 2024/2025.
- The school does not make use of 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 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.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator, the school business manager, governors, including the chair of governors, and curriculum leaders. Inspectors also met with teachers

and support staff and the school improvement partner from the local authority.

- The inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: reading, science, music, computing and history. The inspectors discussed these subjects with pupils, teachers and leaders. The inspectors visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at the curriculum plans and pupils' work and spoke to leaders about some other subjects. Inspectors also visited a school assembly and the forest school.
- 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.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents during the inspection, including school development plans and behaviour and attendance records.
- The inspectors gathered the views of pupils through meetings with them and through conversations with them during morning playtime and lunchtime. Inspectors also took account of pupils' responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through their responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' free-text comments. Each inspector spoke to some parents on each day of the inspection.
- Inspectors also gathered the views of staff through meetings with them and through their responses to Ofsted's online survey.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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