

# St Blasius CofE Primary Academy

Albert Road, Shanklin, Isle of Wight PO37 7LY

## Inspection dates

27–28 June 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The newly appointed principal has united the school community in a clear vision to provide the best possible education for pupils. He has rightly placed their well-being at the heart of this improving academy.
- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve well. Many children join the school with skills below those typical for their age. However, they make good progress and, by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils achieve at least in line with age-related expectations.
- Behaviour in lessons and at other times around the school is good. Pupils are polite and considerate of others. Older pupils take good care of younger ones and this results in a friendly, happy, safe school.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, because teaching is well planned and provides them with interesting learning activities. They enjoy lessons and work hard to complete the activities that they are set
- Children get off to a good start in Reception. Staff know each child well and teach them effectively so that they make good progress. Children are well prepared to move on to the greater challenges of Year 1 by the end of the year.
- The curriculum is a treasure chest of learning opportunities for pupils. They talk excitedly about the way that their lessons bring learning to life and help them to acquire a wide range of skills and knowledge. Lessons are further enhanced by many exciting trips out of school and visitors who come to school.
- The academy trust knows the school's strengths and weaknesses in detail. They have wasted no time in providing the new principal with effective support, while ensuring that he is clear about what needs to improve.
- Governors have the right mix of skills and experience and offer effective challenge and support for leaders. They have helped steer the academy through a time of significant change.
- Pupils, especially the most able, have too few opportunities to use reasoning to solve challenging problems in mathematics.
- Levels of persistent absence have reduced considerably this year. However, rates of attendance are still too low, especially for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- School improvement plans do not systematically address the most urgent issues that the school has identified. These plans also lack clear timescales and targets.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that improvement plans:
  - focus sharply on the areas for improvement identified in the school’s self-evaluation
  - contain clear timescales and measurable success criteria so that leaders can be held to account more stringently.
- Improve the quality of teaching of mathematics by ensuring that:
  - pupils have regular opportunities to apply their skills in solving problems that involve mathematical reasoning
  - teachers move the most able pupils on to more challenging work swiftly when they are ready.
- Reduce rates of absence, especially for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that all pupils benefit from regular attendance at school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, governors and the trust are united behind the academy's vision to keep pupils safe and to provide them with the best possible education. Senior leaders are ambitious for the success of all pupils, whatever their background and circumstances. The principal speaks with justifiable pride about successes that leaders have secured for individual pupils from particularly challenging backgrounds.
- Staff are united in supporting this vision. A staff member wrote: 'I have witnessed the school go from strength to strength; a new team, new dynamic and a cohesive understanding from all staff. This is all about providing the children with the tools and skills to be inspirational.'
- The newly appointed principal has the unanimous approval of pupils, staff and parents, being described as 'enthusiastic, hands-on and fully involved in school life'.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for improvement of the school. They have introduced systems that enable leaders and teachers to track pupils' progress in considerable detail, including the progress of groups. These present a wealth of accurate information so that leaders quickly identify when a group is falling behind and move quickly to accelerate progress.
- The school's self-evaluation is largely accurate and highlights the areas that need to improve. However, senior leaders do not systematically include these areas in the school's improvement plans, and some issues are not dealt with as swiftly as they should.
- Middle leaders are very new to post, because those who were previously in middle leadership have moved up to take more senior roles in the academy. This includes the newly appointed principal. Middle leaders have a good idea of what needs to be done to undertake their roles and have made a good start. However, they correctly say that they will need more training and time out of class to be fully effective in their roles. Senior leaders are aware of this and have plans in place to provide these.
- The principal has a clear view of where teaching is strongest and where it is less effective. He is working closely with the trust and senior leaders to drive further improvements in teaching. The academy's senior leaders work closely with teachers to sharpen their skills and highlight ways in which their teaching can become even more effective.
- The school's staff form a united, motivated workforce which is proud to work at the school. They understand that they can take risks and try new ideas if it will benefit the pupils in the school. Staff say that the principal makes them feel 'safe and valued'. All staff benefit from a range of opportunities to develop their skills and undertake new initiatives.
- Senior leaders work hard to ensure that parents feel fully involved in their child's education. As a result, parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the way that pupils are taught and looked after. Most parents feel that teachers are approachable, keep parents well informed about how well their children are doing and deal with any issues that arise. However, there are a few parents who do not echo

this view.

- The curriculum is rich, exciting and at times innovative, especially in its use of information and communication technology. It provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils speak with considerable enthusiasm about the many opportunities on offer to learn about people, places and cultures around the world. One younger pupil told an inspector, 'I didn't honestly know about most other countries, but I have found out lots about them.' For example, Year 6 pupils have linked up with a school in Pakistan. Also, during the Chinese New Year celebrations, pupils talked to someone in China over the internet. Religious education lessons offer pupils interesting insights into beliefs, celebrations and practices of various faiths, including Christianity.
- Pupils are also involved in their local community. For example, some pupils from the school recorded commentaries to be used on the tourist bus that shows visitors around the sights of Shanklin.
- Pupils enjoy a good number of visits to places far and wide, including some residential visits. These are further supplemented by many visitors who come to the school, including theatre companies, representatives of charities and people who talk about how to stay safe in a range of situations.
- Pupils have a good understanding of British values because leaders have put a good deal of thought into how to make these relevant and accessible to even young pupils. Pupils can explain how these core values apply to them and how they live them out in their daily lives. These values weave seamlessly into the school values of friendship, endurance and wisdom.
- Leaders promote the equality of everyone and take every opportunity to challenge stereotypes. For example, in an assembly on how pupils can help older people, pupils were shown pictures of a 101-year-old abseiling down the Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth and the world-record holder for the 200 metres in the over-95 age group. Pupils understood and could explain clearly how older people can live full and useful lives while still needing help from other people at times.
- Leaders use the physical education and sports premium effectively to train staff, purchase resources to improve games and physical education lessons and promote physical fitness and health, by increasing opportunities for pupils to take exercise during free times. As a result, pupils are more active. Funds have been spent to enable more pupils to take part in inter-school sports competitions, including the local 'Bay Olympic Games'.
- The school also uses effectively the additional funding it receives to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The academy trust has offered very strong support to the school. It has a precise grasp of the school's strengths and areas for improvement because the trust's school improvement partner has identified them clearly during visits to the academy. She has offered clear advice about how to address the issues raised and is working with the senior leaders to improve things further.

## Governance of the school

- The governing body knows the school well and undertakes its role with energy and diligence. Together with the trust, governors have helped to steer the academy safely through a time of considerable change, during which the whole senior leadership of the school has changed. Governors have made good appointments to these senior roles.
- As well as making the right appointments to senior roles in the school, governors have recruited the right mix of members for the governing body. This enables them to challenge the school confidently and help it to improve further.
- Governors understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe and fulfil these duties well.
- Governors carry out the performance management of the principal in line with statutory requirements. They also check that arrangements for managing the performance of teachers are in place and working properly.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders at all levels have made it their responsibility to put pupils' well-being at the heart of the academy's work.
- Detailed policies and rigorous procedures are in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe. These are underpinned by regular training for all staff and governors in all aspects of child protection.
- Staff take great care to perform the right checks on any adults who apply to work in the school. These records are kept in meticulous detail, and senior leaders check them carefully.
- All staff are keenly aware of the signs to look out for that might indicate that a child is at risk. Staff understand what they need to do to record and report these promptly and carry out their responsibilities diligently. They understand that they have a responsibility to record even quite small concerns. They appreciate that these concerns may form an important part of a bigger picture in the future.
- Senior leaders work effectively with external agencies to safeguard pupils. They keep detailed records that provide considerable evidence of their determination to protect pupils and keep them safe.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Pupils enjoy learning, because teachers plan lessons that are interesting and engaging. Teachers enable pupils to acquire and practise skills in reading, writing and mathematics and then apply these in other lessons.
- Lessons are typically based on an accurate assessment of pupils' understanding and previous learning.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Teachers have a good understanding of how to develop pupils as readers. Staff, including teaching assistants, have good subject knowledge, especially in phonics. Even lower-ability readers in Years 1 and 2 read with

growing confidence and fluency because they have been taught the skill of working out how to accurately pronounce words that are new to them.

- Teachers not only give pupils the phonics skills to be able to read unfamiliar words, but also help them towards a love of books and reading. By the time pupils are in Year 6, they are well-informed, confident readers, who have clear opinions about books and authors.
- The well-stocked library plays an important role in nurturing pupils' love for reading. Pupils make weekly visits and enjoy the range of up-to-date books that are on offer. All pupils know that they are expected to take books home every day. Pupils that inspectors spoke to enjoyed reading and loved being able to read at home.
- Teachers work hard to equip pupils with the skills to use accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation. Pupils use and apply these skills in their writing. They become increasingly accurate writers and have many opportunities to develop stamina in writing across the curriculum.
- Pupils regularly write at length. They say that they enjoy writing, especially when they have a clear purpose for doing so. For example, in Year 6 an inspector saw pupils work hard to prepare speeches to be given at a charity event in the town the following week. Pupils' enthusiasm and commitment to the task was unmistakable.
- Mathematics is taught in well-planned sequences of lessons. This gives pupils time to understand new concepts and skills and practise them thoroughly. However, too much mathematics consists of pupils simply answering sheets of calculations. While this helps pupils to develop fluency, especially with numbers, it does not offer pupils the chance to apply these skills to solve problems or reason mathematically. The most able are particularly affected by this, as work is often too easy for them.
- Pupils are taught to be reflective and thoughtful. For example, in a Year 5 religious education lesson, the class was thinking about the symbolism of water and how their feelings about it might change as they grow older. One girl wrote: 'As I age, my decisions will mature and develop. I may go through different experiences which will change my frame of mind.' This was typical of the kind of mature responses that these pupils were writing.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and effective in supporting groups and individual pupils. Some are trained to support pupils with specific learning needs and they undertake this skilfully. However, at times some can focus too much on such issues as handwriting and presentation rather the key learning objective of the lesson.
- Most parents speak highly of the quality of teaching in the school and the way that it helps pupils learn. One parent wrote: 'St Blasius is a school in which teachers use interesting and imaginative techniques to engage children to learn, promote self-esteem, resilience and independence.'
- Parents generally said that teachers are approachable and keep them up to date with developments in their pupils' learning. However, a small minority of parents did not echo this view.
- Pupils are encouraged to eat well and adopt healthy lifestyles. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to take exercise at free times. A range of fruit and vegetable is on offer for younger pupils.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well catered for and make good progress. Teachers understand their differing needs, and draw on the many systems, resources, supports and expertise on offer to provide a good education for them. Work in pupils' books provides compelling evidence that these pupils make good progress, sometimes from very low starting points.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**Good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- This is a harmonious school community where everyone knows that they are valued and safe. One parent said: 'My favourite thing about St Blasius is the family feel – the way that pupils in all year groups mix so well and know each other, the older ones helping and guiding the younger ones.'
- Pupils have positive attitudes to all aspects of school and learning. They come to school ready to learn and strive to do well. They take pride in their work. Books are mostly well cared for and show careful, neat presentation.
- In assembly, pupils listen carefully and join in enthusiastically. They respond thoughtfully, even when the questions are tricky and require a good deal of thought.
- Pupils are taught about how to keep safe in a wide range of situations, including on the road, on the beach (including being sun-safe) and when online. Teachers also explain to pupils how the staff in the office work to keep everyone safe by checking carefully on adults who apply to work in the school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying, being aware that it is not the same as arguments and acts of isolated unkindness. Pupils say that bullying is rare in the school and usually sorted out immediately. However, a few said that it sometimes takes a few days for the bullying to stop completely.
- Pupils are enthusiastic in raising money for charity and good causes. They learn to think about the needs of other people. For example, in one Year 6 lesson, pupils were writing speeches on the subject, 'To live simply, so others can simply live'.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Clear routines are embedded in all classrooms, which allows almost all lessons to flow with little or no wasted time.
- Pupils understand clearly the school's expectations of behaviour and regularly live up to them. They appreciate and respond well to the many rewards and celebrations of success that teachers award.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, including at playtimes and lunchtimes. Well-trained staff take good care of them and help them to make the most of these free times. Inspectors saw lunchtime supervisors organising games for groups of pupils to enjoy. Pupils follow this example and demonstrate high levels of care and friendship for one another.

- There are some pupils who have social and emotional needs that impact on their behaviour. These pupils' needs are well understood by staff, who support them and help them to behave well. Exclusion is used sparingly but effectively.
- The family liaison officer uses her extensive understanding of pupils' social and welfare needs to tailor support for vulnerable families. This has secured considerable reductions in the levels of persistent absence in the school, especially of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, overall levels of attendance are still too low, especially for those two vulnerable groups.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils' outcomes are good and improving. Senior leaders are committed to ensuring that pupils make good progress, whatever their starting point or ability level.
- Levels of attainment and rates of progress have improved since the last inspection. In 2016, at the end of key stage 2, pupils' attainment was close to the national average in reading and mathematics. In writing, pupils achieved beyond the national average, and the proportion of pupils achieving at a greater depth of understanding was well above age-related expectations. Pupils also achieved well in science. In 2017, pupils are on track to achieve in line with the 2016 national figures in writing, and above these figures for reading and mathematics. Percentages of pupils on track for the higher standard are in line with those seen nationally.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2016, pupils achieved above the national average in reading and writing and in line with national figures in writing. Similar proportions of pupils are on track to achieve these standards in this academic year.
- From starting points that are sometimes very much below what is typical for their age, pupils in Reception quickly acquire the skills of reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of early years in 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development is above what is expected.
- At the end of Year 1, there have been improving outcomes in phonics over the last three years. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check are in line with the national average. Almost all pupils have reached this standard by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils currently in the school are making good progress in all year groups in a range of subjects. However, the most able pupils do not make the rapid progress in mathematics that they could. Teachers do not understand clearly how to deepen their understanding by providing them with challenging problems that require mathematical reasoning.
- Leaders use a detailed and comprehensive pupil tracking system that allows them to identify where progress slows and intervene quickly to improve areas of weakness. Evidence found during the inspection showed this assessment information to be reliable and painted an accurate picture of progress across the school.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieved less well in 2016 and made slower progress than other pupils nationally. However, this year, because of good teaching and the effective use of the pupil premium, disadvantaged pupils, including the most-able disadvantaged pupils, are making the same progress as other pupils in school. This is true in all year

groups and in all subjects.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. The principal has years of successful experience of leading special educational needs in the school and has high expectations of what these pupils can achieve. Together with the newly appointed special educational needs coordinator, he ensures that pupils' needs are carefully assessed and pupils are provided with the right teaching to help them learn well.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- In the past three years, the proportion of children attaining a good level of development has been above national figures.
- Many children enter the school with skills that are below what is typical for their age. However, they make good progress, especially in reading, writing and number. Boys currently in Reception have made particularly strong progress this year.
- Disadvantaged children make good progress but, as several also have special educational needs and/or disabilities, proportions achieving a good level of development are below those of other children nationally.
- Staff identify children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities early on. Leaders quickly provide appropriate support and foster effective partnerships with parents and other agencies. As a result, these children make good progress.
- Leaders ensure that transition arrangements enable children to get off to a good start in the school by settling quickly and smoothly. These arrangements include home visits, parent workshops and a handbook for new parents. There are also strong links with the local nursery.
- Leaders have rightly placed a sharp focus on improving communication with parents. Parents praise the way the home/school communication books are used so that they can be fully informed and involved in their child's education.
- Right from the start, staff help children learn routines, such as tidying up and putting things away. Children understand these and follow them well so that little learning time is wasted.
- Children behave and get on well together. They are friendly and cooperate happily. For example, an inspector saw a group of children working purposefully as a team to collect water from an overflowing drainpipe during a downpour.
- Work in children's books provides clear evidence of good progress. Staff undertake a variety of assessments throughout the day. These are recorded both in books and in an online journal, which parents can access from home.
- Teachers ensure that lessons and learning opportunities flow from children's interests. This helps to engage children's enthusiasm and curiosity, so they develop positive attitudes to learning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide children with good models of spoken language. For example, the teacher explained clearly to the pupils about how to make a model caterpillar and provided an accurate running narrative for children to follow.

- The learning environment is well resourced and gives children access to all areas of learning, both indoors and outdoors, even in bad weather. Children are encouraged to learn through play and by pursuing their various interests. However, at times staff miss opportunities to develop children’s learning further by asking searching questions or offering ideas for enriching the play activity.
- Safeguarding is effective. All statutory requirements are met. As in the rest of the school, all staff place the highest priority on ensuring that pupils are safe and well cared for.

## School details

Unique reference number	139644
Local authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	10032851

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Eric Hemming
Principal	Michael Wood
Telephone number	01983 862 444
Website	<a href="http://www.stblasiusacademy.co.uk">www.stblasiusacademy.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@stblasiusacademy.iow.sch.uk">admin@stblasiusacademy.iow.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	3-4 June 2015

## Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- St Blasius is a smaller-than-average primary school. There are seven single-aged classes.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above that seen in other schools across the country.
- Most pupils are White British. There are a relatively few pupils from ethnic minority groups. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is below

that seen nationally.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a range of lessons in all year groups, as well as the teaching of small groups of pupils.
- The inspection team listened to pupils read and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised in class and separately with the principal.
- Inspectors considered 39 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and 10 text responses from parents. The inspection team met with parents at the beginning of the school day. Inspectors took into account responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by 20 members of staff and 16 pupils.
- A meeting was held with governors, including the chair of the governing body. Meetings were held with school leaders responsible for English, mathematics, early years provision and provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Inspectors also held a meeting with a group of staff.
- A meeting was held with the chief executive officer of the academy trust.
- The inspection team examined a range of documents. This included the school's review of its own performance, checks on the quality of teaching, development plans, safeguarding documentation, information about pupils' progress and various records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.

## Inspection team

Bruce Waelend, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Rachel Goplen

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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