

St Francis C of E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	134151
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	381621
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2012
Lead inspector	Chris Nye HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	384
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Silvester
Headteacher	Joy Farrell
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2008
School address	Aiken Road Taw Hill Swindon SN25 1UH
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	14–15 March 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Chris Nye

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Meinke

Additional inspector

Catherine Robinson-Slater

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in every class. They observed parts of 20 lessons, taught by 14 teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, governors and school staff, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior staff and middle managers. Inspectors observed the school's work, including scrutinising pupils' books, and looked at a number of documents including assessment and attendance data, monitoring evidence, and curriculum and strategic planning. They took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors met informally with some parents and carers and scrutinised questionnaires completed by 138 parents and carers, 34 staff and 100 pupils.

Information about the school

St Francis is a larger than average-sized primary school and pupil numbers have increased by over a third since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils who start school other than in the Reception and Nursery classes is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, as are the percentages of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school has a nursery for children aged three to four years and two Reception classes for children aged four to five years. The school meets the government's current floor standards. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average, with needs relating mainly to moderate learning difficulties and speech, language and communication difficulties. The recently appointed headteacher took up her post in January 2012. The school has gained a number of awards, including Healthy School Status, the Becta information and communication technology mark, the silver Eco-schools award and the Interim International School award.

On-site breakfast and after-school clubs are not managed by the governing body and are the subject of separate inspections.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. Highly effective leadership has a very positive impact on the performance of teachers and the quality of teaching. As a result, pupils make consistently outstanding progress throughout the school and attain standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are significantly above those found in other schools nationally at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below expected levels for their age and they also make excellent progress.
- A particular strength is the way in which disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those with challenging behaviour, are supported and taught so that they make exceptional academic progress and achieve in line with levels expected for all pupils.
- Pupils achieve so well because teaching is of an exceptionally high standard and is supported by a rich and varied curriculum. Lessons are imaginatively planned and exceptionally well taught. They meet pupils' individual needs very well and, within a strong Christian ethos, promote exceptionally good opportunities for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Behaviour and safety are good overall, with particular strengths in pupils' behaviour in lessons and their attitudes towards their learning. The school recognises the need to update systems for monitoring rare instances of extreme behaviour and the organisation of morning break time.
- The recently appointed headteacher has made an excellent start. Because of the outstanding skills of senior leaders, the transition has been seamless and the drive for continuous improvement has not been interrupted, reflecting the highest of aspirations. Strategic planning is very effective, although some criteria to measure the success of actions are not sufficiently explicit. Governors know the school well and effectively support the school's drive to further improve. As a result, the school has an outstanding capacity to maintain its already high standards and develop these further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen behaviour, particularly outside the classroom, by:
 - updating systems to monitor patterns of behaviour and record how incidents are responded to
 - ensuring that the organisation of morning break time more effectively promotes purposeful play and social activities.
- Strengthen strategic planning by:
 - making more explicit how the success of planned actions is to be measured against outcomes for pupils.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire feel that their children make good progress in their learning. Inspectors judge that attainment is consistently well above average and that progress is outstanding across the school. Inspectors noted that pupils enjoy their learning and make exceptionally good progress in lessons. For example, in one lesson the pace of pupils' learning was excellent because enthusiastic teaching was very effectively developing their understanding and use of non-fiction books to develop their independent learning.

Children's attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage, in the Nursery or Reception classes, varies from year to year, but is generally slightly below that found nationally, especially in reading and writing. Because of well-planned teaching, which accurately matches pupils' needs and which has a strong focus on phonics (linking letters with the sounds they make), they make exceptional progress. In recent years attainment has improved from average to above average when entering Year 1. In the current Reception classes, almost all children are on track to meet or exceed expected levels.

In Key Stage 1, pupils make excellent progress and, in recent years, have consistently attained standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are significantly above those found nationally. Attainment in the current Year 2 is expected to be slightly lower this year, although still above average. However, because this year group has a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs, their progress from comparatively lower starting points is outstanding in reading, writing and mathematics. Reading is a particular strength because of the highly effective teaching of phonics and the pupils' excellent attitudes towards reading and literature.

In Key Stage 2 such excellent progress is built upon further and attainment is exceptionally and consistently high; in the most recent Year 6 national tests all pupils met the expected levels in English and mathematics and 61% achieved the higher Level 5 in both subjects. A number of pupils also achieved Level 6 in reading and mathematics. Scrutiny of pupils' work, hearing pupils read and lesson observations

confirm the school's own assessment that the current Year 6 cohort is on track to achieve similarly challenging targets.

The exceptional progress of pupils in all groups is impressive, especially of those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. A particular strength is the rapid and sustained progress that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make throughout the school; almost all achieve at or above the expected levels for all pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics, often from very low starting points. This is because pupils' needs are identified early on and highly skilled and committed teaching and support staff provide exceptionally well-planned teaching and support which effectively meets pupils' specific individual needs.

Quality of teaching

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers feel that their children are taught well and inspectors agree with this view. The quality of teaching is outstanding and is the main reason why pupils' achievement is outstanding. Teachers have an in-depth understanding of all their pupils and plan lessons very effectively to meet their specific learning needs. A vibrant, creative and well-planned curriculum supports teaching well because of its emphasis on linking learning to real-life situations and problem solving. For example, pupils were making exceptionally good progress in a mathematics lesson in which they were converting to percentages the outcomes of a pupil questionnaire about a recent residential trip and then constructing accurate pie charts.

Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent and pupils are highly motivated by imaginative and enthusiastic teaching. A particular strength is the highly effective way in which teachers skilfully use incisive questioning to assess pupils' understanding during lessons and then adjust their teaching accordingly to ensure a brisk pace of learning. Teaching assistants are very well trained and make a positive contribution to pupils' learning; they work well with teachers and provide excellent support for pupils, especially disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Teaching has an exceptionally good impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development because it provides wide-ranging activities, for example in art, sport, drama and music, and celebrates pupils' strengths and achievements. The learning environment of each classroom and around the school is bright and attractive, models the high expectations of staff and effectively promotes the very positive attitudes of pupils towards their learning.

A very effective marking policy, which clearly identifies in pupils' work their strengths and what to improve, is rigorously and consistently applied. Teachers' marking provides detailed and effective written guidance on how pupils can improve their work and, as the pupils also regularly assess their own work, they are very aware of their targets and what they need to do to achieve them. Teachers have high expectations, but in a few instances where the presentation of pupils' work is untidy, this is not always challenged.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of pupils is good overall, and outstanding in lessons. This is because teaching motivates pupils so well, clear behaviour policies are consistently and effectively applied and the school's strong Christian ethos helps to ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the inspectors' questionnaire felt that there was a good standard of behaviour. One parent or carer commented, 'I have been very impressed with the standard of behaviour at the school'. The very large majority of pupils feel that behaviour was good all or most of the time. They said that they feel safe in school and have a good awareness of how to keep fit and healthy.

The school is very effective in the way in which rare instances of disruptive behaviour are dealt with, but recognises that systems to monitor and record such incidents are in need of updating to reflect the recent increase in numbers. Although lunch breaks are well organised, the challenging layout of the playgrounds means that opportunities for more purposeful play at morning break time are underdeveloped. Nevertheless, pupils demonstrate care, politeness and consideration towards each other and adults.

The school has a very proactive approach towards the promotion of anti-bullying, such as through anti-bullying week and assemblies. As a result, pupils have a very clear understanding of the different types of bullying, including cyber bullying, and how to respond to it. Pupils' positive attitudes towards their school are also illustrated by attendance levels, which are consistently above average.

Leadership and management

The highly effective leadership and management at all levels, especially during a time of recent change, have been pivotal in ensuring that practice continues to reflect the highest aspirations for pupils and expectations of staff. This is illustrated by the exceptional work of the deputy headteacher and senior team in leading the school prior to the current headteacher taking up her appointment in January. As a result, there has been a seamless transition and the new headteacher is already making a very positive impact on building further on past successes. The school, therefore, has an outstanding capacity to improve.

The impact of excellent leadership extends to all levels; curriculum leaders effectively drive improvement in their subjects because they use detailed, accurate and wide-ranging monitoring evidence to inform improvement plans and identify strengths in teaching which are shared across the school. The curriculum itself is outstanding in all key stages. It is broad, balanced and provides a wide range of creative opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This has a very positive impact on pupils' achievement, behaviour and their developing ability to be reflective and independent learners from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards. Pupils have a good understanding of different cultures, produce artwork to a high standard and are enthusiastic musicians. In addition, the school provides outstanding opportunities to enrich the curriculum through a wide range of clubs, activities, trips and visitors. This is reflected in the wide range of awards that the school has received. Very effective links are made between subjects,

particularly to encourage extended reading and writing and the use of information and communication technology and problem solving, to support pupils' independent research and learning.

The school has highly successful strategies for linking with outside agencies, partnerships and in engaging with parents and carers. Homework supports learning well and events such as parents' and carers' meetings and a mathematics workshop are well attended. The very large majority of parents and carers feel that they are kept well informed.

The governing body is well organised and has a clear understanding of performance data and so makes a positive contribution to strategic planning and holds senior leaders to account effectively. Improvement plans are very effective, but although targets are clear and challenging, some of the criteria to measure the success of specific actions do not indicate explicitly enough how this will be measured against pupils' achievement. All safeguarding procedures are securely in place and rigorously applied. Inclusion is at the heart of the school's ethos and the very effective promotion of equality of opportunity is illustrated by the exceptional progress of all groups of pupils, regardless of their starting points.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 March 2012

Dear Children

Inspection of St Francis CE Primary School, Swindon, SN25 1UH

Thank you for making my colleagues and me so very welcome when we inspected your school. We really enjoyed visiting your lessons, talking to you and the staff and looking at the work that you have been doing. Those of you that we spoke with or who completed questionnaires and your parents and carers are very positive about your school, and we think that it is outstanding! Well done!

These are the things that we think your school does particularly well.

- You all make fantastic progress in reading, writing and mathematics because the teaching is outstanding and you are so keen to learn.
- Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher and senior teachers, all of the grown-ups in your school work really well together to make sure that the school continues to be as good as it is and to become even better in the future.
- You are given a very wide range of interesting and exciting things to learn and do, and this is helping to make you healthy, happy, caring people who have excellent skills and a really good understanding of the exciting world that we live in!

Although your school is doing really well, to help it be even better we have asked the headteacher and staff to focus on:

- improving your behaviour (which is good, but could be outstanding!) by recording more systematically how the school is helping the few of you who occasionally find it hard to behave really well, and by making morning break times a bit easier for you all
- making sure that the school's improvement plans say clearly how staff will know when the actions planned will have had a successful impact on your achievement.

You can help by always behaving as sensibly on the playground as you do in lessons. Good luck with the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Nye
Her Majesty's Inspector

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