

St Francis Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115194
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	379033
Inspection dates	2–3 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Madeleine Gerard

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julian Lyndon-Smith
Headteacher	Kathy Maguire-Egan
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2007
School address	Gilchrist Way Braintree CM7 2SY
Telephone number	01376 320440
Fax number	01376 322498
Email address	admin@st-francis.essex.sch.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons taught by eight teachers, and held meetings with groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work and looked at work in pupils' books. They scrutinised tracking data showing pupils' attainment and progress, the school's development plans, and policies and records for safeguarding pupils. They considered responses to questionnaires received from 104 parents and carers, 121 pupils in Years 3 to 6, and nine staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Are learning and rates of progress consistently rapid in all classes and for all groups of pupils, particularly in mathematics?
- How consistently are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage challenged in their work to make good progress?
- How accurately does the school monitor the quality of its work and ensure consistency of provision through the school?
- To what extent is pupils' personal development a strength of the school?

Information about the school

This is a slightly smaller than average primary school with provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in one Reception class. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is average, with a few from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. A very small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language. Very few of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Most of these pupils have speech, language and communication needs, or moderate learning difficulty. The school operates a breakfast club. The school has achieved national Healthy Schools status and nationally recognised awards including the Activemark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Francis Catholic Primary School provides a good quality of education and serves its community well. The staff work hard to ensure that pupils are well cared for and that all pupils, including those who are experiencing difficult circumstances, are well supported. This is reflected in pupils' enthusiastic attitudes to learning, positive relationships and their well-being. Pupils feel extremely safe and are very confident that staff at the school, as well as pupil-peer mediators, will help them should any problems occur. Pupils are exceedingly clear about the steps they should take in order to keep themselves safe from harm as a result of highly effective visits from local emergency services, guidance on road safety and guidance about the safe use of new technologies. Through close links with the parish church, learning about many religious festivals, visitors from a range of different faiths and cultures, pupils have an excellent understanding of world beliefs and cultures. Pupils take on responsibility extremely readily, for example as play leaders, 'bully busters' and members of the school council. They have made suggestions to the local authority to improve the local town centre. The school choir sings for local elderly residents. Pupils regularly raise funds and make donations to a wide range of local and national charities. Together with pupils' very caring attitudes towards one another, the extent of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils make good progress through the rest of the school and reach above average attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Pupils do particularly well in English because they develop their reading and writing skills quickly as they progress through the school. Sometimes in mathematics lessons, pupils do not always build up their numeracy skills swiftly enough. The school tracks pupils' progress carefully and quickly identifies pupils who need additional support. Extra help, tailored to pupils' specific needs, ensures all groups of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress. Teachers use assessment information well to match work in lessons to pupils' learning needs, although tasks are not always tailored sharply enough to provide high levels of challenge for higher-attaining pupils.

Regular monitoring and accurate self-evaluation enable the school's leaders and managers to identify appropriate priorities for improvement. Since the previous inspection, the school has successfully sustained above average attainment and good behaviour, and has improved pupils' attendance so that it is consistently high. The school has also enhanced the teaching of letters and the sounds they make

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

(phonics), and increased the number of opportunities for pupils to practise writing at length in a wide variety of different styles. These developments, together with improved provision for information and communication technology, reflect the school's good capacity to sustain improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the curriculum in mathematics enables pupils to build consistently on their numeracy skills and raise attainment further.
- Increase consistency in teachers' use of assessment information to ensure all higher-attaining pupils are challenged in their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Children join the school with skills and capabilities that are generally below those typical for children of this age. Pupils' learning and their progress through the school are good. They enjoy learning and achieve well. They set to work quickly and concentrate well on the tasks they are given. The reasons for this were illustrated in an English lesson. Pupils in Year 3 were working hard to practise their sentence-writing skills by writing facts about insects. The pace of learning was brisk because they were interested in the activity and they enjoyed writing the details they had learned about bees or spiders in a science lesson the day before. They made good progress in their literacy skills because they used prompts and guidance carefully to check their work for themselves and ensure they were writing high-quality sentences. Older pupils in a mathematics lesson made good progress and deepened their understanding of division concepts when they challenged themselves to divide large numbers by two-digit and three-digit numbers.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective in ensuring that they make good progress. Extra help in lessons ensures they keep up and learn well. Additional sessions outside the classroom successfully boost the literacy and numeracy skills of pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Specialist support from therapists and well-trained additional adults are effective in helping pupils with speech, language and communication needs. Rates of progress for pupils from minority ethnic heritages are good. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language receive extra guidance in lessons so that they make good progress in their spoken English and across all subjects.

The few pupils who join the school part-way through their primary education settle well and make friends quickly because pupils are friendly and ensure they feel welcome. Activities including dance, football and cross-country, together with sporting equipment for pupils to use at break-time, effectively promote pupils' positive attitudes to keeping fit and healthy. Hot lunches, cooked freshly in the school's kitchen, are popular. Cycling proficiency for older pupils, as well as accomplishments in sporting competitions with other local schools, reflect the

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

school’s success promoting healthy lifestyles. Participating in musical and drama performances promotes pupils’ self-confidence well. Good academic achievement, team-work skills and extremely frequent attendance ensure pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers ensure that explanations in lessons are clear. They use a variety of resources including computers, to engage pupils’ interest and enable them to take an active part in lessons. For example, pupils in a mathematics lesson used measuring jugs to calculate quantities of liquids to explore the concept of capacity. Pupils’ very strong social skills are fostered through regular opportunities to work together in pairs and small groups. Occasionally, higher-attaining pupils are not challenged enough, particularly during whole-class teaching. Marking and individualised targets make clear to pupils how they can improve their work, although in a few classes, this is not consistently effective in helping pupils to move up to the next level in their work.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of activities that the school organises. Topic themes have been carefully planned to motivate all groups of pupils to do well. Good cross-curricular links are developing. For example, pupils use computers widely in their learning. Themed events, and a good variety of enrichment visits to local places of interest, as well as residential visits in Years 5 and 6, bring the curriculum to life. Partnerships benefit the curriculum. For example, older pupils have opportunities to

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

take part in multi-sports activities at a local secondary school. Music is a particular highlight in Years 3 to 6 where pupils learn to play guitar, violin, brass and keyboards. Lunchtime and after-school clubs are popular. These include netball for boys and girls, gardening, and film club.

Pupils’ individual talents and needs are known well to staff. Links with a range of outside agencies promote pupils’ good learning and well-being and are used to provide additional help and guidance for pupils experiencing difficult circumstances. This includes weekly opportunities for counselling where it is needed. The school ensures that important information is passed on to secondary schools when pupils move on to the next stage of their education. Pupils who may find transition to secondary school difficult receive additional support. Effective systems to promote attendance and punctuality consistently ensure that the whole-school community is clear about the importance of attending regularly and on time. The breakfast club staff provide a healthy, calm and sociable start to the day for the small number of pupils who attend.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, staff and members of the governing body work successfully together to provide an inclusive environment where all pupils are valued in the school’s safe and caring environment. As a result, the school tackles discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity well so that rates of learning and progress are good for all groups of pupils. Leaders and managers embed ambition and secure improvements well, and bring about sustained improvement. For example, they have ensured the quality of teaching is consistently good and enhanced the curriculum. Monitoring ensures that the school has an accurate picture of its performance although, occasionally, some monitoring focuses more on the quality of teaching than on its impact on pupils’ learning. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well. Arrangements to safeguard and protect pupils are good and the school site is secure and extremely well maintained. Staff are well trained and have a detailed awareness of safeguarding issues, and risk assessments are thorough. Relationships are harmonious between different groups of pupils, and differences are respected because community cohesion is promoted extremely well. Pupils have a very strong knowledge of the school and local community. Extremely well-established links with a school in Africa ensure pupils have an excellent knowledge of the lives of those who live in communities in other parts of the world. They meet a wide range of pupils

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

from contrasting communities within the United Kingdom through sporting activities, and visits to contrasting communities beyond their local area.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Staff work successfully to establish positive relationships and create an environment where children develop good personal and social skills, grow in confidence and are happy. Children work and play well together. They share resources readily. For example, children in the outside area worked calmly together to build small vehicles using plastic construction blocks. Adults plan a good balance of adult-led tasks and activities for children to choose using the inside and outside learning spaces well. For example, when practising their literacy skills, a group of children working with an adult listened attentively to selected words and tried hard to use their knowledge of the sounds letters make to spell the words they heard. Another group working with an adult in the outside area were developing their listening and speaking skills. They listened carefully to the letter sounds the adult pronounced, and blended them together to say the word the adult was spelling. Children make good progress in the Reception class. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Staff keep clear and helpful records of their on-going observations of children’s progress. Occasionally, planning does not use information from these assessments to plan activities for children that build on what they know and can do already so that they make even faster gains in their skills.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
--	----------

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

More parents and carers responded to the questionnaire than is usually found nationally. A very large majority of the responses were positive. Most of those who responded are happy with their child’s experience at the school and the overwhelming majority confirm that their children enjoy their time there. A few parents and carers do not agree, for example, that the school deals well with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found pupils’ behaviour to be managed well. They judged many aspects of the school’s work, to be good, and their findings endorse almost all the views expressed by parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Francis Catholic Primary School, Braintree to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 104 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 211 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	65	63	38	37	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	70	67	33	32	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	33	32	61	59	9	9	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	41	54	52	6	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	49	47	51	49	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	43	41	51	49	9	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	46	49	47	3	3	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	35	34	58	56	5	5	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	44	42	53	51	4	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	41	48	46	4	4	5	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	27	60	58	6	6	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	39	38	61	59	0	0	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	53	51	47	45	3	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



4 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Francis Catholic Primary School, Braintree, Essex, CM7 2SY

Thank you very much for your friendly welcome and for helping the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our visit and were pleased to hear how successful you have been recently in sporting competitions against other local schools. This letter is to tell you about the judgements that we reached.

St Francis Catholic Primary is a good school. You told us that you like coming to school and you attend school extremely regularly. Your parents and carers like the school, too. You behave well and are keen to learn. You have an excellent knowledge of how to keep yourselves safe from harm and take on responsibilities in school extremely enthusiastically so that you can benefit the whole school community. You have a good understanding of how to keep yourselves fit and healthy. You enjoy all the interesting work the teachers plan and particularly like the clubs and outings that the school organises. The youngest children get off to a good start in the Reception class. You make good progress in your learning to reach above the expected levels by the end of Year 6. You make particularly good progress in literacy. Those of you who need additional help are well supported and also make good progress. All the adults work as a team to make sure all of you are safe and well cared for.

We have asked the staff to make sure that all of you are set work that is the right level of difficulty for you, particularly for those of you who find learning easy. All of you can help by telling your teachers if the work is too easy or too difficult. We would also like the school to plan even more opportunities for you to develop your numeracy skills quickly, so that you reach even higher levels in mathematics.

Finally, I would like to thank you again and wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Madeleine Gerard
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**