

St Francis Special School

Patchway Drive, Fareham, Hampshire, PO14 3BN

Inspection dates 24–25 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The atmosphere in all parts of the school is calm and welcoming and adults provide excellent care and support for all pupils.
- Staff show that they highly value every pupil and give them all an equal opportunity to succeed. Consequently, pupils achieve well from their very low starting points in a good range of subjects.
- Teaching is consistently good at all key stages.
- Teaching and learning are continually improving because senior staff identify weaknesses and provide good training for staff which has had a significant impact.
- The sixth form is good. Sixth form pupils make good progress and are given many opportunities to prepare for life after school.
- The school has introduced rigorous checks on learning that provide a clear picture of pupils' progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Safeguarding arrangements enable pupils to feel extremely safe at all times of the day.
- All leaders, together with the governing body, focus successfully on raising pupils' achievement. Through the skilful work of all staff, pupils' attendance improves significantly, often from a low starting point on admission.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet leading to outstanding progress for pupils.
- In a small minority of lessons the pace of learning is too slow, and the exciting, creative, curriculum is not yet being fully implemented to enable pupils to make the best progress they can.
- Not all opportunities are taken for best practice to be fully shared as a means of improving teaching further.
- Staff with responsibilities do not have a full enough role in ensuring that planned improvements are quickly and firmly established.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons, or parts of lessons, taught by 13 teachers.
- They met with members of the governing body and members of staff.
- The lead inspector held a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 10 responses to the online Parent View survey and held informal discussions with parents and carers before and after school.
- They observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, including data on pupils' progress, individual education plans, evidence of self-evaluation and monitoring records, and arrangements for safeguarding.
- Inspectors analysed questionnaire responses from 54 members of staff.

Inspection team

David Marshall, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Elizabeth Bull

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Francis provides education for pupils who have severe, complex or profound and multiple learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Many pupils have additional disabilities including sensory impairment, physical difficulties, epilepsy, autism and challenging behaviour.
- A high proportion of the pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government), above the national average for all schools.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils have a White British heritage. There are broadly equal numbers of boys and girls.
- The school's sixth form is accommodated in a purpose-built post-16 education centre.
- The school's nursery provision is within the main school building.
- The school is on the same site as a junior and separate infant school, and another special school.
- The school has been awarded Artsmark Gold for its creative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of all teaching and learning to that observed in the best lessons by:
 - making sure all lessons move at a brisk pace
 - enabling all teachers to understand what outstanding learning looks like.
- Ensure that all staff with responsibilities help to accelerate the pace of planned improvements.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' attainment on entry is very low compared with other learners of the same age because they all have special educational and complex needs. From day one, pupils are encouraged to participate as well as they are able in all learning activities. In this way, good relations are fostered and no discrimination is tolerated.
- Observations of lessons during the inspection, along with study of individual education plans which show increasingly difficult targets achieved, confirmed that throughout the school all pupils make good progress.
- The good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 classes is firmly based on meeting individual pupils' needs, and staff sharing with each other what is regarded as best practice. This successful sharing is being built on in the older classes.
- Sixth form pupils achieve well. Wherever possible they take accredited courses that can lead to employment or further education. There are many examples of sixth form pupils coming back to the school to share their successes, made possible by the education they received.
- The school's recent achievement of the Artsmark Gold award is a reflection of the way the pupils acquire good, creative artistic skills, which are used to improve hand functions, and to aid further good progress in a range of subjects across the curriculum, especially in dealing with mathematical concepts such as shape and measures.
- Evidence, including Parent View and the school's analysis of its own parental questionnaires, indicates that parents and carers are pleased with the progress that their children are making, and very appreciative of the outstanding care and support the school offers families and children.
- The many pupils given additional support through the government's pupil premium funding make good progress and achieve in line with their peers, ensuring equality of opportunity.
- Within the context of their needs, pupils make excellent contributions to their own and the wider community through their work experience and community activities in their coursework. Careful planning ensures pupils concentrate on communication, literacy and mathematics across the school, which helps their development of basic skills to ensure they are well prepared for their future lives.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers plan carefully to meet the individual needs of pupils and they deploy the many expert and experienced additional adults in the classroom very well so that the majority of pupils can flourish at a level that is appropriate for them.
- The school has developed a range of detailed information so that the pupils' progress across the full range of their variety of complex needs can be systematically demonstrated. There is good recording and clear target setting, and reviews are completed in a timely fashion with the involvement of education and care staff.
- The secondary department's and sixth form's focus on appropriate external accreditation is promoting equality of access to the next stage of education at college or in training. This is an area that staff are constantly focused on so that all pupils are enabled, where possible, to find their appropriate place in the world on leaving school.
- An outstanding lesson with the older pupils with profound and multiple difficulties, based on making a rice pudding, was a good example of how effective most lessons are. The session began with the teacher enjoying the idea of eating the rice pudding with each pupil. After that every pupil was involved at their own level of ability. This moved without stopping to each of the ingredients being produced to touch and smell, and then on to making the pudding to be enjoyed later. The level of excitement and involvement was extensive and led to rapid and lasting learning.
- Teachers use information and computer technology well. The way pupils in one lesson were enabled to make choices of dances from those displayed on a large whiteboard, and then

demonstrate the one chosen, was a joy for all involved.

- Learning is not yet outstanding overall because careful attention to implementing all the planned changes to the curriculum, which has made such a positive impact on achievement, is not consistent across the school. This means that very occasionally, the pace of lessons slows, and tasks that teachers plan within individual lessons do not have the potential to allow pupils to move on as quickly as possible.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- As a result of the carefully constructed individual learning programmes and exemplary care, behaviour and safety and pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding throughout the school, including in the sixth form.
- Pupils enjoy positive and supportive relationships with all staff members.
- The school places a strong emphasis on the implementation of thorough and practical behaviour plans. As a result, the behaviour of pupils improves considerably, particularly the behaviour of those with autistic spectrum conditions.
- During the inspection, pupils consistently demonstrated high standards of behaviour, positive attitudes to learning and developing social skills. This was very evident in a highly successful assembly celebrating religions from around the world where they all danced together with great commitment and joy.
- Given the number of medical conditions some pupils have, their attendance overall is above average.
- The range of therapy support currently in place is very well deployed, especially the specialised sensory integrated therapy which is making a significant difference to the progress and all-round development of those pupils involved.

The leadership and management are good

- The drive and ambition of the management under the rigorous leadership of the headteacher have moved the school forward very well in the two years since the last inspection.
- In particular, the very effective senior leadership team, including good leadership of the sixth form, ensures that thorough assessments of pupils' progress are contributing to planned changes in the curriculum. A real sense of urgency to continue to improve has become established.
- Systems to track pupils' progress, especially the basic question used, 'What are the barriers for learning?', are detailed and individual. The information is used thoroughly to plan for pupils' next steps.
- Staff work very well together and everyone, including the administrative team and site management staff, are considerable assets to the school and are very much appreciated by all concerned. As one staff member said, reflecting the views of almost all, 'I thoroughly enjoy working at St Francis and feel very valued as a member of staff.'
- The school now knows itself very well and sets the right targets to become even better. Documentation is thorough and the evaluation of the school's work is honest and accurate.
- The headteacher has a very clear and accurate view of the quality of teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning. There is a high level of professional support for all staff which is linked closely to setting targets for teachers in order to improve their practice. This holds teachers accountable for pupils' progress very well. Weaker teaching has been tackled vigorously, and better teaching rewarded accordingly.
- The staff have been organised into groups, reflecting the emphasis of the curriculum across all areas of learning and support. All staff with responsibilities are becoming involved and more effective in checking the implementation of the changes in the curriculum, although their skills are not yet fully developed.
- Very careful attention is paid by managers at all levels to ensure good levels of safety and the highest quality of care. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet current government requirements and there are robust arrangements in place for checking staff and other adults.

Pupils' safety and well-being are paramount at all times, ensuring that the school is a very safe and supportive place to be.

- The curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Trips into the locality, visitors to the other schools on the campus and work experience visits provide numerous opportunities for pupils to pursue their developing interests.
- The local authority has supported the school very effectively in the last two years. Its support has underpinned the improvements now evident. Its support of this good school is now appropriately 'light touch'.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is fully involved in all school processes, checking decisions and requesting explanations where necessary. It holds the school to account in a challenging but supportive manner by asking probing questions when presented with documents and reports. Governors know the school well, because members visit regularly to scrutinise the school's work and regularly analyse the performance of pupils, especially those with additional support through the pupil premium. They ensure that pupil premium funding is spent appropriately on additional, one-to-one support or additional therapy sessions. Their involvement in performance management underpins the school's strong capacity for further improvement. This includes ensuring that there is a clear link between how well pupils achieve and how well staff are paid.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	116618
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	405654

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	86
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deborah Saxby
Headteacher	Steve Hollinghurst
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 September 2010
Telephone number	01329 845730
Fax number	01329 847217
Email address	office@st-francis.hants.sch.uk

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