

St Francis of Assisi RC Primary School

Blakehall, Skelmersdale, Lancashire, WN8 9AZ

Inspection dates

21–22 March 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not yet good because

- Not enough teaching is good or better to accelerate progress further. No examples of outstanding teaching were observed during the inspection.
- Standards in Key Stage 1 have been significantly below average for some time and pupils have not achieved as well as they could have done. However, recent improvements in Key Stage 1 are showing signs of improvement for pupils.
- In some lessons work is not hard enough for the more-able pupils to ensure that they learn as well as they can. Consequently, fewer pupils than average exceed the expected level for their age by the time they leave Year 6.
- Though examples of good marking were seen in books it is not consistent through the school.
- The standard of work in topic books is not as good as that in English and mathematics books.

The school has the following strengths

- From a starting point that is below what is usual for their age children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and achieve well.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and behaviour is good.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium achieve well because of the good quality help they receive.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- Leadership and management are good. Procedures for checking the performance of staff are well-focussed, leading to improvements in standards and progress in Key Stage 2 in 2012. Improvements in progress are now evident in Key Stage 1. Success in achieving targets is reflected in the teachers' pay scales.
- Governors are regularly seen in school and have supported the school well through a period of change in leadership.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 teachers leading 23 lessons, three of which were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and observed staff working with small groups of pupils outside the classroom.
- Discussions were held with staff, groups of pupils, members of the governing body, a representative from the local network of schools and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and scrutinised work in their books.
- They looked at the school development plan and the school’s documentation about pupils’ progress, procedures for safeguarding pupils and the monitoring of staff performance. They also looked at the use of funding received through the pupil premium (additional government funding received for children in local authority care, those from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals).
- Inspectors checked the responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. There were eight responses which is insufficient to provide an overview.

Inspection team

Shirley Herring, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Derek Barnes

Additional Inspector

David Deane

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average primary school and all classes apart from one contain a single age group.
- Almost all pupils are from a White British background.
- Approximately half of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is high.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below average.
- The school meets the current floor standards for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics set by the government.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2011, following a period when the school was led by an associate headteacher.
- The school is part of a local network of schools, sharing expertise and supporting continuous professional development and extended services.
- The independent before- and after-school club on site is inspected separately and the report is on the Ofsted website.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better to raise achievement further by:-
 - consistently providing harder work for the more-able pupils so that they achieve as well as they can
 - sharing the good practice in marking pupils' work so that it is consistent across the school
 - making more consistent use of assessment in lessons to check that pupils understand what they are doing and whether they are ready to move on to the next task
 - taking every opportunity to ask searching questions so pupils can explain their ideas and develop their understanding
 - making sure that the quality of work in pupils' topic books supports their progress in English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children enter the school with a range of skills that overall are below what could be expected for their age, particularly language and social skills. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the majority are working at about the expected level for their age by the time they enter Year 1.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in the Year 1 phonics test in 2012 was below average.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have been below average overall for some time and achievement has required improvement. However, the school's assessments and the work in pupils' books show an improvement in standards and progress for pupils currently in Year 2, with pupils working close to the level expected for their age.
- Standards were below average in Key Stage 2 in 2012. However, all but one pupil made the expected progress in English and mathematics, which is above the national average, and a higher proportion made better progress in English and mathematics than nationally. Achievement was good, improving on the less favourable progress in 2011.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well and make better progress than similar pupils nationally.
- Those pupils supported by the pupil premium made better progress than others in school and nationally, narrowing the gap in attainment.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 was below the national average in English and mathematics.
- The current work in pupils' literacy and numeracy books in Year 6 show that the last year's improvement is being maintained. However, the work in pupils' topic books is not as good.
- Attainment in reading is below average in Year 2 and Year 6.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage plan a good range of interesting, practical activities that engage children well in their learning. A strong feature is the way in which all adults talk to children, whatever the activity, and this is helping to improve children's language and communication skills.
- The better lessons are well planned with well chosen activities that motivate pupils well. This was seen in a mathematics lesson in Year 2 where pupils used a good range of tape measures and rulers to measure objects and learn how many centimetres there are in a metre, and link it to their developing understanding of numbers over 100.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed and they give good support to those pupils who need extra help with their learning.
- In some lessons there is insufficient challenge to ensure that the more-able pupils learn as well as they can.
- Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to ask probing questions to encourage pupils to explain their thinking and develop their understanding.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and many give pupils clear suggestions of how to improve their work. However, this is inconsistent through the school.
- In the better lessons teachers make sure that pupils understand what they need to do to be successful in the lesson, and make regular checks to assess whether they understand. However, this good practice is not consistent through the school.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are good, based on mutual respect, and this makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are polite, friendly and well behaved and this makes a good contribution to their learning.
- Governors and pupils feel that behaviour is good, in lessons and in the playground.
- Pupils say that rare incidents of bullying of any sort, such as name calling, are dealt with quickly and effectively by an adult.
- Pupils take responsibilities seriously and carry them out well. Several pupils remarked that older pupils who help at the friendship stops in the playground are good in helping younger pupils.
- Many pupils show kindness and consideration for each other, particularly if someone appears upset.
- They have a very good understanding of how to keep safe with many opportunities in school to learn about safe use of mobile telephones and the internet, as well as keeping safe on the roads and near water.
- They say they feel extremely secure because the site is safe and adults take them seriously if they have a concern.
- Attendance is improving and is now broadly average.

The leadership and management are good

- Good systems for checking the performance of staff are in place and are leading to improvements in teaching and achievement.
- The deployment of extensive additional support for individuals and small groups in Upper Key Stage 2 has helped to accelerate progress for all pupils, but most particularly those pupils with special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium.
- The reorganisation of teaching groups in Key Stage 1 is successful and progress is improving.
- Methods to improve attendance are proving to be effective. Attendance is now broadly average and the number of persistent absentees has halved.
- Good developments in what is provided in the Early Years Foundation Stage, indoors and outside, have been recognised in the award of the Step into Quality kitemark.
- The school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance are generally accurate and provide a good basis for the school's plans to improve. Improvements in attendance and in progress indicate the school has the capacity to improve further.
- The curriculum is generally broad and balanced. However, more could be done to improve standards in literacy and numeracy in other subjects as well as in English and mathematics lessons.
- The school's strengths in pastoral care and in information technology are recognised and shared with other members of the local network of schools.
- Though firmly based on the school's Catholic tradition, pupils have a good awareness of other cultures and the school has gained The International Schools Award.
- The school is committed to providing equal opportunities and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The local authority has given extensive support to help raise achievement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well trained and are well aware of their responsibilities to safeguard pupils and staff and the required procedures and systems are in place. They are a regular presence in school and are familiar with the data related to pupils' performance in relation to other similar school. Governors have an adequate knowledge of the quality of teaching in school and work closely with the headteacher to decide on how good performance should be rewarded and underperformance can be tackled. They know the school well and provide well informed challenge and support for senior leaders. They are well aware of how the pupil premium is being used and what difference it makes to the progress of the pupils who are entitled to it.

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	134598
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	402614

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	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Reid
Headteacher	Terry Naylor
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2010
Telephone number	01695 558560
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