

St Francis C of E Primary School

Horspath Road, Cowley, Oxfordshire, OX4 2QT

Inspection dates

27–28 March 2014

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		Require improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' progress is not consistently strong across the school. It varies because of inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Standards are below average.
- Teachers do not always check pupils' progress closely enough throughout the lesson and, at times, their questioning is not searching enough.
- In writing, pupils' use of grammar and their spelling require improvement, as do their skills in explaining their understanding of the mathematics they use in lessons.
- Teachers do not always adjust their teaching in lessons when it is not helping some pupils to learn and achieve their best.
- Despite recent improvement, efforts made by senior leaders and the governing body have not yet led to enough gains in the quality of teaching for pupils' achievement to be good.
- Checks made by senior leaders and subject leaders do not always focus clearly enough on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress.
- Not all subject leaders are yet making as strong an impact on classroom practice as the school needs.

The school has the following strengths

- Examples of good teaching are found across the school and it is at the heart of the improving picture of pupils' achievement.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is mostly good. As a result, children in Nursery and Reception do well.
- Reading is a success story. Most pupils know how to go about reading unfamiliar words.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. Behaviour is typically good and pupils feel safe at school.
- Enrichment activities broaden pupils' learning well.
- Parents and carers speak warmly about the school. They appreciate the care adults in the school show for their children.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons or parts of lessons, including three observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with a randomly selected group of pupils and with senior and middle leaders. The inspectors met the Chair and another representative of the Governing Body for a discussion. They also met a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including the school’s records of current pupils’ progress, a summary of the school’s self-evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses, records of behaviour, attendance and safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors took into account the 22 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and the school’s own surveys of parental opinions, and they talked to 14 parents and carers informally before school on the second day of the inspection. The parents of two pupils at the school made a written submission about their views.
- Inspectors also considered the 30 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Krishan Sharma, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Diane Rochford	Additional inspector
John Taylor	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Just over half of pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups, with pupils of Pakistani and African backgrounds being the two largest groups. Nearly a third of pupils speak English as an additional language, some joining the school with little or no knowledge of English.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium is above average. This is extra funding provided by the government to support certain groups of pupils. In this school, it applies to pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement and progress.
- The school runs breakfast and after-school clubs.
- The school has experienced considerable staff changes since the last inspection. The headteacher returned from leave during this period. The school was managed by the deputy head as acting headteacher during her absence and one of the middle leaders was temporarily promoted to acting deputy headship. Two full-time teachers and one part-time teacher have left since.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching good or better in all lessons so that pupils make consistently strong progress by making sure that teachers:
 - check the progress and understanding of different groups of pupils more closely throughout the lesson
 - routinely ask probing questions to make pupils think harder and to move their learning on
 - adjust their teaching if pupils find the work given to them too easy or too hard.
- Improve pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that they consistently write with greater accuracy in their use of grammar and spelling
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to develop skills in explaining their work in mathematics.
- Strengthen the roles of leaders and managers, including governance, by:
 - sharpening the monitoring of teaching by focusing on the progress different groups of pupils make in lessons and in their written work
 - using the most effective examples of the subject leadership in the school to fine-tune the skills of other leaders to increase their impact on classroom practice across the school.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Despite the improving picture of pupils' progress from their starting points, it has not been enough for achievement to be good, particularly by the end of Key Stage 2. Currently, progress in lessons and in pupils' written work varies too much.
- Children enter Nursery at levels below those typical for their age, some with no or limited English. Children make a good start and develop their reading, writing and mathematics skills well from their starting points. Progress is gradually improving during Key Stage 1, and this has resulted in 2013, for the first time over many years, in broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2.
- Progress is improving but is uneven during Key Stage 2 and has not resulted in rising standards at the end of Year 6. In 2013, the Year 6 test results dipped to significantly below average overall, in reading and mathematics. The current Year 6 pupils are on track to reach standards that are closer to the average, but writing remains relatively weak.
- In mathematics, pupils' progress is too variable. Pupils enjoy handling numbers. Their calculations are often accurate and most increasingly use them in solving problems. However, some pupils' skills in explaining the mathematics they are using are limited and hold them back.
- Pupils' progress in writing is improving, and most can construct sentences that make sense. However, written work shows that some pupils do not have a good grasp of the correct use of grammar and their spelling is insecure.
- In the 2013 Year 6 national tests, the attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium was just over a term and half behind that of their peers in reading, writing and mathematics, but their progress was similar to or above other pupils'. The school's analysis shows that throughout the school pupils supported by the additional funding are making at least similar progress to others.
- Progress in reading is now a strength. Regular teaching of phonics (linking letters and the sounds that they make) is developing pupils' skills in tackling unfamiliar words well. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check improved in 2013 and was close to the national figure. Pupils enjoy reading for fun and for information they need for their topics in a range of subjects.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. The extra support they receive is planned to match the specific gaps in their learning.
- Most pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those with an African background, achieve as well as others in the school. Occasionally, pupils with a Pakistani background do less well. Senior leaders are alert to their needs and arrange extra help for them. As they move through the school, most pupils who speak English as an additional language do well.
- An increasing number of the most able pupils are now making the progress of which they are capable as a result of improved teaching. The proportion of pupils working at or achieving the higher levels of performance is rising across the school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has not resulted in pupils' learning and progress being consistently good to raise their achievement, particularly during Key Stage 2. Examples of good, but not better, teaching were found throughout the school.
- Teachers check pupils' progress during all lessons, but their checking is not always sharp enough. As a result, pupils do not fully benefit from teachers' expert oral comments to improve their work. This also means teachers do not always adapt their teaching to take into account the changing needs of pupils. Consequently, some pupils do not make the best possible progress.
- Typically, teachers' questioning is skilful at the start of lessons. It helps in assessing pupils'

previous knowledge and sets the scene for new learning. However, the questioning after the introduction to lessons is not always probing enough to test pupils' understanding and to speed up their learning.

- The extra help teaching assistants provide aids pupils' learning well. Pupils who find learning difficult particularly benefit from the personal support.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage adults are highly skilled in settling children. They observe children's progress closely and use the information to plan the next steps in their learning. Staff effectively promote good relationships and a love of learning.
- Typically, teachers expect pupils to work hard and have good strategies to develop pupils' social and communication skills.
- The teaching of disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those known to be eligible for extra pupil premium funding is rightly aimed at improving their achievement and personal development. The extra support helps them to do as well as others. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported and achieve well as a result.
- The teaching of phonics is effective and contributes to the rising achievement in reading. The teaching of writing and mathematics is getting stronger, but more remains to be done to ensure consistency in pupils' achievement in these two areas.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good both in lessons and around the school. Staff and most pupils and parents agree, while a few parents expressed some concern with behaviour, a view which the inspection evidence was not able to endorse.
- Attitudes to learning are positive because adults consciously promote them. As a result, pupils are keen to learn and to do well. Most take pride in their work. A few pupils' attitudes to learning are not of the highest standard when teaching does not maintain their interest. This means teaching does not always succeed in instilling a love of learning.
- Relationships are harmonious and different ethnic groups get on well with each other. Pupils are considerate towards each other and adults. Senior leaders' focus on making pupils aware of their personal responsibility is guiding pupils' conduct well.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents think highly of the care their children receive at school. Pupils say bullying is rare and it is dealt with promptly, if it occurs. They understand bullying may take different forms, such as name calling, cyber bullying or that which is prejudice based. Pupils feel safe at school and know that they have a part to play in keeping themselves and others safe.
- Attendance continues to improve and is above average. Senior leaders and governors are determined to maintain the gains made so far.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leaders and managers have not secured enough improvement to move the school forward since its last inspection. Steps taken by senior leaders so far to raise the quality of teaching and improve pupils' achievement have resulted in some notable success, demonstrating the school's strengthening capacity to improve. However, inconsistencies remain in both areas.
- Checks on teaching by senior and subject leaders during lessons and the review of pupils' work do not focus sharply enough on the impact teaching has on the progress of different groups. This lack of rigour in checking teaching results in leaders having an incomplete view of its quality to iron out inconsistencies.
- Subject leaders are much more active in leading developments in their areas of responsibility. The leadership of English is effective, particularly in improving the teaching of reading and helping pupils to become competent readers, but leadership is not as strong in other subjects.
- Regular checks and reviews of pupils' progress help senior leaders, staff and governors to know

how well different groups are performing. Good use is made of this information to deploy extra support for vulnerable groups, and ensures equality of opportunity.

- Arrangements for setting targets for teachers are clearly linked to improving pupil achievement and decisions on teachers' pay. Training takes into account the goals set for individual teachers.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to provide one-to-one and small-group support for eligible pupils. This support has been substantially effective in narrowing the gap in attainment of this group of pupils and others in the school.
- The use of primary sports funding is increasing pupils' participation in a wider range of physical activities and competitive events. External expertise is used well to help improve pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles, physical performance levels and teaching of physical education.
- The range of taught subjects and activities are suitably focused on developing pupils' basic skills and their personal development. Together with the extensive range of enrichment activities, including breakfast and after-school clubs, the school contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Most parents are very satisfied with what the school does for their children. Parents, including those from minority ethnic groups, find the school welcoming.
- The local authority makes a worthwhile contribution to the school's provision for literacy and numeracy. Joint observations of teaching and reviews of pupils' work have supported leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body keeps itself well informed about pupils' performance data and what it says about the school's results in relation to other schools nationally. Governors are aware of the strengths in teaching, but are less clear about the detail of its weaknesses. The governing body expects the management of teachers' performance to be clearly linked to their effectiveness in the classroom in order to recognise good and tackle less-than-good teaching. It is sufficiently skilled in holding senior leaders to account for the school's performance. The governing body takes a keen interest in the use of pupil premium and primary schools sport funds and their impact on pupils' achievement and they tackle any discrimination. Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements.

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	123172
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	431039

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	320
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Freda Wolfenden
Headteacher	Gillian Standing
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2012
Telephone number	01865 486190
Fax number	N/A
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