

St Francis Catholic Primary School, Maldon

London Road, Maldon, CM9 6HN

Inspection dates 30 September–1 October 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress. By the end of Key Stage 2, they reach standards that are above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive effective support from teaching assistants and make good progress from their different starting points.
- The executive headteacher, ably supported by other senior staff, provides strong and effective leadership. Leaders have ensured that teaching is good, so that pupils achieve well.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Attendance is well above average.
- The school provides very effectively for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium generally attain similar standards to their peers in school.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is good and has a very positive impact on their learning. They treat each other with respect, showing the positive ethos that pervades the school.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They look after each other and have confidence that adults and their friends will take care of them.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not good enough to make achievement outstanding.
- Outdoor resources and activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not provide enough opportunities for children to develop knowledge and skills in some areas of learning.
- Pupils do not do as well in writing as they do in reading and mathematics.
- Occasionally, some teachers fail to plan work that provides enough challenge for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons, including two jointly with the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher. One inspector also observed an assembly.
- Discussions were held with the executive headteacher and other school leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors also met with pupils formally and informally around the school.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about their reading habits. They also scrutinised a sample of pupils' workbooks.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documents including development plans, the school's evaluation of its performance, governing body minutes and documentation related to behaviour, child protection and safeguarding.
- The inspectors took account of 59 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the views expressed by parents as they arrived at school to pick up their children. They also considered the school's own survey of parents' views and the responses to staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Paul Tomkow, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Anthony Woodward

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. The numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language is extremely low.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are receiving school support is below average. The proportion of those who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (extra government funding for specific groups of pupils including those known to be eligible for free school meals and children in local authority care) is well below average.
- The school has recently been through a period of significant change. The previous headteacher and an assistant headteacher left the school in July 2014. The school has an executive headteacher. At the time of this inspection, she had only been in post for four weeks.
- A strategic intervention board, which includes representatives of the local authority and the diocese, currently shares the responsibility for governance of the school with the governing body.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, so that achievement becomes outstanding, by ensuring that teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills by writing at length on a more regular basis.
- Provide outdoor learning activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage that give children the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills in all areas of learning.
- Improve governance by ensuring that the governing body plays a more active role in monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Despite recent changes, under the direction of the new executive headteacher, the leadership team has ensured that the school continues to run smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Leaders have also made sure that the school has maintained its well-ordered, caring and purposeful atmosphere.
- Action taken by school leaders helped to ensure that standards of achievement improved in 2014, particularly in reading and mathematics. The quality of care, guidance and support remains a strength of the school.
- Within a short space of time, the new leadership team has developed a good understanding of what the school does well and what needs to be improved. Systems are in place to make sure that regular checks are made on the quality of teaching. Middle leaders, such as subject leaders, now have an explicit role in monitoring standards in English and mathematics. Provision for Reception children is well led. Plans have also been made to ensure that teachers have more opportunities for professional development, both within school and on external courses.
- The school provides a broad and exciting curriculum which includes many opportunities for learning outside of the classroom. For example, Year 6 pupils recently spent a week at an outdoor pursuits centre. The school has prepared well for the new National Curriculum and has developed a suitable new assessment system which it will be implementing over the coming year.
- The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through its strong and caring ethos. Adults successfully promote qualities such as empathy, respect for others and kindness. Pupils are considerate towards others and relate extremely well to adults. They show a good understanding of different religions and of what it takes to be a good member of the school community. Through assemblies and events such as charity fundraising and residential visits, pupils gain a better understanding of themselves, the local community and the wider world in which they live. They are well prepared for life in modern British society.
- The school has made good use of the primary sports funding. It has been used, in part, to extend the quality of the provision for swimming. This has ensured that all Key Stage 2 pupils can swim. Through the appointment of a part-time sports coach, pupils' involvement in after-school clubs has risen significantly. Many of the after-school clubs that adults run are well attended and, in some instances, oversubscribed.
- School leaders have ensured that appropriate safeguarding procedures are in place and that pupils are well cared for.
- A minority of parents expressed concern through Parent View about the effectiveness of leadership and management over recent months. However, most parents, including those who inspectors spoke to during the course of the inspection, recognise the recent improvements that have been made and believe that they are already benefiting pupils.
- The local authority has provided effective support and challenge to the school. During the latter part of the summer term, the local authority worked with the Diocese of Brentwood to strengthen governance and ensure that an experienced and effective leadership team was in place for the start of the school year.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Governing Body has been strengthened recently, through support from the local authority and the Diocese of Brentwood. The arrangements which have been put in place have ensured that there is clear focus on achievement and the quality of teaching. Governance is now proving to be effective.
 - The governing body is keen to support the school and many governors visit on a regular basis to meet with subject leaders and to be kept informed about their areas of responsibility.
 - Governors have ensured that all safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
 - Governors are aware of how the school is using the additional funding it receives for the pupil premium

and primary sports and the impact that this funding has had.

- Governors accept that, in the past, they have relied too much on the headteacher to provide information about the school's performance. As a result they have not been sufficiently well informed to provide appropriate challenge to school leaders about the performance of teachers and the impact this was having on pupils' progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This has a strong and positive impact on their learning. Pupils are keen to learn, speak confidently about their work and they want to do their best at all times. Pupils enjoy school and the wide range of opportunities that it provides. They take pride in their work and always try hard in lessons.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school helps pupils to understand how to stay safe in different situations and the importance of becoming responsible citizens. The school also ensures that pupils understand how to protect themselves when using the internet.
- Relationships between pupils and the adults who teach them are excellent. This is true right from Reception, when children settle in happily from the start. Pupils are respectful and polite. Teachers and teaching assistants successfully encourage pupils to work co-operatively and to value each other's thoughts and contributions. As a result, pupils work well with each other and develop high self-esteem.
- The school has good systems in place for promoting good attendance. Good attendance is recognised and rewarded, and poor attendance is followed up rigorously. Attendance has been above the national average for the past three years.
- Most of the parents who completed Parent View agreed that the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved. The majority also felt that the school deals effectively with bullying. However, some parents did not feel that this is the case. Inspectors talked at length to pupils about this issue. Pupils stated that bullying was extremely rare at the school. They also said that they have full confidence in adults at the school to sort out any incidents of bullying should they occur.
- Pupils appreciate the importance of helping others who are less fortunate than themselves. Pupils raise funds for different charities. For example, they are currently supporting Operation Christmas Child. Pupils also enjoy taking additional responsibilities, such as helping children from the Reception class in the dining room and acting as 'Peace Makers' in the playground.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers convey high expectations of learning and behaviour, and pupils respond very well. As a result, most pupils, including disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs, disadvantaged pupils and the most able, make good progress and achieve well from their different starting points.
- The quality of marking has improved recently. Although teachers have always marked work regularly, they rarely provided good advice to pupils about how to improve their work. Now, when teachers mark work, they highlight strengths and areas for development. Each day, 'Fix It' time is provided for pupils to review teachers' comments. Pupils are responding well to the good advice that is provided.
- Teachers generally use assessment well to provide work that is neither too easy nor too hard for different groups, so that pupils generally make good progress. Teachers regularly assess pupils' work and use questioning effectively in lessons in order to challenge pupils and establish their levels of understanding. They then rephrase explanations or alter tasks in order to help pupils learn more effectively.
- Pupils are given regular opportunities to write for different purposes. During one lesson, pupils were totally engrossed in a task which required them to act as newspaper reporters, writing about the first moon landing. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to write at length, and this means that

they do not make as much progress as they could.

- The teaching of mathematics is usually good and pupils make good progress as a result. Where teaching is most effective, pupils are given opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills to solve problems. For example, pupils in year 5 had to choose the most effective strategy for solving complex multiplication challenges. They did this confidently and accurately making good progress in their learning.
- The pace of learning is generally good in classes across the school. Teachers provide work which gives a good level of challenge to pupils of all abilities.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers and support learning well. They provide good support to pupils, both within lessons and when working with small groups. They are particularly effective at supporting those pupils at risk of falling behind with their work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- By the time they leave St Francis, the vast majority of pupils have developed the knowledge and skills necessary for the next stage of their education. The percentage of pupils reaching high overall standards in reading, writing and mathematics is above the national average.
- Most children join the school with good social skills and the ability to communicate effectively. They get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where good teaching ensures that they quickly develop the basic skills needed to read, write and work with numbers.
- In Year 1, pupils make good progress in their use and understanding of phonics (the links between sounds and letters in words). In the 2013 phonics screening check, pupils attained results that were higher than the national average. Similar results were achieved in 2014.
- Pupils make good progress across Key Stage 1. In 2013 attainment was significantly above the national average in all subjects. The progress pupils make in mathematics and writing is not as rapid as it is in reading. This is because the work in Year 1 sometimes lacks challenge and does not always build on the skills and knowledge that pupils develop in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Most pupils develop a love of reading and read often, both at home and at school. As a result, pupils make good progress in reading as they move through the school. By the end of Key Stage 2, overall attainment is above the national average.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics and attain well. However, although pupils' attainment in writing is above the national average not enough pupils make better than expected progress. This is because pupils they are not given enough opportunity to write at length during lessons.
- The most able pupils make good progress as they move through the school. They quickly become competent and confident readers and attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 is well above average. They also achieve well in mathematics, but the progress they make in writing is not as rapid.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their different starting points. Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that programmes of work are structured to meet their needs and they provide additional support when required. This helps to ensure that these pupils are able to make good gains in their learning.
- The small number of pupils entitled to support from the pupil premium make good progress and attain well. The results they achieve are better than those by similar pupils nationally and their achievement is often similar to, and sometimes above, that of their peers in school.
- During their time at St Francis, pupils acquire good knowledge and skills across a range of subjects other than mathematics and English. They sing beautifully, have access to a wide range of activities

related to drama and the arts and achieve well in sporting events.

The early years provision

is good

- When children start in the Reception class their social skills and language development are above those typical for children of their age. In other aspects, such as literacy and mathematics, their attainment is broadly typical. Children are confident, well-behaved and take the new experiences associated with starting school in their stride.
- Children, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, make good progress in the Reception class due to effective teaching and regular, careful assessment. As a result, most children leave the Early Years Foundation Stage having achieved a good level of development. This means they start the next phase of their education with the skills and knowledge necessary to move on in their learning.
- Children behave well. They know what is expected of them because the transition from home and pre-school settings is managed well. Routines are soon established and children quickly develop confidence and a positive attitude to learning.
- Children show good levels of concentration when choosing an activity. There is a good range of activities on offer to help children to develop across all areas of learning. However, in the outdoor area, resources are limited and this sometimes restricts learning opportunities.
- There are good relationships between adults and children. Although children had been in school for a very short time, at the time of this inspection, they worked well together, sharing and talking confidently to each other and to adults, including inspectors.
- Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Adults provide a good level of care, guidance and support. They ensure that there are good procedures in place to keep children safe at all times whilst in school. Provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Children learn to share and to be kind to their peers. This ensures that children feel safe and secure and are ready to learn.

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	115198
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	449317

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	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lyn Collins
Headteacher	Sarah Ginzler-Maher (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	09 July 2008
Telephone number	01621 856698
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