

St Francis de Sales Catholic Infant and Nursery School

Margaret Road, Walton, Liverpool, Merseyside, L4 3RX

Inspection dates

11–12 November 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils make outstanding progress and reach levels that ensure they are very well prepared for their next stage of education.
- Leaders at all levels have an uncompromising commitment to pupils' success, and have high expectations which the pupils consistently rise to meet. They have secured outstanding teaching in all areas of the school.
- Teachers have encouraged pupils to develop a love of reading and all pupils are positive and keen to learn. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are happy and confident. Lessons are exciting and interesting, and as a result, pupils make exceptional progress.
- A particular strength of the school is the use of the open-plan teaching spaces. Pupils regularly mix with other classes, making friends easily and have access to extra resources which support their learning well.
- Teachers plan exceptionally well for pupils' learning, organising interesting activities that support pupils' academic, social, moral, spiritual and cultural development equally well. Feedback is helpful, although is not always in language children can read for themselves.
- Teaching assistants are a strength of the school, working alongside teachers to ensure all pupils have the very best support and appropriate resources for their needs at all times.
- Governors understand the strengths of the school and challenge leaders in areas that could still improve further. They have a good balance of skills to support and challenge the school in all areas.
- Governors have carefully managed finances so that the pupils have access to the best resources possible and their experiences are enriched continually across the school year.
- The school's curriculum includes exciting trips and visitors, and all themes and topics include opportunities for pupils to read, write and investigate using their mathematics skills. This leads to pupils enjoying learning and gaining confidence in using their skills in real situations.
- Pupils' behaviour is exceptional. They are well mannered, polite and respectful, and are welcoming to new pupils who join the school. They gain confidence and are able to work with others, with staff or on their own with an equal amount of focus and determination.
- The early years provision for pupils closes any gaps in their skills very well, so that all are prepared for the next stage of their education and can access the learning in Year 1 equally well.
- The school has improved since the last inspection. A more rigorous use of data on pupil performance has ensured that all are making equally good progress and that all pupils' needs are met well. Middle leaders are now starting to take more ownership of data relating to their areas of responsibility.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 sessions led by both teachers and teaching assistants.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and saw a wide range of pupils' work including work from pupils who have recently left the school.
- Discussions were held with representatives of the governing body, the school's local authority support officer, and senior leaders. They also spoke to those who manage special educational needs, cross-curricular literacy, mathematics and a range of staff and pupils.
- Inspectors analysed the school's documents and development plans from the last three years, including external moderators and consultants, tests and behaviour records.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's processes for assessment and the tracking of pupil progress, and a wide range of information from the early years.
- Inspectors took account of the 18 responses on Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) and the most recent parent survey undertaken by the school.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses from 35 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Rebecca Lawton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Bimla Kumari	Additional Inspector
Ben Cox	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This large nursery and infant school is almost double the size of similar schools.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds, and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is low.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The early years offers part-time provision for nursery pupils, and children attend in different formats according to their age, some starting very late in the school year. Some pupils also start at various points across the school year in other year groups.
- There has recently been a change to the leadership structure within the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the impact of middle leaders by ensuring that they use new data efficiently to inform evaluations and planning for their areas of responsibility.
- Continue to adapt teachers' feedback to pupils to use simpler language so that pupils can read teachers comments themselves, so as to challenge them further.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The leadership of the school has gone through a recent change, and is now distributed more effectively across the school. A culture of excellence in teaching and high expectations for behaviour and care has been established well by leaders in all areas and at all levels. Leaders have planned effectively and have implemented innovative strategies to tackle pupils' needs. As a result, pupils' achievements have improved from good to outstanding.
- The pupil premium funding is being monitored rigorously, and is being spent effectively. The pupils it supports are performing well in all areas and by the time they leave school there is almost no difference between their achievement and those of their classmates.
- There are no differences between the progress of girls, boys or minority ethnic groups, as the school's work to tackle discrimination and ensure equality of opportunity is well managed and effective.
- Middle leaders are mostly new to role due to the recent staffing restructure; the handover was carefully planned so that there was no dip in the outcomes for pupils. The new leaders are making very rapid progress in adding to their skills and developing their leadership roles but have not yet had the opportunity to use up-to-date data to inform planning for improvements in their areas of responsibility.
- The curriculum is particularly well managed. Mathematics, reading and writing are taught by using the open-plan structure particularly effectively. This good planning enables pupils to work in ability groups and with different pupils and staff at different times as best fits their needs, ensuring they make swift progress.
- Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is planned efficiently, and a large number of trips, visitors and resources are used well to enrich the pupils' learning. Pupils are given appropriate preparation for life in modern Britain.
- All provision for the pupils' safeguarding needs are effective and managed well and the school is a safe and welcoming environment.
- The school works well with parents and provides extra outreach activities that parents welcome.
- The local authority's school improvement service link is used by the school when needed and provides a link to a wide range of networks and external partners.
- The primary sport premium is being spent well to enrich pupils' physical education (PE) lessons and further develop staff's skills and confidence. Pupils describe the improvements to PE as 'exciting'.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors are well informed and are linking performance to pay effectively. Finances and the spending of the pupil premium are managed closely, and the school is particularly well resourced.
 - Governors are effectively challenging the school to improve through a detailed knowledge of the current progress of children, the quality of teaching in the school and a clear understanding of the local and national picture. They have a broad range of skills and support the school in all areas.
 - Recently, governors have supported innovative approaches to improving pupils' performance and well being, for example, the school massage programme, and they carefully monitor these to check for a positive impact on pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are happy, confident and enjoy coming to school. They make friends easily and teachers help them to develop awareness of other pupils' feelings which makes them very considerate and kind.
- Teachers ensure pupils have clear, stable routines, which helps them to gain independence and leads to smooth movement between activities. They are able to maintain concentration exceptionally well and are resilient learners.
- Pupils are eager and enthusiastic, curious and keen to improve. They enjoy solving problems, and teachers provide them with fun and interesting activities through which they explore a wide range of topics. Pupils return homework with creative and thoughtful responses that show clear understanding of the classroom learning.
- Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying, but report that no bullying happens in school.
- Pupils' attendance has improved, and is currently in line with national averages. This is down to the

effective work done by the Inclusion officer who works well with families, ensuring that improvements to the attendance of all groups of pupils have been maintained.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Procedures are secure and the school is a clean, well-maintained, safe and welcoming environment.
- Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for in school, and the school has a comprehensive programme to ensure pupils know how to stay safe online.
- The pupils say they know who to speak to if they have any worries and have confidence in the school staff.
- The large number of trips and visits are carefully planned and risk assessed.
- The school works with external agencies very effectively to ensure pupils are safe and well cared for, and pupils' attendance has increased since the last inspection.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers' skills and passions are used exceptionally well to benefit pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants have a wide range of expertise which has enhanced the development of provision in, for example technology, music, physical education and support for pupils with disabilities and special needs. This means that lessons are designed and reviewed by experts with the very latest skills and information, and pupils make excellent progress in all areas.
- Teachers and teaching assistants in all years work tirelessly to ensure all pupils are making the best possible progress. Lessons and activities are planned in detail and all areas of learning are covered extremely well.
- Interventions to close any gaps in pupils' skills or knowledge are used very effectively, and by the time they leave school any gaps in achievement have gone. Some pupils have additional reading, writing or mathematics support and these pupils quickly increase their levels of attainment to match those of their classmates.
- Teachers build a love of reading through interesting and exciting activities linked to early reading and exploring themes. The library is well stocked and pupils use it regularly. Pupils say they like to spend time in the library exploring and reading to each other, and this time is planned for by staff. Reading logs show pupils read often and parents support the reading curriculum.
- The open-plan classrooms are used very effectively by teachers, who separate pupils into different groups so that they make a wide circle of friends and have access to the best possible amount of space and resources possible. For example, in some lessons pupils 'carousel' through a range of different activities, some led by staff, some on their own or with friends so that they have time to explore and then check their learning and understanding with staff. This leads to pupils gaining confidence and skills quickly and effectively.
- Writing is taught particularly well and the majority of pupils make rapid progress in their writing. Opportunities for older pupils to develop their writing skills are used across the whole curriculum and pupils say they enjoy writing. Early mark making is supported by fun activities such as making shapes in foam or sand, and staff use this enthusiasm to build core skills quickly.
- The planning and delivery of mathematics is a strength of the school. Pupils are given a very wide range of resources and activities which support their development of key skills and problem solving which ensures that almost all make rapid progress.
- Teaching assistants very successfully support pupils in both their academic and personal development. Teaching assistants are keen to develop their skills so that pupils have the support they need. For example, some have learned sign language so that pupils with hearing impairment can have equally good support from a range of staff.
- Teachers plan for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development particularly well. Themes are linked across the curriculum and are carefully balanced against core literacy and numeracy skills. For example, South American music was introduced to pupils who had significant speech and language delay. The teacher skilfully included the development of correct 'p' sounds for 'pan pipes' by having the children blow over straws, so that they were learning correct pronunciation, how to play instruments and about other cultures all effortlessly as part of the fun and play.
- In books, the feedback teachers give to pupils on their work is regular and detailed. Currently, these comments are mostly used by staff as they are not in 'child-friendly' language. The school is now planning to adapt the language used in books so that the pupils can read their feedback for themselves, which

enable pupils to move forward even without staff explaining the next steps in person.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children make rapid progress in Nursery and Reception. Their excellent progress is very successfully built upon in Year 1 and 2. As a result, the pupils, many of whom start the school with skills below those typically expected for their age in language and communication, reach above average standards in reading and writing and exceptionally strong standards in mathematics as seen in their work.
- The very small number of pupils who do not reach the good level of development benchmark by the end of Reception is due to some pupils starting the school well after the normal starting points, and in a small number of other cases due to pupils having significantly delayed speech when they start school. These pupils make accelerated progress and catch up with their classmates by the end of Year 2.
- In Years 1 and 2 pupils make rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They gain skills and abilities that ensure they are very well prepared to start junior school by the end of Year 2.
- Although a small number of pupils in the past have not reached the expected phonics level in their first check, this is due to the very low level of speech and language that these pupils have when they start school, and the fact that not all pupils start school in September. For these pupils who do not reach the level the first time, interventions ensure that they soon catch up and reach the expected standard by Year 2.
- Pupils are supported in learning to read through a very well planned system which enables them to make progress at different speeds according to their ability and needs. All staff are involved and pupils can progress to different groups as they master reading skills and this encourages pupils to make rapid progress. Pupils in Year 2 were heard to read at levels well above those expected for their age, and reading logs show pupils in all years are enthusiastic readers.
- The gap between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and their peers is gone by the time they reach the end of Key Stage 1. This is because the support and interventions that these pupils receive is very well targeted to their needs.
- The most able pupils are challenged to achieve the highest standards, and many are well above the standard typical for their age by the end of the early years. In Years 1 and 2 additional challenging activities ensure that they are making very rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, one child was seen who had filled five literacy exercise books in Year 2 because she was so happy to write and complete additional tasks which extended her skills in writing. In these books, she had written at length about how much she enjoyed creating stories and how much she liked the work her teachers gave her.
- All pupils do exceptionally well in developing their mathematics skills. They are given regular, interesting and creative activities which very successfully develop their use of number and problem solving skills across the curriculum. The good quality resources and innovative teaching skills ensure pupils make rapid progress in mathematics. A significant proportion reach Level 3 by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by adults who have specialised training in how to meet their particular needs. Flexible and innovative strategies ensure that these pupils have no barriers to learning and make progress that is at least good and often outstanding in all areas.
- Some pupils join the school, at different times in the school year. They settle quickly and make rapid progress, but do not always reach the same high standards as those who have had more time to benefit from the outstanding teaching.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- The early years provision is particularly effective. The staff use both the indoors and outdoors resources exceptionally well to support pupils' development in all areas of learning. Teachers and teaching assistants are equally highly skilled in supporting pupils to achieve the highest levels possible.
- A large proportion of pupils begin school with skills below those expected for their age. Staff are aware of individual pupils' needs and carefully target their support in order to ensure that no pupil is disadvantaged. Leaders monitor this rigorously and the impact of this is that the vast majority, almost 90%, make more than expected progress from the start of Nursery to the end of Reception.
- Leadership of the early years is very effective. Plans ensure that all pupils' needs are met and a broad and balanced curriculum is supported by rich experiences and resources. Teachers and teaching assistants are imaginative in creating activities for pupils to explore their learning. For example, using foam to make

letter shapes, or playing with puppets to encourage language development.

- Teachers and teaching assistants are both monitoring pupils' progress closely. They take effective action immediately if progress slows and due to this pupils make rapid progress in all areas. All staff are skilled at adapting tasks to pupils' needs and good quality training ensures all staff are up to date with the latest best practice.
- Where children have particular needs, for example delays with developing their speech and language, teachers adapt the curriculum. They make sure that these pupils have additional opportunities and support to ensure they are well prepared for Year 1, and make rapid progress.
- Children are given valuable opportunities that support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development particularly well. For example, in lessons teachers bring in real instruments from different countries.
- Children's behaviour is excellent. They learn to follow clear, sensible routines and due to this they develop independence, self-management and valuable social skills. Good manners are very much a part of normal practice in the early years.
- Those children who join during the school year, including those who join very late on are welcomed and quickly make friends. Children happily share and discuss their learning, and are enthusiastic and interested learners.

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	104651
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	448261

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	383
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr John Thompson
Headteacher	Miss Clare Suffield
Date of previous school inspection	30 November 2009
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