

St Francis Catholic Primary School

Nursery Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B19 1PH

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- As a result of purposeful leadership, the teaching is good. Along with strong pastoral care, this ensures that pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Governors are well informed of the standards that different groups of pupils attain and execute their statutory duties well.
- Pupils, including those who are disabled and who have special educational needs, as well as those pupils who speak English as an additional language are making good progress in learning.
- Teaching is good and all staff ensure that their pupils get all the help that they need.
- Pupils feel safe and secure because of the excellent work that the school has done with local businesses in the community to create 'safe havens' outside school time.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning are a direct result of good attendance, exciting learning opportunities and the school's strong systems of pastoral support.
- Parents are delighted with all aspects of school life, especially the way in which the school promotes respect and tolerance of different cultures.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and outside the classroom. The school is a harmonious community where every pupil is valued.
- The school promotes effectively British values, such as tolerance of diversity, and pupils appreciate their own and other cultures. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school's exciting curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Children learn well in the early years due to secure routines and good teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching does not always challenge the most-able pupils in Key Stage 1 or in Years 3 and 4 in writing at length and explaining how they solve problems in mathematics.
- In the early years, teachers do not give their pupils sufficient opportunities to form their letters correctly.
- Subject and other leaders do not do enough to check that staff give the most-able pupils sufficient opportunities to write at length and solve real-life problems in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 28 lessons, covering all year groups. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and heard several pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, senior leaders, and three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body. They conducted a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a questionnaire completed by 33 staff, alongside looking at the schools' own surveys of parents' views as very few parents completed the online questionnaire, so responses on Parent View were not available to inspectors. Inspectors also held informal discussions with parents.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including minutes of meetings of the governing body, school self-evaluation, school improvement plans, behaviour records, and documentation relating to safeguarding. Documents relating to the monitoring of teaching and subsequent staff performance management were also examined.
- The school's child protection and safeguarding procedures were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mary Maybank	Additional Inspector
Phil Unsworth	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than an average-sized primary school.
- Children in the Reception classes attend full time.
- The majority of pupils come from minority ethnic groups; the largest groups being Black Caribbean and Black African. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average, although there are no children at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding is above average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for primary schools, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection, several subject leaders have been appointed, some of who are new to their roles.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in mathematics and writing so that the most-able pupils make consistently good or better progress in Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4 by:
 - providing a higher level of challenge and ensuring that pupils are consistently stretched in lessons
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length in English and other subjects
 - ensuring that pupils have fluent skills of mathematical recall and can explain their mathematical reasoning when solving problems
 - ensuring that there are regular opportunities for problem solving and for pupils to applying what they have learnt to real-life situations.
- Improve children's learning in the early years by ensuring that more attention is paid to correct letter formation both in teacher-led and child-chosen activities.
- Ensure that subject and other leaders focus their monitoring on checking that teachers provide pupils with opportunities to develop their skills by writing at length in different subjects and through mathematical problem solving in real-life situations.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led by the headteacher. Together with the senior leadership team, he has successfully improved all aspects of provision and raised the performance of pupils since the last inspection. He has placed the school at the centre of the community through his relentless drive at ensuring that pupils and families from different ethnic groups are given good opportunities to improve their life chances.
- Together with the deputy headteacher and well-informed governing body, the headteacher has created a culture of high expectations by ensuring that all groups of pupils achieve well in a calm and orderly learning environment. Targets in the school development plan relating to pupils' progress are ambitious.
- The headteacher has led teaching well by ensuring that all staff receive the right training as identified through his careful management of their performance. He has created a highly effective team. Staff morale is high and all staff and volunteers within the school are well managed so that they make a good contribution to pupils' welfare and learning.
- Leaders with responsibilities for subjects (some of whom are new to their role) monitor all aspects of provision but have not checked that pupils write at length in English and other subjects and that they have regular opportunities for problem solving in mathematics that are linked to real-life situations.
- Subject leaders know how well pupils are doing because of regular pupil progress reviews and careful monitoring. The Inclusion manager and the learning mentor have been thorough in their work to ensure that all pupils have the correct academic and pastoral support.
- Teachers are set challenging targets for improvement due to regular monitoring of teaching. Teachers' assessments of pupils' achievements are accurate; this is confirmed by external moderators.
- Much work has gone into developing the new curriculum and assessment practices with other schools and this has built up a strong professional network. The school is developing new ways of assessing pupils' progress in different subjects. However, the school is still at the early stage of implementing these methods.
- There is no discrimination. The strong implementation of British values ensures that all pupils are valued as individuals. Relationships are strong and everyone has an equal opportunity to achieve well. Pupils are well prepared for life in a multicultural society.
- The curriculum is broad, although there are not enough opportunities for problem solving in mathematics, especially in Years 3 and 4. The curriculum is enhanced by memorable learning experiences for the pupils, such as residential trips and visits to places of interest. Spanish is taught in Years 2-6 and this contributes to pupils' knowledge of different cultures.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The school's motto of 'truth and love' is apparent in the strong relationships in the school. Everyone is expected to develop their talents and to do their very best.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils by, for example, providing good-quality one-to-one and small-group support. This has been most effective in phonics (letters and the sounds they make), where all pupils are on course to exceed the national pass mark for the phonics screening. Throughout the school, disadvantaged pupils make good progress and the school's in-house data shows that the gap between them and all pupils nationally is closing rapidly.
- The school has made good use of its primary sports funding. It is used to widen opportunities for pupils to take part in sporting activities and to improve teachers' expertise through working with specialist coaches. A wide range of sporting opportunities is offered after school. These are very well attended by the pupils and this contributes well to pupils' healthier lifestyles.

- Links between home and school are very strong. Parents express very positive views about the school, especially the school's excellent endeavours at keeping pupils safe, both in and outside of school.
- Safeguarding procedures, including those for child protection meet current requirements. Their effectiveness for ensuring that pupils feel safe outside school time is exemplary. The governors, staff and pupils have worked with various local businesses and organisations, such as 'City Year', 'Citizens UK' and 'Big Community', at ensuring that everyone is kept up to date with any potential dangers that may be facing the local community. This has had a very positive effect on keeping pupils safe. Staff have attended safeguarding training, are well informed and are kept fully up to date with new legislation.
- A newly appointed local authority adviser is in the process of getting to know the school. The school works well with local schools and has been provided with both challenge and support from advisers from the Birmingham Catholic Partnership, who have verified the school's self-evaluation.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors work relentlessly at ensuring that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and that monies for pupil premium and sports premium are spent wisely. They receive regular updates from the senior leadership team on the progress all groups of pupils are making and they know how well teachers are doing through regular visits to the school and information given to them about staff performance management.
 - Governors have a clear understanding of data and they offer both support and challenge to leaders, while ensuring that all pupils have the help that they need. They reward good teaching only where there has been sufficient evidence to demonstrate accelerated progress of all groups. Their decision to employ support staff has paid dividends and all groups are making good progress in relation to their targets.
 - Governors have made an outstanding contribution to helping develop a safe community by working with pupils and local businesses in overcoming obstacles to pupils' safety.
 - Governors contribute to school improvement planning and regularly check progress towards success criteria in the school development plan.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons, pupils demonstrate good learning habits. They offer help to one another in lessons and they show respect for school property.
- Behaviour around the school is good and older pupils help the younger pupils to read. This cements secure friendships and trusting relationships. All pupils get on well together.
- The work of the learning mentor, the inclusion manager and volunteers from City Year (a volunteering group) have been instrumental in improving the behaviour of a small group of pupils with behaviour difficulties. Pupils are given time to talk through their responses to situations with an adult, and this is helping them develop a clear sense of what constitutes unacceptable behaviour.
- Staff apply the behaviour policy consistently and this enables pupils to feel secure and behave well, as they know what is expected of them. Pupils are proud of their school and their achievements. Good opportunities throughout the curriculum to develop pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, together with the high emphasis placed on developing British values, ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Exclusions have gone down in the last year. The school has robust systems for managing exclusions, and these pupils are well integrated back into the school where there is evidence to show that their behaviour is improving. The school has tried to find alternative provision for a handful of pupils that need specialist care but, until this happens, they are integrated into school life.
- Attendance has improved and is now above the national average.

- Pupils are generally attentive in lessons but, on occasions, the most-able pupils lose concentration when they are given work that is too easy for them.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Some aspects of this work are exemplary. For example, pupils are active champions in the community and have highlighted potential dangers that can affect them. As a result, businesses in the school vicinity display 'safe havens' signs where pupils can enter should they feel unsafe. This has been instrumental in developing a safer community for the pupils.
- The school provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to learn about the potential dangers in the neighbourhood. Visits by the police and fire officers teach pupils about personal safety on the street and what to do should this be threatened for any reason.
- Pupils know about the dangers of cyber-bullying and risk associated in using the internet. They know what to do should they be under pressure to join gangs or if they were approached to belong to any group with extremist views.
- Pupils told inspectors that there is no name-calling in school and that there is always a trusted adult at hand should they need to talk to someone.
- Risk assessments and policies to keep children safe are of the highest standard. They are regularly updated and evaluated for fitness for purpose. All staff have received training in identifying any symptoms of abuse, emotional upset and possible radicalisation in vulnerable pupils. All have completed up-to-date training in child protection.
- Parents are very pleased with everything that the school does to keep their children safe.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is consistently good. It has been monitored effectively and staff have been given pointers and training so that they can improve. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they have improved their marking, which is now giving pupils a clear indication of what they need to do to improve.
- Reading is taught effectively. In guided reading sessions, pupils are taught how to look for information in texts and how to describe the author's intentions through the choice of words used. Teachers ensure that pupils read with both intonation and understanding. One pupil told inspectors that the books that the school has purchased have enabled her to 'enter a magical world' and develop her imagination.
- The teaching of writing and mathematics is good but not as strong as that in reading. This is because there are not enough opportunities for pupils, especially those who are most able in Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4, to write at length. Sometimes teachers do not expect enough of these pupils and accept just a few sentences, when in fact these pupils are capable of writing a lot more.
- In mathematics, teachers miss the chance for pupils to apply the problem-solving skills they have learnt in lessons to real-life problems. Pupils sometimes struggle with explaining their reasoning behind the approach that they use to solve problems and they experience difficulty recalling number facts, timetables and number bonds.
- Through skilful questioning, which had been identified on the school improvement plan as a target for improvement, teachers check what pupils know and understand. In Year 6 mathematics lessons, the class teacher and adults who support pupils continually talked with pupils about their learning, especially when attempting to answer test questions.
- Teachers sort out any misconceptions quickly because they ask the right questions and have good systems of immediately checking pupils' understanding. The school has implemented a very effective system that operates in every class where each pupil has three cups: a red cup that demonstrates that

help is needed, a yellow cup that denotes that the pupil is willing to have a go independently at tackling the work, and a green cup denoting that the pupil has understood everything and can work unaided. Coupled with the good-quality of teachers' marking, identifying for pupils the next steps they need to take to move their learning on, this system is having a positive impact on the progress of all groups of pupils.

- Adults work closely together in lessons and there is a seamless approach to raising standards, as everyone knows what is expected of them. The support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and for those who speak English as an additional language is effective. This is particularly the case when staff work with small groups, as tasks are broken down into small steps so that pupils can succeed. At the same time, staff ensure that pupils do not become over-reliant on their support and encourage them to do things for themselves.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Reception class with attainment that is typical for their age but is weaker in early reading, writing and mathematics. While they make good progress in relation to their prior learning, last year the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was below that seen nationally.
- Children currently in the Reception class are on track to attain a good level of development in all but writing, where too few opportunities are provided for them to form their letters correctly, both in play and in teacher-led activities.
- Pupils achieve well in reading. They know how to retrieve information from texts and they are avid readers who enjoy the wide range of books in the school library.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well because of the highly focused targeted support, which is regularly checked up on by the inclusion manager.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make consistently good progress due to the focus teachers place on developing vocabulary and sentence construction, and the support that these pupils receive in class from all adults, including mentors.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils were two and a half terms behind their classmates in reading and in mathematics. They were just over half a term behind in writing. When compared to all pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils the attainment gap was two terms in reading and mathematics, and half a term in writing. The school's in-house data show that the gaps in attainment have narrowed considerably due to careful allocation of funds by the governing body and robust monitoring of progress by the headteacher. Disadvantaged pupils are now achieving well and the gap has been virtually closed.
- In Key Stage 1 over the past two years, attainment has been below average in reading and mathematics, and broadly average in writing. In phonics, pupils in Year 1 just narrowly missed the expected standards. Disadvantaged pupils achieved well in relation to their prior attainment as a result of targeted group work.
- This year, school data shows that there has already been an increase in the proportion of pupils expected to reach the national level. Writing is improving and pupils in Year 1 are now writing longer sentences. Overall, pupils achieve well in Key Stage 1, but those who are more able are not challenged enough to become fluent in their recall of number facts and explain their mathematical reasoning.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, standards since the last inspection have been broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. An above-average proportion of pupils make more than expected progress, and achievement of all groups of pupils is good.
- Although their achievement is good, the most-able pupils do not all achieve the highest levels of which they are capable. In Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4, they do not write sufficiently at length in English and other subjects. Because they have too few opportunities to apply what they have learnt in mathematics to solve real-life problems, their mathematical reasoning is not as well developed as it could be.

The early years provision**is good**

- The assistant headteacher is now working with the teachers in the Reception classes to ensure that a higher proportion of children attain a good level of development. This decision to strengthen the leadership of early years is paying dividends. Teachers now have an accurate view of how well children are doing and know what needs to be done in order to increase the proportion of pupils attaining a good level of development.
- The environment is stimulating and exciting, both indoors and outdoors, with adults providing an appropriate range of activities that help each child to learn.
- Adults take every opportunity to model language, and children quickly acquire the language of mathematics because of the many good opportunities that adults use to plan rich mathematical experiences outdoors. Through play, children learn the value of number, simple properties of shapes and length of objects.
- Trusting relationships, coupled with well thought-out routines result in children feeling safe in learning and enjoying all aspects of their time in the early years. The children behave well.
- Teaching is generally good because of systematic monitoring of children's progress. The teaching of sounds that letters make is helping children develop their early reading skills. However, adults do not give enough attention to helping children form their letters correctly.

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	103437
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	461814

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	415
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Smith
Headteacher	Mark Humphreys
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2012
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