

Inspection of St Francis Catholic Primary School

Station Road, Nailsea, Somerset, BS48 4PD

Inspection dates: 29–30 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They know the school's values well and are polite and courteous. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour in school could be better, both in lessons and on the playground. Inspectors noticed that sometimes poor behaviour gets in the way of pupils' learning. Pupils also stated that bullying occurs, but staff are not always quick to resolve it.

Pupils attend well, and few are frequently absent. Pupils' attitudes toward learning are mainly strong, but less so towards writing.

Teachers do not adapt the curriculum to match the needs of pupils well enough. When pupils struggle, most would ask for help. Some pupils, however, told inspectors they do not feel comfortable asking for help and would rather copy a friend's work. Over time, pupils do not build on their previous high attainment.

Most pupils state that they feel safe in school and parents agree. However, staff and leaders are not fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities well enough. Staff do not always deal with concerns about pupils' welfare.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has endured difficult times in recent years, with several changes to leadership and staffing. Senior leaders want the best for pupils; their dedication is unquestionable. However, they spread themselves too thinly, taking on multiple responsibilities rather than share them out among staff. As the school's performance has deteriorated, they have taken more on. Leaders' attempts to address weaknesses have not been effective enough. Due to a lack of leadership capacity, they have relied on unsustainable quick fixes. This has prevented them addressing root causes. As a result, actions have little impact.

Governors' knowledge of the school is weak. They know senior leaders have too much responsibility but have done little to help. They do not check how well leaders are tackling the school's priorities for improvement, including safeguarding. They rely on the headteacher too much. Their checks on the school's work are poor, and they do not set clear timescales for actions. As a result, weaknesses continue for too long.

Curriculum plans for writing and the foundation subjects are not good enough. Teachers know what they must teach and when. However, they do not sequence lessons to build on what pupils already know. Due to ineffective leadership, teachers can choose how much importance and time they give to these subjects. This has led to huge variability across the school and does not provide pupils with secure foundations for future learning.

In subjects such as personal, social and health education (PSHE), some pupils struggle to remember what they have learned. While pupils know how to stay safe online, they have little knowledge of fundamental British values.

In mathematics, teachers sequence lessons effectively, building on what pupils already know and can do. Pupils told inspectors that they feel ready to tackle new learning. Inspectors met pupils who told them they enjoy mathematics but do not think teaching challenges them enough. Pupils' work shows the curriculum is not helping these pupils to deepen their knowledge sufficiently.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) keeps a firm hold on the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). She adapts the help she gives teachers to ensure pupils receive the support they need to achieve. Pupils' targets are precise, and they have opportunities to overcome barriers to their learning.

The school use a consistent phonics programme, which is well established. Teachers have the knowledge they need to teach phonics effectively. They check how well pupils are getting on and provide support for those who need to keep up. Most pupils are on track with learning to read and how to apply their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make in their writing. Pupils read books that match the sounds they know. They read fluently, which helps them recall key events from the book. Children in the Reception class get off to a strong start learning phonics but have few opportunities to apply this to their writing. When children do write, staff do not tackle their weak letter formation.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Staff do not know how to keep pupils safe. Leaders have not made sure staff are clear about their safeguarding responsibilities or follow school policy. Staff do not routinely pass concerns about pupils' welfare on to leaders. When they do share concerns, leaders do not vigilantly record or respond to these. Record-keeping is disorganised. Leaders do not routinely draw upon the expertise of external agencies. Therefore, vulnerable pupils are at risk.

Governors' understanding of safeguarding is poor. Despite clear recommendations for improvement in the school's annual safeguarding audit, governors are unclear what they are or how well leaders are bringing about these improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Safeguarding is not effective. This puts pupils at risk. Leaders must make sure all staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and follow school policy. Staff must be much more vigilant when recognising, recording and passing on concerns

about pupils' welfare. Leaders need to make sure records are well-organised and make clear the actions they have taken to keep pupils safe, contacting external agencies for early help or intervention where appropriate.

- Senior leaders have taken on too many tasks and responsibilities themselves. This undermines their ability to tackle key areas of weakness. They need to develop leadership capacity within the school, so that it contributes to improving the quality of the school's work more quickly.
- In a number of subjects, curriculum planning is weak. This means pupils do not learn as well as they should. Curriculum leaders need to review curriculum plans and ensure staff have the training they need to sequence lessons better. They will also need to make sure teachers adapt curriculum plans to better meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those who are capable of more challenge.
- Governors have a poor understanding of the school and their roles. They need to establish an accurate evaluation of the school, including of safeguarding. They must ensure they follow up their actions, against clear timescales, and closely monitor for impact.
- Pupils' experiences of PSHE are varied. Pupils have gaps in their knowledge. For example, their understanding of fundamental British values is poor. Leaders must make sure teachers implement the PSHE curriculum effectively, so it promotes pupils' personal, social and health development.
- Low-level disruption in lessons is too frequent. Bullying occurs and continues longer than it should. Staff do not act quickly enough. Leaders must raise staff expectations of pupils, both in lessons and around the school, so behaviour improves. Where bullying occurs, leaders must deal with it swiftly.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	109239
Local authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	10133434
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ann Tarr
Headteacher	Catherine Hunt
Website	www.st-francis.n-somerset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 March 2009

Information about this school

- Ofsted last inspected the school in March 2009 and judged it to be outstanding.
- The school is arranged into seven single-form entry classes.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Clifton.
- The school operates a breakfast club and several after-school clubs.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- We conducted deep dives in reading, writing, history and mathematics. We met with senior leaders and curriculum leaders, considered work in pupils' books,

carried out lesson visits, and spoke with pupils and teachers. The lead inspector also spent time looking at pupils' geography work.

- We spoke with representatives from the local governing body. He also met with a representative from the Diocese of Clifton.
- We considered information about behavioural incidents, exclusions and attendance.
- We met with the SENCo. We looked at pupils' support plans and the quality of targets. We evaluated how well staff meet the needs of pupils with SEND during deep dives and separate book scrutiny.
- We met with the PSHE leader to consider curriculum plans and discussed how staff promote the school's values.
- We considered the responses to Parent View. In addition, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils during the inspection.
- We met with the designated leader for safeguarding. We spoke with staff about their safeguarding responsibilities and met with pupils to determine to what extent they feel safe in school. We looked at records of concerns about pupils' welfare, record-keeping and leaders' actions to help pupils who may need early help or are at risk of harm.

Inspection team

Nathan Kemp, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Shears

Ofsted Inspector

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