

Inspection of St Francis Church of England Primary School

Horspath Road, Cowley, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX4 2QT

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 December 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Adults care deeply about the children at St Francis. The school's Christian mission of 'living life to the fullest' shapes what leaders and staff do. The relationships between everyone are special. It is a happy and welcoming place. Children enjoy coming to school to learn.

Leaders are determined in raising the aspirations of the school community. Pupils know that they are expected to work hard and behave. Classrooms are for the most part calm, and staff teach routines that help children to move around school sensibly. Children model this well from the start of Nursery.

Outside, pupils love playing in the spacious grounds, and staff ensure that there are always things that pupils can do. Pupils said that behaviour is much better, and that adults stamp out any bullying quickly. Pupils said that they feel safe wherever they go. They know the school rules of 'be kind, be ready, be safe'.

Pupils appreciate how adults arrange experiences they have never tried before. This year, pupils are working on a project with a professional opera singer. They have supported one of the city's homeless charities, and older pupils have worked with students from an eminent independent school.

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

The acting co-headteachers are carrying the mantle in establishing an ambitious curriculum that develops children both academically and personally. Leaders have tailored this to suit the local community the children live in. In 2019, pupils' attainment in national tests was low. Many did not meet standards expected for their age. Leaders knew that this was not acceptable. Since then, they have swiftly established new curriculum plans in English, mathematics and science, so that pupils learn the knowledge they need to succeed.

The new early years leader rightly identified that the teaching of phonics was not effective enough. Thus, a new, comprehensive phonics programme has recently started. This is making a difference already. Staff in Reception follow the new plans exactly as set out. Children can recall the sounds they know so far, and are able to accurately read short words that contain these sounds. Leaders carry out ongoing assessments from the programme to check that all children are on track. For those children behind in their reading, staff provide extra one-to-one sessions to help these children catch up. They use the programme's plans and resources highly effectively.

Due to stock delays, some of the phonics programme's resources, including the accompanying reading books, have only just arrived. Leaders have not yet got all staff expertly trained to teach all parts of the programme. This has led to some

inconsistencies in teaching phonics, which are hampering some pupils' progress in learning to read, spell and develop their handwriting.

Across the curriculum, learning is planned through projects which combine different subjects. Leaders recognise that this can lead to some subjects not being taught in as much as depth as they would like. They are reviewing this. Subject leaders are working on mapping out the essential knowledge for each year group. At the moment, this is not well sequenced in some subjects. Therefore, pupils are not necessarily learning content in the right order, and teachers' assessments are not always closely matched to what should be taught. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the pace of leaders' plans to fix this.

In lessons, pupils do the right thing and focus on the task in hand. However, there are times where pupils can distract others and not always follow an adult's instructions straight away. Sometimes, teachers do not pick up on this quickly. Occasionally, teachers' expectations of pupils' conduct and how routines are consistently applied are not high enough.

The new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) supports teachers well in providing what pupils need in the classroom. All pupils are expected to learn the same content. Staff skilfully break down new learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities into smaller steps. They challenge all pupils to think deeply, and provide regular practice to recall prior knowledge. The SENCo liaises effectively with other agencies to help with identifying if a child may have additional needs.

Governors know the school well. Each committee drills down in detail to understand what leaders are doing and whether this is improving pupils' education. Governors make good use of reports from the local authority to help them check on the progress of the school development plan.

Staff described working at this school as being like family. They were complimentary about what leaders do to look after their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Children are always at the centre of leaders' decisions. The safeguarding team members do what they can to reach out to families in need. They take the initiative, for example, by being the lead agency in securing help for children. Leaders' record-keeping is thorough. This ensures that case histories are accurate and up to date.

Staff are well trained to spot any safeguarding concerns. They know what may be happening in the city, for example female genital mutilation and county lines. Staff know how to raise a concern. When they do, leaders act fast. Governors carefully check the school's safeguarding culture.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all adults are experts in teaching phonics. In addition, new resources and matched reading books have only just arrived. This means that pupils do not get exactly what they need in order to learn to read, spell and develop their handwriting. Leaders should ensure that every adult is trained to deliver the phonics programme effectively.
- Sometimes staff do not pick up quickly enough when pupils are off task or not following the rules. This can occasionally lead to pupils not behaving as well as they should. Leaders need to ensure that all staff have the highest of expectations, and that routines and consequences are consistent across all classes and around school.
- In some foundation subjects, leaders have not precisely laid out what knowledge is taught, and when and how it is taught. This can lead to teachers being unclear about what to teach across a series of lessons. Subject leaders require further training to sequence this knowledge step by step from early years to Year 6. Leaders have already begun to do this. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	123172
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10199827
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Geoff Bayliss
Headteacher	Fleur Belcher Gillian McDermott (acting co-headteacher) Liz Burton (acting co-headteacher)
Website	www.st-francis.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 and 9 June 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher went on maternity leave in October 2021. The deputy headteacher is currently acting as co-headteacher, alongside a partner who joined the school shortly after the headteacher went on maternity leave and works two days each week.
- In September 2021, a member of staff was internally promoted to be the new SENCo. At the same time, a new early years leader joined the school.
- As a Church of England school, St Francis is part of the Diocese of Oxford. Its most recent section 48 inspection was in May 2017.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair. He met with a school improvement officer from the local authority, and had a telephone conversation with a representative from the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, art and history. To do this, they met with subject leaders, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors also considered leaders' plans for geography and personal, social and health education.
- Pupils were observed reading to a familiar adult by the lead inspector.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to examine records and actions. This included sampling a range of safeguarding documents. A team inspector reviewed checks on the safer recruitment of staff.
- Inspectors met with pupils from different year groups to talk about their learning and experiences at school.
- The views of staff and parents were gathered through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documents provided by the school. This included the school improvement plan, self-evaluation form, policies, curriculum documents, pupil premium strategy, published information about pupils' performance and minutes of governance.

Inspection team

James Broadbridge, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kimberley Kemp	Ofsted Inspector
Jon Hills	Ofsted Inspector

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