

Inspection of St Francis RC Primary School

Ellenbrook Close, Gorton, Manchester M12 5LZ

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected 14 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Over time, leaders have not ensured that pupils at St Francis Roman Catholic Primary School receive an acceptable standard of education. From the early years, through to the end of Year 6, the curriculum is poorly designed and weakly implemented. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not gain the knowledge that they need to be successful. Consequently, pupils across the school are not ready for the next stage of their education.

Pupils are happy in school. They come into school with a smile, keen to get on with their learning. They are friendly and welcoming to each other and to visitors. Pupils are proud to hold additional responsibilities, such as chaplains or as head boy or girl. They make a positive contribution to the school community.

Most leaders and teachers expect pupils to behave well. Many pupils do. However, some pupils choose not to follow the school rules. Incidents of poorer behaviour are not managed as well as they should be by some staff. This means that pupils' learning is sometimes disrupted.

Pupils feel safe in school. They feel confident to share their worries with trusted adults. Pupils know what constitutes bullying. When such incidents occur, leaders deal with them effectively.

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

Until very recently, leaders have not paid enough attention to the curriculum. Although leaders have started to think about how to improve the curriculum, it remains in a state of disarray across the school. The early years curriculum does not help children to learn all that they should in readiness for Year 1. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 lacks coherence. Leaders have not set out what pupils should learn in different subjects.

Little consideration is given to the order in which knowledge will be taught. This means that pupils do not have the knowledge that they need to be successful in their future learning. Pupils do not remember what they have learned. Their achievement across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, is weak.

Without any real curriculum guidance, teachers do not have the support that they need to design learning that helps pupils to build their knowledge over time. Pupils' learning is disconnected and jumbled as a result. Teachers do not use assessment strategies effectively. They do not know what they should be checking. This means that gaps in knowledge are not dealt with well enough. Pupils develop misconceptions in many subjects.

Leaders and teachers do not have high enough expectations for pupils with SEND. Their needs are not identified clearly to ensure that these pupils receive the support that they need to be successful. Teachers do not know how to shape their teaching, so that pupils with SEND can progress through the curriculum. Pupils with SEND do not achieve well.

Leaders do not ensure that pupils learn to read as well as they should. The phonics programme is not delivered consistently well across the early years and key stage 1. This is because staff do not have the subject knowledge that they need to deliver the programme effectively. They teach incorrect sounds and they do not make sure that pupils read books that match the sounds and letters that they know. As a result, pupils do not systematically build their phonics knowledge over time. This hinders their fluency, accuracy and confidence. Leaders do not place enough importance on helping pupils to catch up. This means that many pupils enter key stage 2 without the reading knowledge that they need to support their learning or to just enjoy reading for pleasure.

Most pupils behave well in school. This typically helps to create an orderly environment. However, some pupils do not behave as well as they should. Some staff accept low-level disruption in lessons as the norm. This interrupts the learning of others. During social times, some pupils' enjoyment of playing with their friends is marred by the boisterous behaviour of others. Staff do not tackle such behaviour effectively. This means that it continues.

The curriculum to develop pupils' personal development is a small step ahead of the rest of the curriculum. Recently, leaders have developed the curriculum, so that pupils learn more about different types of relationships. They have a better understanding that families come in many different forms. Pupils also have some knowledge of fundamental British values, but their understanding of what these values mean is less secure. However, due to weaknesses in the past, some pupils still have gaps in their learning. This means that they are not fully prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils know different ways to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. They value the many sporting opportunities that they have. They enjoy representing the school at different competitions.

Governors have not kept a close enough eye on what has been happening at the school since the previous inspection. They are too ready to accept what leaders have told them. In a bid to strengthen governance, new governors have been appointed. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this change.

The new headteacher and deputy headteacher recognise the significant weaknesses at the school. Governors and leaders have taken too much time to bring around improvement. Some of the weaknesses have become engrained. Governors have not ensured that subject leaders within the school have had the training that they need to develop their ability to check how well pupils achieve in their subject.

Leaders consider staff's workload. Most staff said that leaders support their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have implemented new procedures in school to keep pupils safe. Staff receive training on how to spot signs that pupils might be at harm. They report these concerns to leaders. Leaders in turn work in partnership with outside agencies to ensure that pupils get the support that they need.

The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn about different aspects of safety. For example, pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Governors have overseen a decline in every aspect of the school since the previous inspection. This has led to pupils' weak achievement over time. Capacity to improve is poor. This is because many leaders do not have the skills that they need to bring about the improvement. Governors must ensure they have the expertise and knowledge to hold leaders to account for the achievement of pupils in school. They must also strengthen leadership capacity within the school in order to tackle the weaknesses.
- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum for all pupils, including children in early years, enables them to achieve well. Pupils do not gain the knowledge that they need to be successful. Leaders must ensure that there is a well ordered and ambitious curriculum that prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.
- Teachers do not know what they should teach or how best to deliver subject content. They are ill-equipped to check pupils' learning and spot misconceptions. As a result, pupils do not build their knowledge over time and gaps in their understanding go unchecked. Leaders must ensure that teachers have the guidance and training that they need to design learning that helps pupils to learn all that they should know.
- Pupils, including children in the early years, do not gain a secure knowledge of phonics. This means that they do not become fluent or confident readers by the end of key stage 1. This hinders their access to the key stage 2 curriculum. Leaders must ensure that staff deliver the early reading programme consistently well and that pupils receive the support that they need to catch up by the time they leave Year 2.
- Pupils with SEND do not achieve well. Their needs are not identified well enough. Teachers do not know how to meet their needs or how best to support their

progress through the curriculum. Leaders must ensure that teachers receive the training that they need to support pupils with SEND to achieve well.

- Subject leaders do not keep a close enough check on their subject. This means that they do not know how well their curriculum is being implemented. Subject leaders do not know how well pupils are achieving in their subject. Leaders should ensure that they develop subject leaders' skills in keeping a check on how well their subject curriculum is being implemented and what impact it is having on pupils' achievement.
- Some pupils do not behave in lessons as they should do. Staff do not ensure that pupils have a positive attitude towards their learning. Staff too readily accept low-level disruption. This means that some pupils do not learn as effectively as they should do. Leaders must ensure that staff expectations for behaviour increases, so that low-level behaviour is not tolerated.

Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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.

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	105529
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10204538
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Matthew Gee
Headteacher	Lynn Elder
Website	https://stfrancismanchester.com
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 November 2015, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- A new deputy headteacher is currently seconded to the school from within the Diocese of Salford.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- There is a breakfast club for pupils. This was considered as part of this inspection.
- This Catholic school is part of the Diocese of Salford. The last section 48 inspection took place in June 2015.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons

responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors met with a range of leaders who are responsible for the school's pastoral system and the personal development programmes.
- The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of governors, a representative of the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Salford.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, music and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils and looked at pupils' work. They also reviewed other subjects in the curriculum.
- The lead inspector observed some pupils in Years 1 to 3 reading to familiar adults.
- Inspectors reviewed leaders' policies and procedures to keep pupils safe. They discussed safeguarding arrangements with leaders and staff.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes, and as they moved around the school. They scrutinised leaders' records of pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors met with parents and carers at the start of the school day. Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Stuart Perkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Katie Hague

Ofsted Inspector

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