Inspection of St Francis Catholic Primary School, Braintree

Gilchrist Way, Braintree, Essex CM7 2SY

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 June 2024

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?

St Francis is an inclusive school where pupils are happy. They love coming to school and are proud to talk about the values and virtues they learn. Pupils feel part of a community where everyone is valued. Relationships with staff are positive and nurturing. Parents praise the support their children receive. Pupils contribute well to the community. For instance, elected members of 'Laudato Si' take their role seriously, working with leaders to make decisions, representing their peers, improving the school environment and caring for the world around them.

Pupils are safe, and say without hesitation, that they feel safe at school. They learn to be kind to each other. Pupils behave very well in lessons and at breaktimes. Classrooms and corridors are calm places to be. Children in the early years learn the routines that help them to be successful in school.

Pupils learn a rich and broad curriculum. They achieve well. They enjoy reading regularly and love spending time in the school libraries. Pupils who need extra support get the help they need from well-trained additional adults. This builds their independence and enables them to access the curriculum successfully.

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

The curriculum meets pupils' needs. This is because leaders systematically improve it. For instance, they review how well a subject identifies the key knowledge pupils should learn. Pupils make connections between the different things they learn. For example, they use learning in mathematics to help them understand integers on a timeline in history and to measure accurately in art. This helps pupils to know and remember more.

However, in some instances teachers do not adapt learning as effectively so as to consider what pupils already know. Teachers sometimes set work that is too easy. Pupils do not always move on to learning new, more complex knowledge when they are ready to do so. When this occurs, pupils do not make as much progress as they should.

Leaders have put in place a successful reading curriculum. Staff are well trained to teach phonics. Teachers model sounds clearly and consistently. Pupils regularly practise the sounds they are learning. Where pupils need extra help, this is effective. As a result, pupils quickly develop fluency in their reading. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils read a wide variety of texts to help them with their learning. Pupils enjoy the books they read.

Children in the early years make a positive start to school. The early years curriculum supports children well to develop their learning. For example, they rapidly build their mathematical understanding. Adults model key vocabulary well to help children's language and communication. This includes those with English as an additional language. Well-planned activities and high-quality resources actively

engage children in their learning. Children are naturally curious and highly motivated to learn.

The school ensures that pupils with SEND get strong support. Staff identify and meet the needs of pupils who need extra help. This includes teachers adjusting the learning in class where necessary. This means that pupils with SEND are included and given the best chance to succeed in their current and future learning.

Pupils mostly enjoy a coherent programme for personal development. For example, they learn about how to keep healthy and develop healthy relationships in an age-appropriate way. They take part in exciting school productions. The limited number of clubs are mostly focused on sports. This means pupils do not get enough opportunities to develop their interests across different activities. The development of pupils' interests and talents is not as rich as it could be.

There are high expectations for behaviour. Staff apply these to make sure that classrooms are productive places for thinking and learning. The foundations for positive attitudes are set in early years. Children show enjoyment and focus as they learn and explore. Consequently, there is very little disruption to learning in the school. However, leaders do not always track and analyse records of any incidents of poor conduct or attendance. As a result, on occasion their actions to address issues are not as effective as they might be.

Governors know the school well. They hold leaders to account and fulfil their statutory duties effectively. Staff feel valued and well supported. They appreciate that leaders are considerate of their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers sometimes do not adapt learning successfully to account for pupils' prior knowledge. Some pupils do not find the work sufficiently challenging to enable them to attempt new learning. The school should ensure that learning is consistently tailored to build on pupils' existing knowledge so that they move on to learning more complex content and knowledge when they are ready to do so.
- Pupils do not have access to a wide range of clubs and activities to help promote and nurture their interests. This means that the development of pupils' interests and talents is not as full as it could be. The school should expand the range of extra-curricular activities, ensuring they align with pupils' interests, so that pupils can develop their talents and extend their learning opportunities.
- The school does not always record and monitor information about pupils' behaviour, attendance and well-being in detail. This means that the school's

actions to address behaviour, attendance or well-being concerns are sometimes less effective. The school should make sure that all checks on pupils' attendance, behaviour and welfare, and actions taken, are recorded in detail. The school should use this information to inform all work to improve individual pupils' behaviour, attendance and well-being.

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' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	115194
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10323624
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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Graham Fretwell
Headteacher	Vicky Jackson
Website	www.stfrancisbraintree.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 February 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A breakfast club is provided for pupils and is managed by those responsible for governance.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider of education.
- This is a Catholic school. The most recent inspection of its religious character, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, was in May 2023. It will receive its next inspection within eight years of that date.

Information about this inspection

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

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, computing and geography. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also listened to pupils read to a familiar member of staff.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interest first.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including behaviour logs, bullying records, pupil records, records of the minutes of governors' meetings, school development plans and school policies.
- There were 59 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, which were considered.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection to gather their views.
- There were 23 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for school staff.

Inspection team

Nichola Pickford, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Nina Kemp	Ofsted Inspector

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