

# Inspection of St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School

Blakehall, Skelmersdale, Lancashire WN8 9AZ

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Inspection dates:	8 and 9 October 2024
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School is warm, caring and welcoming to all. The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils are happy and feel safe and supported in school. Pupils, including children in the early years, have positive attitudes to their learning. They are keen to learn and achieve well. The school has fostered the development of pupils in line with their vision to 'build and share together'.

Pupils behave well across the school. As a result, there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Pupils are attentive and care for and support each other. They respond well to staff's requests and direction. Pupils are aware of who they can talk to if they have a concern.

Pupils benefit from the school's well-resourced outdoor environment and playing field. This helps to stimulate their engagement and learning. Older pupils have additional responsibilities and value these opportunities. These roles include 'lunch-time support' and 'well-being champions'.

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

The school has established a well-structured curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In some subjects it is clear what the important knowledge is that pupils should learn and when they should learn it. Teachers use assessment strategies effectively, allowing them to deliver the curriculum in a way that enables pupils to build their knowledge securely over time.

However, in a few subjects, the school has not clearly identified the important content and vocabulary that pupils should learn and the order in which they should learn it. This makes it difficult for teachers to design learning activities that build on what pupils already know. As a result, in these subjects, some pupils do not learn and remember the intended curriculum as well as they could.

Reading is at the centre of pupils' learning. The 'Reading Garden' provides pupils with a book-rich retreat that allows them to become immersed in reading. Its position in the middle of the school allows it to entice pupils into reading widely and often. Children start to learn the phonics programme as soon as they enter the Reception class, having benefited from a language-rich environment in the Nursery class and two-year-old setting. Teachers' regular checks ensure that those pupils who struggle to keep up with reading are identified and quickly receive effective support. As a result, pupils gain the knowledge and skills that they need to become confident and fluent readers.

The school provides a highly inclusive setting. Pupils with SEND achieve well alongside their peers. Staff work well together to identify the needs of pupils. The special educational needs (SEN) unit provides well-designed and tailored programmes, which effectively support vulnerable pupils' learning and well-being.

Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is positive. They are well-mannered, kind and polite. Children in the early years learn to share and take turns from the earliest point of entry as two-year-olds. The school has established an effective routine in its 'Good to be Green'. This supports pupils' awareness of the school's high expectations for their behaviour. As a result, pupils learn in an environment that is free from distractions for the majority of the time.

Attendance is a high priority for the school, and it is improving due to the focus, incentives and initiatives to support families. The school encourages parents to engage with it openly and offers wider support where needed.

Pupils benefit from the well-being hub within the school. This helps pupils to understand the needs and feelings of themselves and others. As a result, pupils are respectful and caring towards each other. The school provides opportunities for the wider development of pupils. Pupil roles include support buddies and house captains.

The school has fostered a positive and supportive culture among staff. It has taken carefully considered action to support the workload demands on staff. For example, staff are given time to focus on their teaching.

Governors know the school well. They have a clear and accurate understanding of the quality of education that pupils receive. Governors provide effective challenge and support to the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In a few subjects, the school has not clearly identified the important blocks of knowledge, vocabulary and skills that pupils should learn and when they should learn it. This means that pupils do not learn as well as they could and struggle to retain and recall some aspects of their learning. The school should define the key subject content more precisely in these subjects so that pupils' learning builds securely over time.
- In some subjects, there are gaps in teachers' subject-specific knowledge. At times, this means that teachers do not deliver the curriculum as well as they could. The school should ensure that staff have the appropriate subject knowledge to support pupils to achieve well in all subjects.

## 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 special educational needs and/or disabilities (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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134598
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10348244
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	156
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Alan Horridge
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ann Naylor
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sfoa.lancs.sch.uk">www.sfoa.lancs.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	21 May 2019

## Information about this school

- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic school and last received a section 48 inspection in May 2018. The next inspection is scheduled to take place by July 2025.
- The school has provision for two-year-old children.
- The school has a SEN unit. This provision is for key stage 2 pupils with speech, communication and language needs. Five pupils currently access this provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID 19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of 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' interests first.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors observed pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the diocese and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses from the Ofsted surveys for staff and pupils.

### **Inspection team**

Iain Sim, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Kelly Butler

Ofsted Inspector

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