



St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 126046
LEA West Sussex

Inspection number 274815
Inspection dates 14 - 15 June 2005
Reporting inspector David Carrington

Inspection deemed to have been carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 according to section 12(3) of the same act.

Type of School	Primary	School address	Southgate Drive
School category	Voluntary aided		Crawley
Age range of pupils	4 - 11		West Sussex
			RH10 6HD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01293 521009
Number on roll	418	Fax number	01293 521041
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Andrew Bayes
Date of previous inspection	13 September 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Teresa Browne

Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 - 11	July 2005	274815

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Introduction

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School.

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Francis of Assisi is a large and popular Catholic Primary School. It provides an education that is rooted in the Catholic faith, and it has strong links with its local church.

Fewer pupils have free school meals than in most schools but more have learning difficulties and disabilities, mainly related to speech and language; five pupils have a statement of special educational need. A large number of pupils take advantage of care that is provided before or after school. Most pupils are White British but 13 other minority ethnic groups are represented in school. A small number of pupils speak English as an additional language.

Most children start school with below average levels of skills and knowledge, and one third - a significant proportion - do not complete their primary education at the school. There are many more new and less experienced teachers than in most primary schools.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

The school provides a good education for its pupils, which enables them to make brisk progress and reach above average standards by the time they leave. Pupils are also successfully encouraged to become courteous and friendly.

The school judges its overall effectiveness to be satisfactory. Inspectors believe this to be a cautious analysis that results from the school's focus on the areas for development it had already identified, especially the teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 that, whilst satisfactory, are weaker than in the other age groups. In fact, the school knows its strengths and areas for development well and has made good improvements to standards since its last inspection in 1999. It also shows good potential to make continued improvement.

Children settle quickly in Reception and build well on their below average starting level of skills and knowledge. This is because teaching and the curriculum in the new Early Years Unit are of good quality. By the time they leave Reception, most children have reached their targets. Sound teaching then ensures that learners build their knowledge, skills and understanding systematically, although not enough reach the higher levels in the national tests, especially in Key Stage 1. Progress accelerates again in Key Stage 2, where the teaching is more effective.

The curriculum is good, and a wide range of out-of-school activities also helps pupils to extend their skills well. Pupils' personal development is good and the school looks after them well. However, the curriculum is not yet as adventurous as the school wishes it to be in order to ensure that all pupils benefit from a consistent quality of education.

The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The less experienced staff are supported well and they show good potential as effective leaders. Newly-qualified teachers soon become part of the good staff team. The school gives good value for money, considering the below average amount spent on each pupil.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- Press on with the priority of improving teaching and learning for pupils in Key Stage 1.
- Work to ensure that more learners reach higher levels in their work.
- Be more adventurous in the interpretation of the curriculum and in teaching in order to maximise the achievement of all learners.

Achievement and standards

Pupils reach above average standards by the time they leave. This marks good progress, given their below average standards when they started in Reception.

Pupils have consistently achieved well since the school's previous inspection, especially in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2, where standards in Year 6 are above average. The targets set for pupils' attainment are challenging and the majority of pupils are on course to reach them by the end of the year.

Children in the Foundation Stage make a good start to their education and make good progress through the Reception Year, and reach their targets by the time they join Year 1. Good teaching includes a good focus on development of speech and communication skills, which is particularly successful and stands children well for work in Key Stage 1.

Progress in Key Stage 1 has improved well since the previous inspection, when provision in Year 2 was reported to be unsatisfactory and the pupils were not achieving highly enough. Standards at the end of Year 2 are now average, in keeping with sound teaching.

Pupils' progress accelerates in Key Stage 2. By the end of Year 6, more learners reach the expected level of work than is found in most schools. However, higher-attaining pupils do not always achieve enough. The use of the same worksheets for pupils of all abilities, especially in Key Stage 1, limits the achievement of these learners.

Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are supported well and they make good progress as a result. Learners from all minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as successfully as each other. Boys in Key Stage 2 achieve higher standards than boys in most other schools. Girls do best in Key Stage 1.

The school evaluates the standards and progress made by learners as satisfactory, largely because of pupils' slower progress in Key Stage 1. Whilst inspectors agree that this is an area for improvement, the overall rate of progress and the standards attained are good.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being

The school works successfully to ensure that, regardless of their background, pupils grow into confident and mature children whose personal development and well-being are good. Pupils understand the need to keep safe and healthy, and to work happily with others. The school's views about the personal development and well-being of learners match those of the inspection team.

Learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They understand that life is special; they work well together, know right from wrong and enjoy learning about people from different faiths and cultures. Pupils take an active part in a good range of community-focused events. They raise good amounts of money for charity and they present concerts and plays for many people outside school. They enjoy their life and work in school; one pupil commented: "*It is the best thing that has happened to me*". Their enjoyment is most marked in the best lessons in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2, where activities are particularly stimulating.

Attendance is satisfactory. The level of unauthorised absence is higher than is usually found, but has fallen this year because of the school's active approach to promoting good attendance.

Pupils are given ample opportunities to share their opinions and concerns about the school. The Student Council is a very successful forum for pupils to talk about what they see as important issues. Staff take these views seriously and act decisively on them. The school tackles bullying effectively; there is not much of it, but as one pupil said, "*If there is any, the head will sort it out*".

Grade: 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils enjoy and learn most successfully in lessons where there is a hands-on approach and they can work together on problems.

The quality of teaching of the youngest children is good. Children in Reception respond well to this and happily explore and investigate the many new things that they meet. In Key Stage 1, whilst teaching is satisfactory, the pace of work is not always brisk enough and expectations could be higher.

Pupils in Key Stage 2 are well provided for. Many lessons are interesting and motivating, which enthuses pupils to work hard and produce a lot of work. The effective building of skills and knowledge is particularly marked in this Key Stage.

Pupils from different backgrounds are taught well, although the school has identified that more could reach higher levels in their tests. The pupils say that they are aware of the levels that they are reaching in their work and talk confidently about the targets that have been set for them. However, the marking of work is not yet linked sufficiently to these targets in order to help pupils identify what they must do next to move on.

The school had identified the main areas for improvement to teaching and learning before the inspection took place. Its evaluation of teaching is not as positive as that of inspectors because it focused more on weaker areas of provision than the strengths when reaching its views.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

Inspectors agree with the school's view that there is a good curriculum. The school has worked well to remedy the weaker areas highlighted in the 1999 report.

Children in Reception are provided with a good range of experiences that extend their knowledge, skills and understanding well.

The school has made good improvements to the curriculum in Key Stage 1 since the last inspection, but has identified as a priority the need to strengthen opportunities for children to develop the skills to work independently and to solve problems. This is particularly focused on the learners with the potential to reach higher levels in their national assessments.

The curriculum in Key Stage 2 is good. This is shown in the positive outcomes from the improved curriculum for music, which has led to brisker progress than in other subjects.

All the expected subjects are taught to the minimum required depth, but many primary schools now go the extra step to make learning more stimulating. The school is keen to bring more flair and enjoyment to its curriculum coverage and teaching approach, particularly in Key Stage 1, and inspectors feel that this is likely to raise standards by encouraging more adventurous and exciting learning.

The enrichment of the curriculum has been one of the school's main priorities and the range of out-of-school activities is now good. Many learners take part. Sports training is particularly popular amongst the pupils. Many people from outside school, including parents and visitors with special skills and knowledge, work with the pupils.

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support

The school evaluates the quality of care, guidance and support as good and inspectors agree. Pupils say that it is very easy to talk to their teachers if they have problems and that they are well looked after. They believe that the staff follow up their concerns well and that they are sympathetic listeners.

The school ensures learners' health and safety well through good policies that are applied well by caring staff. For instance, behaviour in the playground is carefully checked to ensure pupils do not feel threatened by boisterous play. Teachers are alert to signs of potential anxiety amongst pupils and are quick to give firm, sensitive support to tackle problems. Child Protection procedures are understood and followed appropriately by staff in the few cases involved. The school has identified a need for updated staff training, and a programme is already in place.

Extensive records of pupils' successes and difficulties in learning are based on thorough assessments of their progress. This information is used to set challenging targets that are tracked carefully, although the school has identified the need for greater rigor in its analysis to find out which pupils are the most successful learners and which are not doing as well as expected.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

The school is led and managed well. The senior leadership team has a good understanding of the school's areas for improvement and its many strengths. These qualities of good leadership ensure that pupils make good progress in their work and personal development.

The headteacher gives the school a very strong steer and has high expectations of staff and learners. The leadership team gives good support to the headteacher. The drive for improvement is fully supported by the subject leaders. Whilst many of these are new to school and inexperienced teachers, subject leadership is satisfactory. There is good potential to bring the rigour of subject leadership to the same consistent level of effectiveness as that shown by senior leaders.

Senior staff keep the school's performance under constant review, and are sure to include the views of learners, parents and governors in this process. They use the results to make carefully thought-out changes that are aimed at improving pupils' progress. The system is effective, and shows that the school has the capacity for further advances.

Financial management is good. The school has a large amount of money in reserve, but much of this is appropriately earmarked for improvements to the buildings and the central-heating system. The remaining amount, however, is not yet targeted clearly enough on improving the progress of learners.

The school judges its leadership and management to be satisfactory because its programme of checking and evaluation has been focused on areas needing improvement and has not taken enough account of its many strong points. Inspectors have found many more strengths in the school than areas for development.

Grade: 2

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INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall	16-19
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OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

How well do learners achieve?	2	
The <i>standards</i> reached by learners	2	
How well learners' make <i>progress</i> , taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community.	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily.	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise.	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse.	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health.	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe.	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place.	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism.	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them.	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships.	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them.	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills.	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams.	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in Key Stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form.	NA
Education for all learners aged 14-19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy.	NA

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St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School
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20 June 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave my team of inspectors when we came to school. We enjoyed our stay with you. Lots of you spoke to inspectors, and gave us the same message: *This is a good school and we like learning here*. We judged that the following things are what make learning good at your school:

- Children in the Reception class are a bit worried about starting school, but the teachers make them feel at home and they soon settle to good learning.
- Children in Years 1 and 2 learn quite a lot about simple English and maths and other subjects. They also learn how to work well with other children.
- We think that children in Key Stage 2 work hard, remember a lot of information and talk about it confidently. The oldest children are doing well in their work.
- You told us that you think that the headteacher is fair but firm. We agree with you and have written in our report that the headteacher does a very good job of managing the school.
- You enjoy your sporting activities and in the science club you learned why cola is not good for your teeth. Perhaps some of you will now prefer to drink water!

There are a lot of good things in school, but we think there are things that could be better:

- We think that your lessons can be made even more exciting. We have suggested to your teachers that they find more ways of letting you explore things that are just a little bit different from your usual work.
- Sometimes everyone in a class does exactly the same work, which is not always helpful in making sure that you are learning the right things at the right time.
- We think that some of you in Years 1 and 2 could do even better than you do.

You can help your teachers with these changes by working sensibly and listening carefully. You already do this in most lessons, but we are sure you can do it in all of them. The school will send our report to your homes. You might like to read some of it because it says a lot of good things about your school. See if you can find the bit about the headteacher "*sorting things out*". Good luck in your work and enjoy your life in school.

David Carrington
(Lead inspector)