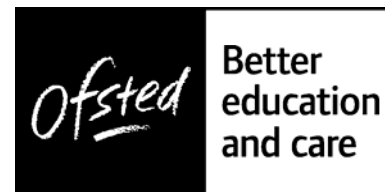


Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division
4th Floor
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

Direct Tel 020 7421 6594
Direct Fax 020 7421 6855

www.ofsted.gov.uk



15 June 2005

Mrs D Huxtable
Headteacher
St Francis Catholic Primary School
Rye Piece Ringway
Bedworth
Warwickshire
CV12 8JN

Dear Mrs Huxtable

Implementation of St Francis Catholic Primary School's Action Plan

Following the visit of Mr A P Harrett HMI, and Mr C Kempton HMI, to your school on 8 and 9 June 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings which are recorded in the attached note.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures. The focus of the inspection was to assess: the pupils' standards of attainment and their progress; the quality of education provided; the leadership and management of the school; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan.

The school has made reasonable progress since the last monitoring inspection and reasonable progress overall since being subject to special measures.

The school is permitted to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the County Education Officer for Warwickshire and the Director of the Diocesan Schools Commission for the Archdiocese of Birmingham. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF ST FRANCIS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

Findings of the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures

During the visit 13 lessons or parts of lessons and two registration sessions were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the vice-chair of governors, a representative of the LEA and nominated staff. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the headteacher, the vice-chair of the governing body and a representative the LEA.

Teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons. It was good in six lessons and very good in three. The pupils' progress lagged behind the quality of the teaching. It was satisfactory or better in 12 of the lessons, of which it was good in five lessons and very good in one. Although these proportions are an improvement on those observed at the time of the last monitoring visit, they need to be interpreted with caution: two permanent staff were absent at the time of the visit. Their absence also caused an increase in the proportion of teaching observed in Key Stage 2.

The good and very good lessons were underpinned by detailed planning. Clear learning objectives were addressed by a range of appropriate activities, allowing the pupils to extend and reinforce their understanding by working independently and in pairs and groups. In some lessons, the teaching enabled the pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills in ways which simultaneously improved their understanding of the topic and their literacy skills. The pace of the lessons was brisk and challenging. The teachers had high expectations of the pupils and had established effective classroom routines. Behaviour management was unobtrusive and effective. The quality and range of questioning strategies have improved since the last monitoring inspection: in the best instances, questioning involved the whole class rather than only targeting individuals and enabled the teacher and the pupils themselves to gauge the level of understanding. Plenaries were of an appropriate length and enabled the pupils to consolidate their learning. Good quality displays celebrated achievement, creating learning environments that reminded the pupils of their targets and reinforced the skills that they were developing.

Although the quality of teaching has improved, the progress of the pupils is hindered by some deficiencies. In the less successful lessons, planning was sparse and did not cater for the different needs of the pupils. Learning objectives were imprecise and the range of activities was limited, resulting in a slack and occasionally monotonous pace. The role of teaching assistants was sometimes unclear; they tended to act as general helpers rather than having specific, planned roles. The teachers dominated some lessons so that the pupils became passive observers of the teaching rather than active participants in their learning. Although

questioning has improved, there were still lessons in which it only required the pupils to answer straightforward questions which did not encourage them to reflect on their learning. Across the school, inconsistent marking of work also hinders the pupils' progress.

The headteacher continues to have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Her monitoring and evaluation are systematic and thorough and her planning is focused on school improvement. Under her guidance, the senior leadership team continues to be effective and its impact is more coherent and strategic than at the time of the last monitoring inspection. However, the acting deputy is relinquishing her role and the numeracy co-ordinator is leaving to take up the deputy headship of another school. Although this presents a considerable challenge for the future quality of leadership and management, sound plans have been devised to restructure the senior leadership team for next term; nevertheless, these depend on the ability of the school to attract suitable candidates for the vacant positions. The quality of middle leadership remains inconsistent; some subject co-ordinators have not taken responsibility for standards and progress across the school and this is impeding the rate of improvement.

The governing body monitors the work of the school effectively and provides the school with appropriate challenge and support. Regular monitoring visits by governors to the school focus on identified areas for improvement and feedback is honest, accurate and reported to the school and to the full governing body. The minutes of the governing body show that the meetings focus effectively on the areas for improvement outlined in the school's action plan.

The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils have declined slightly since the last visit. They were satisfactory or better in 11 of the 13 lessons observed. Implementation of the behaviour policy is inconsistent across the school. In the better lessons, where teaching was more secure and there were high expectations of behaviour, the pupils were not easily distracted. Transitions between activities were smooth and pupils quickly engaged with the new task. Where behaviour was unsatisfactory, there was too much shouting out during the teacher-led activity and pupils chattered noisily when working independently in groups. Too frequently, adults spoke sharply and inappropriately to pupils when correcting them, which did not model good behaviour. Behaviour around the school was inconsistent. Whilst pupils were always polite to visitors and ready to engage in conversation, many pupils were too noisy in the lunch hall and playground and did not adjust their behaviour quickly enough to more formal situations, for example when lessons began. The range of outdoor activities available at lunchtimes is insufficient to engage pupils in purposeful play and sometimes leads to inappropriate behaviour.

Attendance has improved since the last visit to 94.6 per cent and is now broadly in line with the national figure. Punctuality at the start of the day is an issue. In most classes, one or two pupils persistently arrive after the register has been taken. There has been one fixed-term exclusion since the last visit bringing the total to two in this academic year. Both exclusions were the result of boys' aggressive behaviour.

The LEA is providing the school with good support. It has conducted thorough and useful audits of some areas of the school's work, such as the provision for pupils with special needs, and has supported the school in raising the quality of teaching and learning. It has a good knowledge of the school and is working with it regularly and effectively to improve provision.

Action taken to address the key issues

Key Issue 1: raise standards in the Foundation Stage, English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT)

Although the quality of teaching and the progress of the pupils are improving, there has been insufficient time for this to have a significant impact on standards, because of the legacy of unsatisfactory teaching in the past and the different rates of progress in various subjects. Standards observed in English and mathematics showed some improvement in both key stages, particularly in the quality of speaking and listening. Nevertheless, weaknesses in the pupils' writing are a significant hindrance at both Key Stages. Standards in science, ICT and in the Foundation Stage remain below average.

Progress on this key issue is limited.

Key Issue 2: improve the quality of teaching throughout the school

This key issue has been considered above. The quality of teaching has improved since the time of the last monitoring inspection. The school's own monitoring has produced an accurate assessment of the quality of teaching; as a result identified staff have received appropriate training and support and all staff have received training on particular features of good practice, such as the use of appropriate questioning techniques and improving speaking and listening. The Intensifying Support Programme has had an effective impact since the last monitoring inspection, working with individual teachers to improve their practice, giving demonstration lessons and working with all teachers to review the progress of targeted pupils. Although there have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching, some of these are still at an early stage and some inconsistencies persist.

Progress on this key issue is reasonable.

Key Issue 3: improve the balance of the curriculum at all stages

The school is now providing an appropriately broad curriculum for the pupils at all stages and is sensibly keeping its provision under review.

Progress is good.

Key Issue 4: improve the teachers' assessment of their pupils' progress and the use they make of it

The assessment policy has become much more embedded since the last visit. The LEA assessment co-ordinator has provided good support to the school. The staff are now more confident about the interpretation of data and have a better understanding of the importance of regular assessment to track progress and to inform future planning. Although the school has introduced sound procedures for assessment, marking remains inconsistent throughout the school. Some staff mark well and pupils understand the comments that have been made in their books. Other staff use excessive marking for encouragement and too little marking for improvement. Marking remains an area for further development.

Progress is reasonable.

Key Issue 5: improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs

The provision for pupils with special educational needs continues to improve in many areas. The LEA's special educational needs adviser has provided valuable support to the headteacher and the special educational needs co-ordinator and suggested many areas for improvement that the school has adopted. The co-ordinator and headteacher have formalised the reviews of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) of pupils at School Action and School Action Plus. A clear policy now exists that involves parents appropriately. A daily record sheet has been devised that allows teaching assistants working with pupils with special needs to communicate any significant issues to do with the pupils' progress to the class teacher and the special educational needs co-ordinator. The line management of the teaching assistants who support pupils with special needs has been discussed with the headteacher, who has now assumed the overall responsibility for their management. Increasingly class teachers are taking ownership of the IEPs of pupils with special needs in their class, although lesson planning does not always sufficiently identify the specific nature of the additional support required.

Progress is reasonable.

Key Issue 6: leadership and management

This key issue has been considered above. The headteacher and senior leadership team provide good leadership and management, but middle leadership remains inconsistent.

Progress on this key issue is reasonable.