



St Francis Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104239
LEA Walsall
Inspection number 277110
Inspection dates 10 January 2006 to 11 January 2006
Reporting inspector Susan Morris-King HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mill Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Walsall
Age range of pupils	3 to 1		West Midlands WS4 1RH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01922 682583
Number on roll	222	Fax number	01922 685609
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Karen Clarke
Date of previous inspection	4 October 1999	Headteacher	Mr John Murray

Age group 3 to 1	Inspection dates 10 January 2006 - 11 January 2006	Inspection number 277110
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspector's and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Francis Catholic Primary School is an average-sized primary school situated in the Shelfield area of Walsall. The school takes pupils from 3–11. Some pupils join the nursery when they are three or four years old, while others do not join the school until Reception. Most pupils are White British; a few pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils who are identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities is average. Around half of the pupils are baptised Catholics. The school has experienced considerable changes in staffing in the last two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Francis Catholic Primary School judges that it provides pupils with a satisfactory education, with good elements. The inspection team agrees. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and by the end of Reception an average proportion of children reach the expected levels. Progress is satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2, with rates of progress accelerating in Key Stage 2. Standards at both key stages are in line with national averages. The school has rightly identified that writing has been an area in need of improvement over several years. A new approach to the teaching of writing has begun to have some impact. Personal development is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and behave well. Mutual support is seen by the school as central to their ethos and this is demonstrated in several ways, such as the care which older pupils show for younger ones. Pupils are articulate and thoughtful about their school. Care for pupils is good; the school has well-managed systems and structures to ensure that pupils receive the guidance and support they need. Teaching is satisfactory, with areas of strength. Lessons have clear structures and are well prepared. The school has recently started to introduce a greater variety of teaching approaches to make lessons more interesting. Assessment is thorough, but the analysis of the information and the tracking of pupils' progress need refinement. The curriculum is satisfactory, and the extracurricular opportunities for pupils are good. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as is the capacity to improve further. The headteacher has a sound understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas which need development. Monitoring of the school's effectiveness is regular but evaluation needs improvement. The role of the curriculum co-ordinators has begun to develop but the headteacher is aware that this needs further improvement. Governors provide valuable practical support as well as appropriate challenge. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- refine the systems for analysing and tracking the pupils' progress to ensure that data is well used by teachers to plan the next steps in the pupils' learning.
- ensure that the outcomes of monitoring are evaluated rigorously and used more effectively to shape school improvement.
- develop the roles of the curriculum co-ordinators.
- continue to raise standards in writing by building on the recent positive developments.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are in line with national averages. During their time at the school, almost all pupils make progress which is at least satisfactory; many pupils have made good progress by the time they leave at the end of Key Stage 2. Children's skills on entry to the nursery or to Reception are slightly below that expected for their age. Children make good progress during the Foundation Stage and, by the end of Reception, standards are average. The progress which pupils make between the end of Reception

and the end of Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils usually achieve standards which are around average. Outcomes in mathematics and reading have been better than in writing for several years, but in 2005 writing results improved to come in line with the national average for the first time in several years. In 2005 an average proportion of pupils gained the higher Level 3. Standards by the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly in line with national averages. English results have been the most variable. The proportion of pupils who gained the higher Level 5 in English in 2005 was well below the national figure, but was in line in mathematics. In 2003 and 2004, the progress which pupils made between the end of Key Stage 1 and the end of Key Stage 2 was particularly good. Whilst progress declined in 2005, it was still above average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes towards their work. They particularly enjoy writing activities as a result of new ways of teaching this subject. One younger boy commented: 'I love writing stories now!' Parents agree that their children enjoy school; this enjoyment is reflected in good attendance. Behaviour is good. Pupils get on well together and older pupils are very willing to help the younger ones; for example, older pupils sit with younger ones in church and help to explain the services to them. They understand the school rules and know what is right and wrong. The school council members are enthusiastic about the opportunities they have to make changes, for example, improving playtime facilities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are sensitive and understanding towards others. Pupils know about keeping safe and making healthy life choices. Regular sporting activities contribute well to pupils' fitness. Through raising funds for charities such as the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD), pupils develop a good awareness of the community outside school. By the time they leave in Year 6, pupils have academic and social skills that will be useful to them in the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with elements of good practice. Pupils generally enjoy their lessons and were keen to tell inspectors how their teachers help them to improve. Recent action taken in response to the pupils' wish to make learning more interesting has resulted in a wider variety of teaching approaches being used, to which the pupils respond well. Pupils have an increasing number of opportunities to talk about their work together and to share their ideas. The introduction last term of a new approach to the teaching of writing has begun to have a positive effect on the standard of pupils' work. Teaching assistants play an important part in supporting pupils' learning throughout the school. The school generates a wealth of data about

pupils' attainment but analysis lacks clarity. The available data needs to be simplified to help teachers to be clear about the rate of pupils' progress and to plan for improvement. However, in the Foundation Stage the good use of assessment means teachers plan work which meets pupils' needs well. Target setting and marking are satisfactory and often good: in some classes, such as Year 6, thoughtful marking has a positive impact on pupils' progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets statutory requirements. The wellplanned Foundation Stage curriculum covers all of the six areas of learning thoroughly and is good. In Years 1 to 6, the use of national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy ensures that learning is built upon year on year. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory. Individual education plans are in place and have relevant targets. The school enriches the curriculum well. Pupils appreciate that visits and visitors improve their understanding of subjects. For example, they say they are becoming better at football as a result of the input from a local football club. Pupils enjoy the challenges of learning to play instruments and many pupils attend the wide range of after-school activities. The school's accommodation is cramped and sometimes has a negative impact on practical activities. The small hall, for example, restricts physical education lessons for the older pupils, although the staff make every effort to use the outdoor spaces well when the weather allows. The lack of any extra teaching spaces means that small group work outside the main classrooms is particularly difficult to organise.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a caring school, which provides a happy and secure environment in which all pupils can grow and develop. Induction arrangements for when children first start at school in nursery or Reception are satisfactory. Pupils feel there is always someone to whom they can turn for help, should the need arise. As a result they are happy and can get on with their learning. Parents agree that their children are safe and well cared for. The before- and after-school clubs provide continuity of care and are appreciated by parents. All adults know the children very well and are aware of their personal and family circumstances. Child protection arrangements are very clear. Those children who are vulnerable for whatever reason are quickly identified and supported, making good use of outside agencies where appropriate. Children who have learning difficulties receive the sensitive support they need to enable them to play a full part in school activities. Health and safety routines and risk assessments are fully in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, with some strengths. The headteacher has a sound understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas which need development. He has managed considerable staff changes effectively to ensure that the school is stable and continues to develop. He is well supported by the senior team, who provide positive role models for staff through their good teaching. Staff are well motivated and keen to continue to improve the school: they have responded particularly well to new approaches to the teaching of writing. Newly established good leadership of the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 has enthused staff and has begun to result in better outcomes for pupils. The headteacher and other senior staff regularly monitor the school's work, but the evaluation of information gained from monitoring needs to be more rigorous and used more effectively to shape school improvement. However, where monitoring and evaluation have identified specific issues, such as the need to extend the range of teaching approaches, suitable changes have been made as a result. The headteacher has rightly identified that the role of the curriculum leaders is underdeveloped and this forms part of the school's improvement plan. The school has good relationships with parents. Parents' views are sought and acted upon and parents are regularly invited to attend events and workshops at the school. They are appreciative of what the school does for their children. The Parents' Association raises considerable funds for resources, such as a stage and stage lighting. Governance is good. The chair and vice-chair play a particularly active part in the school and provide valuable practical support as well as appropriate challenge.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

St Francis Catholic Primary School Mill Road Shelfield Walsall West Midlands WS4 1RH

2 January 2006

Dear Children

Thank you for welcoming us to your school this week, and for talking to us about your views and ideas. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and listening to what you had to say about your school.

You told us that you enjoy coming to school and that your lessons are interesting. You also told us that your teachers work hard to help you to learn. We agree with you. Your teachers plan your lessons well. Since September they have tried particularly hard to help everyone to improve their writing. We were glad to hear that many of you are now finding writing more enjoyable. We agree with you that your writing is getting better. We have asked your teachers to keep this good work up.

The comments your teachers write on your work are very helpful. We were glad to see that often you are taking notice of these and you are trying to make improvements. Sometimes you also have tests and other assessments. This means that Mr Murray knows a lot about how well you are all getting on. We have asked him to make all this information a bit simpler so that it will help your teachers to decide what you need to learn next. We have also asked him to think about how the teachers can help each other sometimes with their work to improve your learning. We were impressed with the way you behave towards each other and towards your staff. You explained very well how you help each other, for example, by being 'playground buddies'. You have many good ideas about how you can make your school even better. It was good to learn that you have a school council, which has already made some changes, such as improving the playground equipment. We were glad to see that you raise money for so many charities, such as CAFOD. There are many things which are good about your school, and together you and your staff can make it even better. Please keep working hard and doing the best you can!

Yours faithfully

Mrs S. Morris-King Her Majesty's Inspector