



# St Francis RC Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 105529  
**LEA** Manchester  
**Inspection number** 277372  
**Inspection dates** 27 June 2006 to 28 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr John Coleman HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Ellenbrook Close
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Gorton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		Manchester, Lancashire M12 5LZ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 2233457
<b>Number on roll</b>	171	<b>Fax number</b>	0161 2232768
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Fr Hugh Allan
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18 May 1998	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Louise Frize

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## **Introduction**

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

## **Description of the school**

The school serves both the parish of St Francis and the parish of Sacred Heart, together with the community of Gorton. It is increasingly popular and numbers are rising. About a fifth of pupils come from homes where English is not the first language; this is above the national average. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals, well above the national average. The number of pupils with additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above that found nationally. There is considerable variance in the composition of year groups by gender, ethnic origin, pupils with additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities, pupils for whom English is not their first language and in the number who join or leave the school during the year, which is particularly high. There are a growing number of pupils arriving from overseas. A number of pupils take extended absence for family and cultural reasons.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

The school provides a satisfactory and rapidly improving standard of education.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are leading improvements to many areas in the school at a remarkable rate. Weaknesses at the time of the last inspection have been successfully tackled and, whilst standards of pupils' attainments are not yet high enough across the whole school, they are rising quickly. Inspectors judge that pupils now achieve satisfactorily though standards remain below average overall. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are providing inspirational leadership. They have secured the commitment of all the staff to improvement and to higher expectations for pupils. The school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. The leadership team rigorously monitors the performance of pupils and constantly seeks to improve the quality of teaching and learning, which is satisfactory overall. The school is improving because weaker practice is identified and good training is provided for teachers. There is some way still to go and the leadership rightly recognises the need to pursue this rigorously. Pupils join the school with knowledge and skills which are well below average. In the Foundation Stage, standards are below average and children make satisfactory progress due to the satisfactory but improving quality of teaching. Assessment systems in the school are becoming embedded; they are providing detailed information about the progress that pupils make. This is used well by the school to track the progress of most groups, for example, those for whom English is an additional language. However, there is no analysis of the very large numbers of pupils who join the school after the usual starting age of three years. Although pupils are given broad curriculum targets for improvement, about which they and their parents are knowledgeable, they are not always clear about how to improve their next piece of work. Governors are well informed and increasingly hold the school leadership to account for the school's performance. They show a strong determination to seek the very best provision for the pupils and this is shown in the high quality of recent appointments to the school staff.

Pupils like school. This is because the staff treat each individual pupil as special. An ethos of care is created by the good role models provided by all staff. Pupils feel safe and secure in school and are confident they can turn to someone for help if they need to. Pupils are helped to mature by taking on responsibilities such as being members of the school council, playground and litter monitors and receive visitors with courtesy. Behaviour is good overall and pupils generally get on well with each other, though the misbehaviour of a minority of pupils in some lessons slows the pace of learning. They are prepared for the next stage of education and acquire the skills they will need. Arrangements for the transfer to secondary education are good. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good.
- Ensure the tracking of pupils' progress identifies those who join the school later than the usual age of 3 years.

- Sharpen the guidance given to pupils about what to do next to improve their work.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and, although below average standards are reached overall, the rate of all pupils' progress is improving rapidly.

Most children enter the Nursery with skills that are well below those found in the majority of schools. They are particularly low in children's social development and in the skills of communication, language and literacy (CLL). Children make satisfactory progress during the nursery class which accelerates in Reception. They achieve standards which are below average overall by the end of the Foundation Stage, but the gap has narrowed due to good achievement in CLL and social skills.

In Key Stage 1 and 2 the satisfactory progress is maintained and the rate is increasing, but it is not yet enough to bring all pupils' standards up to an average level. By age seven, standards are below average in English, mathematics and science but they are rising quickly and the number of pupils with above average standards is also growing. In year 6, standards seen during the inspection, supported by preliminary national test results for 2006 in science, and current teachers assessments, show results similar to those expected nationally, with increasing numbers of pupils achieving the higher Level 5. However, there is considerable variance in Years 2 to 6 and below average standards overall. There is imbalance in the numbers of girls and boys, those with minority ethnic backgrounds, the significant numbers of pupils for who English is an additional language, and those with additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Progress for these groups of pupils is good and improving, but they attain standards which are below average. Good quality teaching quickens progress in Years 5 and 6.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

At the heart of promoting pupils' confidence and self-esteem is the school's caring ethos. Provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils spoke about how they appreciate the weekly sharing assemblies when they celebrate together the good things they have done. One pupil commented 'you feel proud inside'. Behaviour is good overall. The school promotes moral values well as seen in the respect pupils have for each other, adults and school property. Opportunities for social development abound, in lessons, taking part in school clubs and during residential visits. Pupils have obvious respect for each other's beliefs and customs because the school celebrates its wide variety of cultures and languages. Attendance is improving, although still below the national average. The school is vigorous in its attempts to encourage a small number of families to improve their pupils' attendance rates.

Pupils say they like school and their teachers because 'they help you all the time'. Provision for personal development in the Foundation Stage is good where adults help to make pupils feel special. Pupils can explain why they need to eat healthy foods and

take exercise. They take on, for example, the role of book, litter or playtime monitors with enthusiasm and commitment. The school council appreciate the opportunity to influence decisions made about improving the school, for instance, developing the Peace Garden and improving playground facilities. Pupils' basic skills of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory although rapidly improving, and this stands them in good stead for later life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with good features. Very good relationships and both teachers' and classroom assistants' clear knowledge of the requirements of teaching young children, ensures that learning is effective in the Foundation Stage. Certain strengths characterise all teaching. Careful planning matches work to the wide range of pupils' needs. Interactive whiteboards are used well to demonstrate and explain difficult concepts and to move the lesson on apace. Speaking and listening skills are developed well through pupils working in pairs and through open questioning. Pupils' behaviour is good overall in classes. However, in a small number of lessons, pupils do not listen well enough and the pace of the lesson slows. Some pupils say they are frustrated when the misbehaviour of one or two in the class prevents them from finishing their work. Classroom management and ways of using assessment to plan for pupils' learning are identified as a focus for improving the quality of teaching, and as a result of effective staff training this is improving rapidly.

Pupils with additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress, because teachers match work to their specific needs. They receive extra support from well-informed and sensitive teaching assistants.

The school has a rigorous system for tracking the progress of individual pupils. Teachers are more aware of the levels at which pupils are working, what they can be expected to achieve and plan teaching activities based upon this.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

Careful planning across the curriculum takes into account the school's diverse population so that all pupils, including those with additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities, at an early stage of learning English and those of asylum seeking families, receive the curriculum to which they are entitled. The school develops pupils' English and mathematical skills satisfactorily and is good at helping them to grow in confidence through the strong emphasis it places on their personal development. The focus on information and communication technology (ICT) has boosted learning and is beginning to strengthen links between subjects. Visiting artists, specialist teaching in music and a strong emphasis on physical activities ensure pupils receive a rounded education. In

the Foundation Stage, children experience exciting activities and acquire a strong desire to learn.

Pupils like the themed weeks, such as the recent African theme, that gives them a chance to work in different and challenging ways. A wide range of visits, including residential ones, and visitors who contribute to pupils' enjoyment, give meaning and relevance to class work. School clubs are popular; pupils say they particularly enjoy the sporting activities and their visits to Manchester City Football Club.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Good relationships and the approachability of staff contribute much to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their sense of security. They say that there is always someone to turn to if help is needed. Behaviour is closely monitored and incidents of bullying or unacceptable behaviour are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils say behaviour has improved 'because the headteacher has sorted it'. Health and safety, child protection and risk assessment procedures are in place and staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities.

Staff are skilled in supporting and caring for the wide range of cultures and backgrounds within the school and are quick to notify outside agencies when the need arises. Careful attention is given to ensuring that pupils, at whatever stage they join, settle into school with ease, particularly those who arrive from other countries with little warning. The recently introduced curriculum targets in English and mathematics are beginning to motivate pupils well. However, they are not yet sharply focused to guide individual pupils. Parents say that they are happy with the care provided and that the school always alerts them if their children are having difficulties.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Overall leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are a formidable team. They have made effective changes to the internal organisation and deployment of staff, classroom practice, assessment procedures and set high expectations of everyone in school. These are embraced by all staff who appreciate the way the headteacher values staff expertise and skills. Collectively, there is a high level of commitment to improving the school and unanimity of support for strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning, which is seen as the key to raising standards of pupils' attainment. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide outstanding direction. They have precise priorities and monitor the work of the school robustly.

The school's self-evaluation matches closely with inspectors' views of the school. The school has a good understanding of where it needs to improve. Subject leaders are knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' performance and the quality of teaching and learning. Appropriate staff training is pinpointed. The best teaching is identified and used throughout the school to improve the overall quality;

for example the deputy headteacher modelled literacy and numeracy lessons in every class.

Governors are well informed and knowledgeable about the school; they successfully challenge the school leadership where appropriate and provide effective support. Governors are increasingly seeking information for themselves and this is welcomed by the school leadership, for example, each governor is linked with a class and visits are arranged to observe the pupils whilst they learn. Improvements are being made in many areas of the school in response to under-achievement seen during the last inspection. A rigorous and systematic approach to school improvement planning, utilising measurable criteria for success, is fully in place. Resources are well deployed. The recruitment and retention of staff is well managed. There is a good partnership with the local authority.

The leadership have good capacity to improve the school further.



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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Following our visit we would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for talking to us about your lessons and life in school. We would like to tell you what we found out about your school.

- Your school is quickly improving and lessons are getting better and more interesting so that you learn more.
- You told us that you enjoy school and are happy. We think this is because all the staff treat you as special and look after you so well.
- Most of you behave well and are responsible.
- Your headteacher and deputy headteacher are very good at improving your school.
- We have asked the school to improve some lessons.
- We think that you will learn more if you are given targets for what to do next and we have asked that the school does this.
- If you join the school after the Nursery class we have asked the school to measure carefully how well you are doing.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. We all hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make St Francis RC Primary School an even better place to be.