



St Francis Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120216
LEA Leicestershire
Inspection number 280768
Inspection dates 10 July 2006 to 11 July 2006
Reporting inspector John Eadie AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Dalby Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Melton Mowbray
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Leicestershire LE13 0BP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01664 562891
Number on roll	268	Fax number	01664 482712
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Simon Curly
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Denise Shipstone

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4 to 11	10 July 2006 - 11 July 2006	280768

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This Catholic school is situated in the market town of Melton Mowbray but draws many of its pupils from a wide rural area surrounding the town. Most children are White British, the rest representing a wide range of heritages. There are an increasing number of pupils from Poland joining the school, many of whom enter speaking no English. There are also a small number of other pupils for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The headteacher took up her post in April 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This school is very popular with parents and rightly so, as it is a good school that gives good value for money. The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness matches that of the inspection. Parents say such things as 'The school provides a supportive, loving, caring educational environment.' Pupils are making good progress through the school due to good teaching. This progress is particularly good in Years 3 to 6 and pupils leave the school having reached high standards in many subjects. Raising standards in the tests at Year 2, particularly in writing, has been a focus for a little while and the work that has been going on is beginning to have an impact. Standards were broadly average in 2005 and have improved this year, although there is still some work to do to maintain this upward trend. Children make a good start in the Reception class and make good progress to reach standards above those expected by the time they move to Year 1. This is due to the good provision made for them.

The Catholic ethos is very evident in all areas of school life and is at the heart of the way that each child and adult is viewed as an individual. This is very effective in the excellent individual care and support provided which results in the pupils' good personal development. Academic support and guidance are not as well developed as not enough use is made of assessment information in planning the next steps in learning. Systems of assessment are not yet enabling children to know exactly what they need to learn next. The curriculum is good and is particularly strong in the creative subjects.

The new headteacher has built very effectively on the good progress that has been made since the previous inspection. She is developing a new management structure and has quickly and accurately analysed strengths and areas for development. Leadership and management are good. Bearing in mind the progress made in recent years and the very evident desire to raise standards, the school is well placed to continue to move forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue the work already started to raise standards in Year 2, particularly in writing.
- Ensure that assessment information is used in planning and that pupils know what they need to learn next.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress through the school and reach high standards in many subjects by the time they leave. For example, standards in art and design, music and information and communication technology (ICT) are high throughout the school. Children start in the Reception class with levels of skills and knowledge broadly in line with those expected at this age. They make good progress in this class and start in Year 1 with higher standards than those expected. Their progress in acquiring literacy

skills is particularly good. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 have improved this year, which redresses a dip in the test results in 2005. They are now a little higher than they have been for some years in reading and mathematics, though not in writing. The pupils currently in Year 2 have made satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. This situation is improving and pupils in Year 1 have made good progress this year. Good and sometimes very good progress is made in Years 3 to 6 and standards in the national tests at the end of Year 6 have been consistently high for a number of years. Well over half of Year 6 pupils gained the higher Level 5 in the tests in mathematics and science this year. The targets set for achievement in these tests were upgraded as the school recognised that these were not sufficiently challenging. These new targets were met or exceeded. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as they are supported well. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English are also making good progress because the school has worked hard to meet their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. The spiritual and moral aspects are excellent and a tribute to the school's Catholic ethos. This shows strongly, for instance, in pupils' joyful and committed singing in assemblies and in some sensitive art and written work. Pupils' outstanding contribution to the school and wider community is evident in their considerate behaviour and in fund raising for a wide range of charities, both local and further afield.

Older pupils are very critical of misbehaviour. Bullying incidents are very rare and pupils are confident that they are dealt with effectively. Pupils show concern for others and behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent. Pupils have a good understanding of what makes for a safe and healthy lifestyle. Some older pupils take on high profile roles as playleaders and prefects, helping others to play safely and behave responsibly. There are plans to form a school council at the start of next term and increase pupils' opportunities to take responsibility and make decisions about issues that affect them.

Attendance is good as pupils enjoy school. Their enjoyment of school and eagerness to succeed underlie the high standards found in a broad range of subjects. Pupils work hard in lessons and cooperate well with others. They are enthusiastic about after-school clubs, particularly sports and drama, and the residential visits where working with others is critical to success. The high standards of their basic skills and their willingness to work hard on their own or with others promise well for their future success.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, as shown by the good progress made by pupils. Examples of outstanding teaching were seen during the inspection. The best lessons are characterised by very good relationships between teachers and pupils and this helps teachers to challenge children to achieve as well as they can. Year 4 pupils were fierce in their pursuit of advertising standards: 'If it says strawberry/blueberry lemonade, then it had better only have strawberries and blueberries in it!' Challenging teaching is particularly successful in Years 3 to 6 and results in many pupils gaining the higher levels in the national tests in Year 6 in mathematics and science.

Teachers make accurate assessments of how well children are learning, but the school is at an early stage of using this information to help with planning the next steps in learning. Alongside this, marking of pupils' work does not often help pupils understand exactly what they need to do to improve.

Teachers and other adults give good support to children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English are particularly well supported.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is well balanced and gives good coverage to all subjects. The school puts a very strong emphasis on ensuring high standards in mathematics and English. However, in Years 1 and 2, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their writing skills. The use of different aspects of ICT across other curriculum areas is now strong, and this is a good improvement since the last inspection – as is the good provision for children in the Reception class.

There is a very thorough programme for pupils' personal, health and social education. For example, participation from the school nurse helps to teach pupils how to live healthily, and work with the police in all classes is part of teaching pupils to stay safe. The curriculum is also enhanced by the contributions of specialist teachers for geography, history, art and music, for example. Pupils are enthusiastic about the very high quality work in art which they have recently exhibited. They are also very proud to point out that visitors from the local community consider the professional pantomime 'not a patch on the St Francis one!' Two residential visits give good opportunities for pupils to develop independence.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The strong relationships that staff build with their classes mean that pupils grow in confidence, both personally and academically.

An unusual feature is that significant aspects of pupils' personal accomplishments and behaviour are regularly recorded and this gives a very clear picture of their successes and needs. Pupils say they feel safe and know who to turn to if they need help or advice. There are good procedures for dealing with any incidences of bullying that occur. Rigorous child protection procedures are in place. Support for pupils at an early stage of learning English, particularly those newly arrived from Poland, is very good. For example, the school has employed a Polish speaker to help these pupils.

Assessment procedures are sound. The progress made by pupils is measured accurately. However, more could be done to include pupils in assessing their own progress and particularly in setting them clearer targets for the next steps in their learning. Strong teamwork between teachers and assistants ensures that children having difficulties in lessons are given extra help.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. A particular strength is the quality of monitoring and evaluation, which is excellent. The headteacher, ably supported by her deputy, has led a very thorough analysis of the school's effectiveness and quickly established strengths and areas for development. The effectiveness of self-evaluation is outstanding. Evidence of this is that the school is already working at all the areas for improvement noted in this report. However, some initiatives are in their early stages and are only just beginning to have an impact. For example, although standards in the tests at the end of Year 2 have improved, standards in writing are still significantly lower than standards in reading and mathematics. Parents are consulted regularly and their views are considered in development planning. Pupils' views are valued and also play a part in planning. For instance, the playleader scheme was started as a result of some pupils' concerns about involvement at playtimes. Governors are very well involved in self-evaluation and their role in monitoring the effectiveness of the school is strong.

A further area for development identified by the headteacher is in the effectiveness of middle management. This is being restructured and clear guidance is now being used by subject coordinators to ensure consistency in the way that they carry out their roles.

The headteacher is providing a very clear focus for the work of the school and continuous improvement is very much at the heart of this. Bearing this in mind, and taking into account the evident sense of teamwork, the school is very well placed to build on its success.

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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?	2	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	1	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	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	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	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?	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	1	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	2	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

12 July 2006

Dear Children

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school. We really enjoyed our time with you and were impressed by how polite you are. Many of you told us how proud you are of your school and your own achievements. You are right to be proud as yours is a good school.

We think that the following are the best things about your school:

You reach really high standards in the national tests at the end of Year 6 and in many other subjects, such as art and design, music and ICT.

Your headteacher and the staff are very good at working out what needs to be done to make the school better.

You make good progress through the school because you are taught well.

All adults look after you very well.

There are a number of things which make your lessons more interesting, such as having specialist teachers, and a good number of visits and visitors. We have told your school that the following things need to be improved and they are already working at these:

The standards you reach by the end of Year 2 are improving and we hope that you will continue to keep this up, particularly in writing.

You do not always know clearly what you need to do to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

John D Eadie Lead Inspector