



St Francis C of E Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134151
LEA Swindon
Inspection number 282470
Inspection dates 15 September 2005 to 16 September 2005
Reporting inspector Martin Kerly RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Aiken Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Taw Hill
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Swindon SN25 1UH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01793 727624
Number on roll	170	Fax number	01793 721 964
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Theresa Turner
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr Clive Westall

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3 to 11	15 September 2005 - 16 September 2005	282470

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This new school opened in September 2004 in temporary accommodation with around 100 pupils on roll. It moved into spacious new accommodation in January 2005. At first, most pupils were in mixed-age classes, including those in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 who were in one class. There are now 170 pupils on roll aged 3 to 11 years who are taught in six classes. Four of these are now for single year groups. The teaching staff team has almost doubled in size since opening, reflecting the increasing numbers of pupils. The school serves a new community within the parish of North Swindon but the pupils have come from widely scattered schools and backgrounds in other districts of Swindon and beyond. Numbers are expected to rise steadily as more homes are built until it becomes a one form entry school with some 250 pupils on roll.

St Francis is a Church of England Voluntary Aided school and was originally designed to include an attached Anglican church. This has been deferred but the school building is used as a venue for regular local worship.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This new school is already providing well for all of its pupils. It has become a purposeful and harmonious place in which pupils and staff feel part of a coherent community. It has achieved much in a short space of time.

Children in the nursery and reception classes achieve well and by the start of Year 1 many have good basic skills above those expected nationally as a result of good provision. Infant and junior pupils of all abilities also achieve well as a result of good teaching.

The main strengths are the leadership of the headteacher and deputy, the achievement by the pupils, their personal development and the overall quality of teaching. The school provides good value for money.

The school has a clear understanding of its strengths and areas where it can improve and it is well placed to improve further. It has no significant weaknesses. However, to enable it to develop successfully good practice needs to be shared effectively. The outcomes of the effective monitoring and evaluation undertaken by the school need to be understood and acted upon by all staff. Governors need to strengthen their role in holding the school to account.

What the school should do to improve further

- make more use of the three leading teachers by sharing their skills in support of colleagues' practice in the expanding staff team
- ensure the most important issues to emerge from checking up on how well the school is doing are clearly identified and made more accessible for staff
- strengthen the role of governors in holding the school to account and establishing all the required written policies.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities achieve well and have made good progress since arriving in this school. Most children entering the Foundation Stage classes are close to or a little above the national expectations. For the majority of these children, this is their first school. By the end of the Foundation Stage, having progressed well, most are meeting the nationally expected goals and many are exceeding them.

Pupils who have joined the school in Years 1 to 6 represent the full ability range but most are achieving broadly average standards. The school quickly assesses their abilities and matches work to their needs, minimising potential disruption to learning. There is no significant variation in progress between different groups of pupils. Those with special educational needs make good progress because of early identification and well managed support. Gifted and talented pupils are also challenged well and some are withdrawn for separate sessions. Pupils are set challenging targets in all year groups and their progress towards these is systematically monitored. Most achieved, and a

good proportion exceeded, their targets over the last term. Results of national tests taken by Year 2 in the summer of 2005, a few months after many pupils had arrived, were broadly in line with the national average in reading and writing, although below in mathematics. Too few pupils took tests at the end of Year 6 to make judgements about standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Throughout the school, pupils' personal development is a high priority and is good, with some outstanding aspects. The good systems for personal care enable new arrivals to settle in quickly and focus on their lessons. There are particularly good induction arrangements for the youngest children arriving in nursery and reception. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is also good. Almost all pupils enjoy school. Attendance is excellent. Behaviour and relationships are good within this new and growing school community. All pupils have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the school. Members of the school council have excellent opportunities to engage in decision making. They report that their work has led to a safer and happier play area because each week the number of pupils nominated for demonstrating kindness at break times has increased. Some older pupils represent the school on the Parochial Church Council, providing an excellent link with the local community. Pupils have a clear set of values and respect themselves and others. Older pupils are keen to take on responsibility. For example, many formally apply for posts as 'mini teaching assistants' working with younger children. Pupils develop a sound understanding of different cultures through work in different aspects of art, literature and music. They have a good understanding of why it is important to exercise and eat sensibly. A clear and effective focus on teaching pupils the basic literacy and numeracy skills helps prepare them well for their future learning needs.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall and consequently pupils are learning well. Teachers plan effectively, taking account of the age groups in their classes and, as far as possible, pupils' previous experiences to avoid undue repetition in their learning. Pupils respond well in lessons and to the opportunities to cooperate in pairs or small groups. The school has three 'leading teachers', identified by the local authority, who are in a position to support colleagues within the school and across Swindon. To date their expertise has not been shared sufficiently across the expanding staff team and there is some variation in quality of provision between the classes. The new accommodation is a significant factor in enhancing the quality of learning. Teachers have worked hard to establish new classrooms twice within the first school year, and succeeded in making them stimulating working environments. They make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) in their classrooms to support their teaching, helping

to engage the pupils. However, the newly commissioned ICT suite is not yet used as well as it might be.

The school is developing effective assessment procedures and has established detailed arrangements for English, mathematics and science. Teachers regularly assess pupils at the beginning and end of lessons and at set times during the year. This enables them to match work to the needs of different groups, including those with additional learning needs. They deploy teaching assistants well to work alongside specific pupils and support small groups.

Parents are well informed about their children's progress and how they can help with their learning. They are overwhelmingly appreciative of the school and the way they are fully informed and consulted.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is developing satisfactorily to reflect the changing structure of classes as the school expands. All pupils experience the breadth and balance of subjects required. Pupils in single and mixed-age classes have work that meets their ages, interests and needs appropriately. Children in the nursery and reception classes have access to the full range of experiences expected for this age group in a stimulating environment. The school is successfully working to ensure a smooth transition from the Foundation Stage to the National Curriculum requirements in Year1. The personal, social and health education programme effectively involves pupils in thinking about decisions they need to make to stay safe and healthy, including such aspects as drug abuse, healthy eating and sex education. However, the overall policy for sex education has not been formally adopted and it should be.

Increasing numbers of pupils are attending a range of activities after school, such as music, art, football, netball and cookery. These help to extend their experiences, particularly in developing physical, creative and social skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support of pupils are good. The staff team successfully provides a safe and happy environment for the pupils throughout the day. Effective procedures ensure pupils' safety and well-being. However, several procedures, including those for providing for pupils with special educational needs and promoting racial equality, whilst agreed are not formally written and should be. This is particularly important as the school is growing in size and taking on new staff and pupils. Despite the absence of a formal policy, the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, enabling good achievement by these pupils. Comprehensive records of all pupils' achievements are used effectively to track their progress and ensure support is focused where it is needed most. Pupils are set challenging targets to help them do their best and encourage good progress. Teachers use an agreed marking code and this helps pupils to understand how well they are doing and how they can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides good leadership. His clear vision and high expectations have been key in the way the school, despite the disruption of moving at the beginning of the second term, has become successfully established. He has been instrumental in ensuring that the school has a calm and purposeful learning ethos in which all are respected and valued whilst challenged to do their best. He is supported by an effective deputy who fulfils teaching and leadership roles with skill and commitment. This helps to ensure that members of staff are working as a team. Pupils are developing positive attitudes to learning and a pride in their school as a consequence.

The extensive systems for checking up on how well the school is doing successfully involve all partners in the school community including parents and pupils. However, it is too early to judge the outcomes of some changes made as a result of the findings, for example the added focus on investigative science and additional ways of improving standards in reading. At times the most important issues to emerge from data and other evidence need to be made clearer for new and existing colleagues. An interim governing body worked effectively to establish this new school and appoint all the staff. The new permanent governing body is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities and individual governors are undergoing considerable training. Governors have not yet formally adopted a full range of policies confirming school practice. They need to strengthen their role by seeking more information about the school's strengths and weaknesses so that they can hold the school to account and encourage the school in its drive to raise standards.

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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	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	1	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	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?	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?	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	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	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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 CE VA Primary School Aiken Road Taw Hill Swindon SN25 1UH

28th September 2005

Dear Children

As you probably remember a team of two inspectors visited your school recently to find out if the school is giving you the education that you should receive. Thank you for making us feel welcome. We enjoyed talking with you and finding out about your new school and the work that you have done.

I am pleased to say that for lots of reasons we decided that St Francis Primary is already a good school. The things that we think are particularly good are:

the way your headteacher and deputy headteacher have led all the arrangements for setting up your new school and making sure all children, teachers and other staff quickly settle in

the progress you are all making in your learning since you arrived in this school

your good behaviour and the many ways you support and help each other

the good teaching and interesting lessons in your new classrooms.

To make your school even better we have asked the governors, headteacher and staff to improve a few things. These include:

share with each other all their really good ideas about teaching and ways of working as the size of the school grows

make good use of what they find out from checking up on what is going well and what needs to improve

help for the new governors and staff in getting to know about the work of the school and to write down some of the important things that have already been agreed.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. We hope that you carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make St Francis CE VA Primary School a great place to be.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Martin Kerly and Mrs Fran Gillam - Inspectors