

Saint Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100494
Local Authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	285816
Inspection date	30 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Lynn Bappa

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	305
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr E Dooley
Headteacher	Mr P Rincon
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2002
School address	Treadgold Street Notting Hill London W11 4BJ
Telephone number	020 7727 8523
Fax number	020 7229 2174

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Francis of Assisi is a one-and-a-half form entry primary school serving a diverse inner-city community. Over three-quarters of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and there are small numbers of refugees and pupils from Traveller communities. More than half the pupils speak English as an additional language. The predominant languages, other than English, are Portuguese, Spanish and Tagalog. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The school received government funding in 2003 to build a 'classroom of the future'. It is a recognised centre for excellence for mathematics.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Francis of Assisi is an outstanding school. As one pupil commented, 'There are many things that are unusual about this school - that's what makes it special.' At its heart lies a clear commitment to Catholic values. Pupils feel safe, welcomed and cared for. Most attend school regularly, thoroughly enjoy lessons and other activities and make excellent progress in their personal development and well-being.

The school provides a stimulating learning environment in which pupils are able to blossom. The 'classroom of the future', for example, includes technology such as video conferencing and a powerful telescope. Pupils are particularly proud of the fact that it produces its own electricity, some of which is sold back to the National Grid. The playground's environmental area includes a forest, stream, two ponds and a large boat. Pupils are extremely proud of these facilities and explain that they help them to play and learn creatively. As one pupil commented, 'We don't need lots of toys in our playground because the forest helps us to use our imaginations.'

Children start school with levels of knowledge and skills that are below those expected of three year-olds, particularly in communication, language and literacy skills. They get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage and are well prepared for more formal learning when they enter Year 1. As a result of the exceptionally high quality of the school's provision and their own extremely positive attitudes, pupils make outstanding progress during their time in the school. By Year 6, standards are significantly above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. The school has put into place strategies to improve the pupils' performance in science, with a particular focus on investigative work and data handling. Inspection evidence confirms that these are already bearing fruit and that standards in this area are rising.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Pupils experience a very good range of interesting activities to help them to learn, including excellent use of resources such as historical artefacts and interactive white boards. The rich curriculum makes very good provision for creative subjects, as well as for basic skills.

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. He works in close partnership with a dedicated and talented leadership team to ensure that pupils develop a deep love of learning and school. A real strength of the school is the high quality of teamwork and commitment which ensures that everyone plays an integral part in moving the school forward.

What the school should do to improve further

Although there are no substantial weaknesses, the inspectors agree with the school that in order to build on its success it should:

- implement current plans to further improve standards in science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are well above average overall and achievement is excellent. Pupils join the Nursery with very modest skills, with particular weaknesses in communication, language and literacy skills. A very high proportion speak English as an additional language. This means that, despite good progress, by the end of the Foundation Stage, pupils reach below expected levels.

Standards by the end of Year 2 are below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Secure foundations for learning are laid in Years 1 and 2, when pupils' literacy skills are still being consolidated. These foundations result in excellent progress being made throughout the junior classes by all groups of pupils, irrespective of their ethnicity, ability or gender. By the end of Year 6, standards are significantly above average overall. Pupils do particularly well in English and mathematics, with high proportions producing work at the higher levels. Pupils also achieve very well in other areas of the curriculum, such as art, history, Spanish and information and communication technology (ICT). The school is on its way to meeting its challenging targets for this year and prepares its pupils very well for the next stage of their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are understandably proud of their school. Their attitudes and behaviour are exemplary, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This can be seen in the way in which they value one another, reflect on life, and welcome opportunities to learn about the wider world. One pupil, for example, described the school as being 'close to nature' and thought this reflected its association with St Francis of Assisi. They thrive exceptionally well in a community that values their cultural heritages and pupils explained very firmly that 'this is not the kind of school where there is racism.'

Pupils have excellent relationships with each other and with staff, and contribute very effectively to the school and wider community. Pupils are proud to represent their class in the school parliament, for example, and feel their views are listened to. They happily accept responsibility by taking on jobs such as 'forest rangers' or looking after the school's chickens.

Pupils participate enthusiastically in sports and show a good understanding of why it is important to take part in them. They can explain which foods are good for you and enjoy the tasty and nutritious dinners they eat at lunchtime. They are particularly proud of the fact that these meals are cooked by the school's own chef and include vegetables they have grown on the school farm.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils learn exceptionally well because the quality of teaching is consistently high. As one teacher commented, 'Everyone is enthusiastic in the classroom and everyone is striving to do that much better.' Pupils enjoy their lessons, are highly motivated and work hard. In a mathematics lesson, where pupils were working out very complicated percentages in their heads, one boy enthusiastically commented, 'We do this sort of thing all the time. It's always fun and challenging.' Because they like their lessons, pupils do not waste time and concentrate very well on their work. They are eager to share their views with others and are confident when asked to do so. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are carefully identified. They are well supported in lessons and in small group work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum encourages pupils to think for themselves. It is reviewed regularly and tailored to meet pupils' needs very well. There are excellent opportunities for creative activities, such as astronomy, as well as weekly Spanish lessons for all pupils. Personal, social and health education is central to the ethos of the school, and pupils have very good opportunities to learn how to be responsible and tolerant citizens. They learn about Judaism, for example, through good links with a local Jewish school. The outdoor area for Nursery and Reception is well used. Pupils' understanding of 'green' issues is developed very well through use of the school's impressive environmental area and the 'classroom of the future'.

The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, including residential visits, a chess club and a multi-sensory club.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support, enabling pupils to make exceptional progress in their personal development. It is clear that every child matters at St Francis. As one parent commented, 'It makes me feel better when my children happily wave goodbye to me and stay in a place where they feel safe, valued and important.' The very positive relationships with parents and the good levels of support from outside agencies contribute significantly to pupils' excellent academic and personal progress. Vulnerable pupils are very well supported. The induction of children into the Foundation Stage is thoughtfully planned. As a result, children settle quickly into their new environment. There are good procedures for child protection.

Academic guidance is very good. Very good use is made of assessment to identify learners who need extra help or who are at risk of underachieving. Pupils know how well they are doing and have clear targets to aim for.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding because there is a clear focus on maintaining and improving high standards as well as promoting the personal development and well-being of pupils. The headteacher provides inspirational and clear-sighted leadership which enthuses and unites the staff, leading to improvements in many areas. He knows the school's strengths and weaknesses very well and this is evident in the high quality of the school's self-evaluation. Excellent systems are in place to provide rigorous and regular monitoring of all that goes on. The improvement planning process takes careful account of the views of parents and pupils. Pupils, for example, are asked to work out ways to reduce the school's electricity bills because budget information is regularly shared with them.

Issues relating to the last inspection have been tackled successfully. Governors are supportive and have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school is keen to improve even further. The success of the recent drive to improve the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in the national tests at the end of Year 6 provides a clear indication of the school's excellent capacity to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Saint Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School, Treadgold Street, Notting Hill, London, W11 4BJ

Thank you all for taking part in the inspection of your school. Special thanks to the pupils who showed me around the school and talked to me about their work. I particularly enjoyed seeing your 'classroom of the future' and being shown some of the special features of the environmental area, including the forest, the budgies and the chickens.

You all told me how special your school is and I agree. It is outstanding. You make excellent progress because you work very hard. The teaching in your school is excellent and you told me that lessons are fun.

All the staff look after you very well and make sure you are happy and safe. You have an excellent headteacher who is helped by the rest of the staff and governors to make sure that your school always wants to get better. I was very impressed by how well you all get on together and how sensible and friendly you are. The behaviour I saw was excellent.

There is very little that needs to change in your school, but I have agreed with your headteacher that teachers carry on with the plans they have to help you do even better in science. You can help them in this by continuing to work as hard as you can.

I hope you all keep on enjoying school and wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Lynn BappaLead inspector