



St Francis Church of England Aided Primary School and Nursery

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 103546
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286694
Inspection dates 17–18 January 2007
Reporting inspector Colin Lee

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Teazel Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Bournville
Age range of pupils	3–11		Birmingham B30 1LZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4595548
Number on roll (school)	244	Fax number	0121 4582720
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Don Higgs
		Headteacher	John Croghan
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	17–18 January 2007	286694

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size primary school with its own Nursery. It serves an area where falling birth rate is leading to fewer pupils of school age but this is a popular school that is over-subscribed. Children's attainment on entry is broadly average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with a small number representing a range of minority ethnic groups. All pupils speak English fluently. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average but a significant number of these have statements of special educational need.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. It provides a well balanced education for its pupils that has a positive impact on all aspects of their development. The headteacher inspires all with his drive and enthusiasm. All staff and governors contribute to the good overall leadership and management of the school. The strong sense of teamwork also extends into the excellent partnership that exists between home and school. Parents and carers take full advantage of the many opportunities the school provides to involve them in their children's education. The school has a very accurate awareness of its own strengths and areas for development. It responds with real urgency to any signs of a drop in the high standards it sets itself, such as a dip in national test results.

Pupils' achievement is good, so that standards are above average by Year 6 and sometimes very high. This success is due to consistently good teaching. Children make good progress from the moment they start school due to the good provision in the Foundation Stage. This is successfully built on so that a good rate of progress is maintained through each year group. The good progress of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities owes much to the excellent support they receive. The one area where progress of all pupils is only satisfactory is information and communication technology (ICT). This is due to the lack of confidence of some teachers in the teaching of basic ICT skills and opportunities being missed to use ICT in other subjects.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their very high levels of attendance are just one of many indications of their tremendous enjoyment of all that they do at school. This love of school pleases parents and carers as much as the good progress their children are making. Another notable strength is the pupils' excellent behaviour. The good curriculum is imaginatively planned so that it links subjects together and provides many opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pastoral care is exceptional and there is a consistent quality of good educational guidance and support in all classes.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement in ICT by boosting teachers' confidence in teaching key skills and providing more opportunities for ICT to be used in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement throughout the school is good. Attainment is broadly average when children start in the Nursery, although their language skills and some aspects of personal and social development are weaker than other areas. Children make good progress throughout Nursery and Reception and the vast majority attain the levels expected nationally in all areas by the start of Year 1, with a significant minority exceeding the expectations.

Good progress is maintained throughout Years 1 and 2. Results in national assessments at the end of Year 2 are generally above average. Slightly lower than average results in 2005 were due to the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities in that year group. 2006 saw a return to above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics and this is being maintained in the current Year 2. Whilst the school has consistently achieved above average results in the Year 6 national tests, there was a slight downward trend in the results from 2003 to 2005. Senior staff thoroughly analysed the results, established where there were some weaknesses, and worked with staff on measures to improve pupils' achievement. Success was seen in the 2006 results, which were above average in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Such levels are being maintained by the current Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils show very positive attitudes to lessons and to all other aspects of school life. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils show high levels of respect for the views of others.

Pupils have excellent knowledge and understanding of how to stay healthy as a result of the school's strong emphasis on the importance of regular exercise and healthy eating. They have a good awareness of safe practices in and out of school. They show genuine concern for others, for example, when older pupils look after the youngest or work with them on reading activities. The school has a strong sense of community and the pupils make a good contribution to school life. The very active class and school councils bring about genuine improvements to the school. Pupils are rightly proud of their effort to improve toilet facilities. The school council changed parental attitudes to parking and driving near the school when all previous efforts had failed. Pupils' mature social skills and their good basic literacy and numeracy skills mean they are well prepared for future education and eventual economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers' enthusiasm and professionalism shine through in lessons. They know exactly what they expect pupils to learn and their explanations are clear so that pupils are confident about tackling their work. Assessment procedures are good and this ensures that work is usually well matched to the learning needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties. Teachers' positive relationships with their classes, and their good skills in capturing pupils' interest, result in exemplary behaviour and sustained concentration. 'Wish we didn't have to stop,' commented one Year 4 pupil at the end of a lesson which included a range of interesting practical mathematics tasks.

Teachers usually know just when to intervene with well judged advice and when to let pupils work things out for themselves. However, on rare occasions, the pace of learning slows and opportunities are sometimes missed to check pupils' understanding through probing questions. Teachers are generally very well informed about the subjects they teach, and have high expectations of pupils' achievement. However, some are less secure about teaching ICT skills and this is reflected in pupils making satisfactory, rather than good, progress in the subject.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage benefit from a particularly rich range of learning opportunities, including purposeful play, which means they love coming to school. In Years 1 to 6, while a strong and effective emphasis is given to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, the school also takes care to provide a broad range of worthwhile learning experiences. For example, first rate opportunities are provided in music, and most pupils in Years 3 to 6 are learning to play an instrument. Pupils also benefit from very good provision for their personal development, including regular opportunities to talk about their feelings. However, insufficient use is generally made of ICT to support pupils' work in other subjects.

The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of educational visits, visitors and school clubs. These are greatly enjoyed by pupils. After reflecting on a visit to Blists Hill museum, where pupils dressed in Victorian clothes, one commented, 'It was brilliant and helped me to really understand how people used to live.'

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The staff know the pupils very well and the school works effectively with parents so that pupils' needs are met. Parents have regular opportunities to join their children in lessons. This is just one example of the excellent home/school partnership that has been developed. Parents are justifiably confident that their children are very well looked after at school. 'The school couldn't do more to make sure my son is happy and doing well,' commented one parent. Pupils feel safe and know that they can talk to staff if they have any worries. Child protection procedures are robust and regular health and safety checks are carried out. The school works very well with external agencies to provide support for pupils when this is required. Effective arrangements help children to settle into the Foundation Stage and prepare Year 6 pupils for their next stage of education. Support and guidance are outstanding for pupils' personal development, and good for their academic development. Pupils have a clear understanding of their achievements and of their targets for further improvement. Their progress is tracked carefully, and well judged actions are taken to support any pupils who may be falling behind.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has vision and provides high quality leadership. School improvement is seen in relation to how the school can best meet the needs of all members of the school community. The school knows itself well and knows equally well the priorities for school improvement. This drives achievement upwards and improves all aspects of provision. The governing body is fully involved in the day-to-day life of the school and has very effective strategies for monitoring its effectiveness. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and this, in turn, indicates that there is a good capacity for further improvement.

Most staff have recently taken on new responsibilities in terms of subject leadership and it is too soon to see the impact on pupils' achievement or judge the effectiveness of this management level. Senior staff carry out rigorous, purposeful monitoring and evaluation of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. This information is used constructively to show where pupils' achievement can improve and what action can be taken to achieve this. These processes have been very effective, for example, in raising the percentages of pupils in Year 6 gaining the higher Level 5 in the 2006 national tests.

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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?	2
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	2

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

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

We very much enjoyed visiting your school and we want to thank you for making us very welcome and showing us your work.

These are some important things we found out about your school:

- Your parents and carers are right in thinking that you go to a good school.
- You work hard, make good progress and produce work that is often of a good standard, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Your behaviour is excellent and older pupils are very good at looking after the younger ones.
- You told us how much you enjoy being at the school and we saw that in your enthusiasm during lessons and outside at playtimes.
- Your teachers and the teaching assistants teach you well and do their best to help you learn.
- Your teachers plan interesting lessons and many adults help to give you extra activities at lunchtime and after school. This helps many of you to be very good at music, in particular.
- The headteacher leads your school well and all the staff, governors and other adults in school work hard to help him to improve things.
- You also do important things to improve the school through the class and school councils.

What we have asked the school to do now:

- We want teachers to give you more opportunities to improve your skills still further in ICT.