

St Francis Xavier's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116884
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	290669
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2007
Reporting inspector	William Goodall

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat King
Headteacher	Margaret Daron
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2002
School address	Venn's Lane Hereford HR1 1DT
Telephone number	01432 273941
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a Roman Catholic primary school of average size in the city of Hereford. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage, but currently a small minority of children in Reception Year are at an early stage of learning English. This is not typical of other year groups but is an indication of the increasing proportion of pupils who are learning English as an additional language entering the school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion with statements of special educational need. A new headteacher joined the school in September 2006 and a new senior management team was created in January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Francis Xavier's is a school that is changing rapidly. It has a new headteacher who has appointed new senior leaders and together they have introduced a range of initiatives. There is little evidence yet of their impact. The school's effectiveness at this stage is satisfactory, although the school self-evaluation judged provision to be good. The attainment on entry is average at present. All children make satisfactory progress and by the time they start Year 1, most will have met the expected goals, although language skills of a minority remain weak. Current standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are average and achievement is satisfactory. The standards attained by Year 6 pupils in the 2006 tests were above average and this represented good achievement from their attainment in Year 2. The school is not confident that these results will be maintained. The pupils learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties are supported well and make similar progress to the others.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. There is a strong emphasis on the Catholic ethos, and pupils enjoy their time at school, behave well and attendance is good. Pupils enjoy physical activity and make healthy choices at lunchtime and snack times. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for later life through the many opportunities to develop initiative and to take on responsibilities.

Teaching and learning and the curriculum are satisfactory. The curriculum has been revised but the impact of the changes has yet to be seen. The pastoral care, support and guidance of pupils are satisfactory. Pastoral support is good but academic support and guidance is weaker. There is not yet a whole school approach to assessment, and so although individual teachers and subjects have information about pupils' progress, there is no overall strategy to monitor it. The leadership and management are satisfactory. The focus has been on creating a team ethos and supportive environment, but some vital initiatives, such as the monitoring of teaching and learning by senior managers, are not yet in place, so the support needed for teachers and learners to improve has not been clearly identified. The plans for improvement are in the pipeline, and much has been done to improve policies and paperwork, but the evidence on which the self-evaluation was based is uncertain and so several judgements are too generous.

What the school should do to improve further

- Gather and analyse evidence to make the self-evaluation more accurate.
- Establish systems for senior managers to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, and act upon the judgements made.
- Ensure that the assessment procedures are effective in identifying pupils' progress and the action to be taken to improve standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage is in line with that usually found. Most pupils achieve the expected levels by the start of Year 1 and a few exceed them. Children who are learning English as an additional language quickly settle into the school and make satisfactory progress. In 2006, standards were around the national averages at the end of Year 2, and above average at the end of Year 6. Most pupils, throughout the school, make satisfactory progress although boys underachieved in the Key Stage 1 assessments last year. The school met its challenging targets for Year 6 pupils' performance in the national tests in 2006, which

represented good progress from their Year 2 results, but is not confident that they will be met this year because they were set too high. Standards in the current Year 6 are around the national average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children in the Reception class love coming to school. They are full of expectation and eager to learn. The older pupils also enjoy school and this is reflected in the above average level of attendance. Pupils say, 'School is good; it is a fun place to be.' They feel protected from problems such as loneliness and bullying. They are polite, well mannered and friendly. Children are caring of each other and they are mindful in their actions. The school seeks the views of the pupils and listens to their concerns and ideas through the active school council. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The spiritual side of their development is strong. Pupils have a clear understanding of those who are not as fortunate as themselves and have raised money for local and national charities. Pupils have a well developed appreciation of their own culture and the presence of other cultures is used well to develop a wider understanding. Responsibility is readily accepted and acted upon by pupils, for example the school prefects carry out their duties most seriously. All pupils make a good contribution to the school and the wider community such as in the regular drama productions.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Most lessons are made interesting and relevant, with the result that pupils are keen and work hard. There is a 'buzz' to learning in the final years because the quality of teaching is consistently good and occasionally outstanding. Typically throughout the school, much of the questioning is brisk and pupils participate enthusiastically. However occasionally the pace is too slow and pupils become distracted when activities change. Pupils develop as sensible and mature learners who are keen to do well. Teachers manage pupils well and there is a good emphasis on the social and emotional aspects of learning. In the Reception class, the outdoor area is used well to enhance learning, but the large apparatus is not set out at the start of the day so is not used regularly. Pupils respond well to this respect and show a keen desire to do well in their work. They also respond well to the opportunities they are given to share ideas with each other. Work is marked regularly, but it concentrates on praise rather than informing the pupils how they could improve their work to reach their targets. Teachers guide the support staff well through clear direction in the lesson planning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the needs of the pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those for whom English is an additional language. At present the curriculum is being revised to take account of the new English and mathematics frameworks. Provision and use of information and communication technology (ICT) has developed satisfactorily since the previous inspection. Pupils are now confident users of technology and the examples of the art and design work in Year 4 is of exceptional quality. Booster programmes are used well for pupils needing extra help in basic skills. The individual educational programmes for pupils with learning

difficulties or disabilities are satisfactory. Care is taken by teachers and teaching assistants to adjust work in lessons to meet their needs. There is good use of visits to museums and residential trips to enhance the curriculum and extend pupils' enjoyment and experiences. Pupils benefit from visiting experts, there are strong links with the secondary school, and the local priest is a regular visitor. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect and discuss issues, and personal, social and health education is thoroughly planned.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff know the pupils well and they develop warm relationships with them. Procedures to ensure that pupils are kept safe and secure, including those relating to child protection, are well established and all staff are aware of them. Pupils are confident that adults look after them and support them well. The school provides good personal support and guidance for pupils who have behavioural and learning difficulties. The school works closely with parents to provide the most effective help for their children. Pupils say that they feel safe and know who to turn to if necessary. Pupils reported, 'The teachers listen to us and they sort things out.' Parents are very supportive and many help around the school.

Academic guidance and support are satisfactory. There are regular assessments of the youngest children's progress through careful observation and evaluation. However, tracking of pupils' progress is not consistent across the school which results in pupils' progress not being monitored consistently as they move through the school. This also results in difficulties in creating accurate end of year targets for all pupils. Rigorous systems have been put in place by individual subjects and teachers, but there is no whole school approach. The school sets targets for pupils but many are unsure of them so their impact is reduced.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

On starting their jobs, the headteacher and senior leadership team identified a number of areas needing urgent attention, and are developing strategies to address them. Policies and documentation are being revised and approved and the focus has been on developing a shared approach within a mutually supportive environment. This is being done successfully but it is too early to evaluate the impact of some of the specific strategies for improvement, because although the science and technology co-ordinators have begun to visit lessons, there are no regular and systematic checks on teaching and learning or a clear view of how the school will make the best use of performance data. Therefore some of the judgements in the school's self-evaluation are too generous, as the evidence on which they are based is insecure. Standards are satisfactory in the school at present, but the plans for long-term development and improvement are not clear.

Governors support and are starting to challenge the school's performance more rigorously. They are now informed through day-to-day involvement in the school's work. The school's limited resources are used effectively. The improvement since the last inspection and the capacity to improve further are both satisfactory.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking to you and observing your lessons. You were all very polite and helpful throughout the day. Your headteacher, governors and members of staff are making a number of changes and have made several improvements since the last inspection. There are some things that need to be put into place to make the school even better and I am asking the staff and governors to make improvements.

Here are the things that I think are best about your school.

- We were very impressed by how much you all enjoy the school, are punctual and attend very regularly.
- Your very positive attitudes to learning are helping you to succeed.
- The behaviour we saw in class and around the school was good and you all acted sensibly and maturely.

This is what we think the school could do better.

- The headteacher and teachers need to decide how they set challenging targets for you to improve your work and how your work is marked. You can help by asking your teachers how you have improved in lessons.
- The senior teachers need to visit lessons and see how well your class teachers are helping you to improve.
- More information needs to be collected to make sure that everyone is progressing as well as they can.

Thank you for the way in which you represented your school and yourselves during our time with you. We wish you well.