

St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108025
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	309573
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith Bardon

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	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bernard McGrath
Headteacher	Ms Patricia Holmes
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2005
School address	Lady Pit Lane Beeston Leeds West Yorkshire LS11 6RX
Telephone number	0113 270 0978
Fax number	0113 276 5997

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized primary school serves a socially and economically disadvantaged area a short distance from the city centre. Almost two thirds of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, with pupils of Black African origin making up the largest group. A small number of pupils are from refugee families seeking asylum. A substantial proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds speak a language other than English at home and about half of pupils in the school are at an early stage of learning English. The number of pupils who enter or leave the school part way through their primary education is higher than normal. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average, although very few of these pupils have a statement for their special educational need. The school has achieved the Healthy School Award and the Leeds United Anti-racism Award.

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 in which pupils are given a stimulating education, which they enjoy immensely. 'We love school', 'all teachers are helpful and everyone is nice to me', are typical of the comments pupils made during the inspection. Parents agree; 'It is a joy to see how my children are progressing', is a typical comment that reflects the very positive opinions that parents hold of the school.

Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. Teaching is skilful at encouraging pupils and giving them the confidence and drive to succeed. A strong feature of pupils' personal development is the value they place on education. This was very apparent when discussing with Year 6 pupils how they felt about the oncoming national tests. 'Last year the school was in the top 100 and we want to do as well.' When they start in Nursery, children's skills and knowledge are often low for their age but when they leave at the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average. This represents good achievement for the majority and particularly good progress for the significant number of pupils who enter the school at an early stage of learning English.

The manner in which pupils from such diverse backgrounds are included fully in the life of the school is outstanding. The school is a model of tolerance and mutual respect. Pupils are extremely well behaved and get on very well with staff and each other. They try hard during lessons, listen carefully to their teachers, and are polite and well mannered. The school has rigorous procedures for promoting pupils' regular attendance and levels are broadly average. Pupils state they feel safe and secure, and confirm that if they have a problem, a member of staff will help. Most pupils appreciate the need to eat and live healthily and readily participate in the many physical activities the school provides. As they grow older, pupils take on more responsibilities around school and willingly give their time to helping others. Pupils' broadly average standards in the basic skills give them a good preparation for their next stage of education.

Pupils learn well because they find lessons 'interesting and fun'. Planning carefully ensures the tasks they are set are challenging but achievable. Pupils' response is good and they try hard to meet the clear learning objectives set at the start of each lesson. Speaking and listening form integral parts of many activities, effectively promoting pupils' language skills and giving them the confidence to communicate with others. The curriculum supports pupils' basics skills in literacy and numeracy particularly well. Pupils are cared for very well. The school has a strong family atmosphere that nurtures all pupils and gives support to their families. Procedures for keeping pupils safe meet requirements. Pupils' progress is assessed thoroughly and tracked accurately. However, the systems used to record and analyse the information make the evaluation of pupils' progress more difficult than it should be.

The school has a 'can do' attitude, which stems from enthusiastic and purposeful leadership. Issues that could act as barriers to pupils' learning are tackled determinedly with well planned strategies. Senior staff and governors check how well the school is performing regularly and from their findings plan carefully for the next stages in its development. This ensures that the school is constantly moving forward and is well placed to cope with new challenges as they arise.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Many children start in the Foundation Stage with low levels of knowledge and skills and a significant proportion have little or no English. They make good progress in Nursery and Reception because of the good teaching and support they receive. Achievement is good. Relationships are very positive and children are well cared for in secure and attractive learning areas. Staff support children's personal development extremely well and, consequently, they make rapid progress in this area of learning. By the end of Reception, children's personal qualities, such as getting on with others and persevering with tasks are approaching those expected for their age. Interesting and varied opportunities are provided for children to learn the basics of communication, language and number. Strong emphasis is placed on children's oral skills and with constant encouragement from staff they grow in confidence as speakers and listeners. Despite children's good progress, many do not reach the standards expected for their age by the time they enter Year 1. Provision and resources are good overall but children learn more indoors than outdoors because the activities inside are better organised. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. The recently appointed manager has a good understanding of the areas in need of development and has clear plans to improve them. Staff work cohesively as a team, monitoring children's progress closely and ensuring that their needs are being met. Parents are provided with useful information on how they can help their children at home.

What the school should do to improve further

- Revise systems for managing assessment data to make the information easier to extract and use.
- Improve the opportunities for Foundation Stage children to learn outdoors.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All pupils achieve well. Although pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress, standards by the end of Year 2 are still below average. Good progress continues in Key Stage 2 so that pupils reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Assessments at the end of Year 2 and national test results at the end of Year 6 are often affected by the higher than usual number of pupils who enter or leave the school part way through the year, and the number who speak little or no English when they first arrive. Consequently, test results can vary significantly from year to year. However, the school sets and meets challenging targets for pupils' performance. Pupils who enter the school with little or no English make very good progress in their communication and language skills. There is no significant difference in the attainment of pupils from different ethnic groups. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress at the same good rate as others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are happy at school and enjoy learning, because as several stated, 'all teachers are helpful and other pupils are nice to you'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They gain in self-confidence and take pride in what they are able to achieve. They show respect for others and feel safe and secure in the school's welcoming atmosphere. The majority

of pupils attend regularly. Standards of attendance have improved and are now in line with the national average. Pupils from a wide range of cultures and home backgrounds get on extremely well and all agree that theirs is a school devoid of bullying or racism. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are exceptionally well mannered, try very hard with their work and act very responsibly in and out of lessons. They enjoy taking on responsibilities around school and welcome the opportunities to make decisions provided by the school council. Pupils appreciate that some people have far less than they do and willingly raise money for charity. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. While they eat sensibly and take exercise at school, pupils often admit that they are not as conscientious at home. Pupils leave school with a good range of basic skills and a well developed appreciation of the value of education. This provides a good platform for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Excellent relationships are a feature of lessons. Class management is very effective and a calm working atmosphere pervades; as a result, pupils' learning is good overall. Classroom assistants provide strong support to the teaching, especially for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those for whom English is a new language. Classrooms are well organised, colourful and stimulating. The 'working walls' provide a wealth of prompts and aide-memoirs to help pupils with their work, and do much to aid the learning process. Clear and confident instruction is usually balanced with well chosen practical tasks, but opportunities for collaborative and group work are sometimes missed. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are promoted well in many lessons, with good use made of 'talk partners' to encourage pupils to share their thoughts and ideas with others. Most lessons are well paced, keeping the pupils 'on their toes' and motivated. However, just occasionally, the pace of a lesson is too slow and learning dips as a result.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum that has been adapted well to meet the needs of the pupils. There is a strong emphasis on the development of pupils' basic skills, which are taught systematically and imaginatively. The programmes in subjects such as history and geography are satisfactory. The school has identified the need to review the curriculum but plans are at an early stage of development. Pupils say that focus days, in which they study particular topics in depth, are a valued and enjoyable addition. The curriculum is enriched by numerous additional features that add interest and excitement; for example, Key Stage 2 pupils are learning to speak French and 'Wake up and Shake up' activities get each day off to a positive start. An extensive range of after-school activities, visits and visitors add much to pupils' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes very good care of the pupils and all the correct safeguarding systems are in place. Staff provide valued support for groups and individuals, and the school draws well upon the expertise of a number of outside agencies to provide further support where it is needed. The school works hard to gain the confidence and cooperation of parents, enabling them to

take a greater part in their child's education. Despite the fact that the school faces challenges in maintaining attendance at an acceptable level, much is being done to promote good attendance. Very good provision is made for pupils who need additional help or those for whom English is a new language. Regular and thorough assessment enables the school to provide suitable additional support for those who need it, including effective small group work with skilled teachers and teaching assistants. There are numerous activities to help pupils understand how to live a healthy and safe lifestyle, including recognising the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Whilst there are some good examples of how pupils are guided, through marking, on how to improve their work, the overall quality is variable.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides the school with clear direction and the confidence to overcome the many challenges it faces. Senior staff carefully check all aspects of the school's work, monitoring pupils' progress and ensuring that the provision made for their learning is effective. However, the systems used to collate and manage assessment data do not allow staff to easily gain a clear picture of the progress of all groups. Nevertheless, areas for development are derived, helping to ensure that the school is constantly moving forwards. The improvement the school has made since it was last inspected and its capacity to improve in the future are good. The headteacher, senior staff and governors share a common vision for the school's future and ambitions for pupils' achievements. Provision for particular groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and pupils at an early stage in learning English, is managed very well and gives them every opportunity to learn. Particular attention is paid to the needs of vulnerable children, such as those from asylum seeking families, and the many pupils who come and go throughout their primary education are made equally welcome. This ensures that the school is free of racial tension. The school has good links with other schools and organisations and these contribute much to the quality of pupils' education. Governors are well informed and play a full and active part in the life of the school.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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?	2

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	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

Inspection of St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School, Leeds, LS11 6RX

Thank you very much for the very friendly greeting you gave the inspectors when we visited your school recently. Lots of you smiled and chatted to us which made us feel comfortable and welcome. We thoroughly enjoyed finding out about the work you do, and a special thanks to those who talked with us about the school.

St Francis is a good school and we understand why you enjoy it so much. We were pleased to hear how happy you are at school and when we visited your lessons your enthusiasm for learning was clear to see. Everyone gets on extremely well and it was nice to hear that this is one of the things you like most about the school. Your behaviour is exceptionally good. The weather on that first day was awful and it was a real pleasure to see everyone acting sensibly, playing games or chatting happily at playtime and lunchtime when you could not get outside to play. This showed us that you are growing into mature and sensible young people with a strong sense of responsibility. You are well cared for in school and it is good to hear that you find your teachers kind and helpful.

You make good progress because you have good teaching and 'fun' lessons. We were particularly impressed by how quickly pupils who do not speak English when they first arrive at school learn the language. We know you are given many interesting things to do to help you learn, and enjoy the frequent visits you are taken on. Nursery and Reception children make a good start to school but we found that the outside area does not get used enough and have asked the school to improve this. The school keeps a close watch on how well you are achieving and keeps detailed records of your progress. However, these are not always easy to use so we have asked the school to consider ways of making improvements.

Thank you once again for a very enjoyable two days and I wish you lots of luck in the future.