

St Francis Catholic Primary School, South Ascot

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110029
Local Authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	310181
Inspection date	24 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith Williams

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Eugenie ten Cate
Headteacher	Mrs Jacqueline Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2004
School address	Coronation Road South Ascot Berkshire SL5 9HG
Telephone number	01344 622840
Fax number	01344 873574

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. He investigated the progress made by current pupils and the extent to which those in Year 6 are on track to maintain the above average standards seen in recent years; whether more able pupils are challenged sufficiently, particularly in Key Stage 1; and how well data are used to meet pupils' differing needs. Evidence was gathered from the analysis of pupils' progress, scrutiny of samples of their work, observation of lessons, parents' questionnaires, discussions with the headteacher, senior staff, the chair of governors and pupils.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is steadily increasing and is above average, although the proportion learning English as an additional language is below average. Overall, the largest groups represented are from White British and other White backgrounds. The number identified with learning difficulties is similar to that found in most schools. These are predominantly pupils with behavioural, emotional and social needs or moderate learning difficulties. The proportion eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school has a number of nationally recognised awards, including Healthy Schools, Investors in People and Artsmark status.

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. A strong Catholic ethos underpins its work, leading one parent to write that the school is, 'a happy and welcoming place. The children have a very good sense of right and wrong.' Pastoral care is of a high standard and, as a result, most pupils enjoy school very much, and make excellent progress in their personal development. Pupils achieve well academically to reach well above average standards by the end of Year 6. This is reflected in the school's consistent performance in the Key Stage 2 national tests in recent years, the results of which have been significantly above average and, in some years, exceptionally high. From pupils' starting points, this reflects a good level of achievement.

Good leadership from the headteacher, senior staff and governors ensures that there is no complacency. A close check is kept on lessons and the work in pupils' books. The leaders have worked hard to eradicate the inconsistencies in teaching identified in the last inspection. In particular, pupils' inattentiveness in some lessons meant that teachers spent too long on capturing their attention and, as result, their progress slowed. This is no longer the case. Pupils of all ages are ready to start at the beginning of lessons and they concentrate well throughout. Some parents suggest that inappropriate or disruptive behaviour sometimes hampers the rest of the class. However, pupils behaved well, in and out of lessons, during the inspection and any low-level disruption is managed well by staff. While a few pupils report that there is occasional over-exuberance, they do not find this distracting, and the work in their books reveals little evidence of disrupted progress.

Year 2 national test results fell to the national average in 2007. Leaders recognised that too few pupils reached the higher Level 3. They set about tackling this by reviewing approaches to lesson planning, particularly the level of challenge provided for more able pupils, and by introducing a range of strategies, including specific sessions in literacy and numeracy. The work is already bearing fruit, and pupils currently in Year 2 are well on track to raise standards this year: a larger proportion are working at the higher level. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously but the quality of feedback, and its impact on pupils' learning, is patchy. In some cases, pupils are given a clear indication of how well they have met the objectives that are set at the beginning of each lesson and how they might improve their work. Elsewhere, comments are too general, or do not relate sufficiently to the intended learning. In other ways, academic guidance is good. Children in Reception have personal learning targets, and this approach is used well across the school. Older pupils, in particular, have a good understanding of what they need to do to reach their targets. Staff make good use of their day-to-day assessment of pupils' understanding to provide work that meets pupils' differing needs. An increasing proportion of pupils are identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and they are supported well. As a result, boys and girls of all backgrounds and abilities achieve well. Those pupils with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties receive the help they need so that they too make good progress.

Pupils' high levels of enjoyment are reflected in excellent attendance rates. Year 6 pupils, in particular, enjoy the extra responsibilities they are given. The school council gives pupils an effective voice and councillors are proud of their contribution to the school community. Pupils enjoy a wide range of subjects and are appreciative of the very good extra-curricular and enrichment activities, with a particular emphasis on sport. They also like the way teachers 'make the lessons interesting,' while another commented that school 'is quite cool really.' The broad and balanced curriculum contributes well to pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development. They have a very well developed understanding of how to stay safe and healthy, enjoy the healthy food offered at lunchtime and take part enthusiastically in energetic play. Pupils' good progress in developing basic skills means they are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

Senior staff and governors have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness, and a good understanding of what is working well and what can improve. This is based, increasingly, on the availability and analysis of data from assessments and tests and enables governors to hold leaders to account for the school's performance. There are appropriate systems to consult with parents including, for example, an annual questionnaire. Despite this, a significant minority of parents do not feel that their views are taken sufficiently into account. This is recognised by the school and, rightly, plans are in hand to tackle this. The leaders have made good inroads into the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. They have maintained well above average standards and ensured that pupils make excellent progress in their personal development. These qualities show that they are well placed to improve the school's effectiveness further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the Reception classes from a variety of settings, many attending the pre-school group held on the school's site. Most are well placed to start their schooling, particularly in their language and social development. Children enjoy their time in Reception, are eager to learn and make a confident start. They talk enthusiastically, for example, about how to find half of a number, or how they move objects on the sea-bed on their laptop computers. Staff are sensitive of the needs of young children and they provide a careful balance between activities directed by adults and opportunities for children to make choices and decisions. This good planning, teaching and assessment means that children make good progress and achieve well. Most reach the goals expected of them by the end of Reception and many exceed those goals.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the consistency of marking so that it provides pupils with a clearer picture of how well they have done and how they can improve.
- Work with parents to ensure that they feel their views are taken into account.

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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	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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	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	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

07 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Francis Catholic Primary School, South Ascot, Berkshire, SL5 9HG

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school for its recent inspection. I would like to give a special 'thank you' to those who met with me to tell me your views. You gave me a lot of helpful information. I am writing to tell you what I found out during my visit. I agree with many of you who told me that you go to a good school.

I am pleased that you enjoy school so much. You told me about lots of things that you enjoy, including the many clubs and activities outside of lessons. Your teachers do a good job of making lessons interesting and giving you work that is hard enough to stretch you. They are also good at helping you when you are stuck. This good teaching means that you make good progress and, by the time you leave Year 6, the standard of your work is well above average. If you are not sure what this means, please ask your teacher and she will explain. Your teachers also work hard at marking your books. Some of you told me how helpful you find their comments. I have asked your teachers to make sure that they use their comments more to help you understand how well you have done and how you can improve your work. Another reason why you do well is that you work hard, are keen to learn and behave well most of the time. Please keep this up, because it is so important. One of the best things about your school is the way it helps you develop as a person. This means the way you learn right from wrong, help others who are less fortunate and learn how to keep safe and healthy. All of these areas are excellent. Well done!

Your headteacher, staff and governors take good care of you and keep a close check on how the school is doing. Even though your school is good, they are determined to help you improve even more. Some of your parents feel that the school does not listen enough to their points of view. I agree that the school should look to see how this could be improved.

I am sure you will want to help your teachers to make your school even better and I wish you good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Williams

Lead Inspector