

St Francis Special School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116618
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312348
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Lily Evans

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	96
6th form	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Eric Nixon
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Chalmers
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2004
School address	Patchway Drive Oldbury Way Fareham PO14 3BN
Telephone number	01329 845730
Fax number	01329 847217

Age group	2–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Francis is a school for pupils with severe learning difficulties. Other categories include autistic spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, pupils with challenging behaviour, speech and language difficulties and physical disabilities. The medical needs of pupils in the Nursery are increasingly complex and one third of pupils are at an early developmental level, requiring total adult support. One sixth of pupils are aged over sixteen. Four are looked after children. The medical needs of pupils in the Nursery are increasingly complex. The school has received several national awards including the Enhanced Healthy Schools Award. The headteacher retires in September this year and will be succeeded by the assistant headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Parents have very positive views of the school. One commented, 'The staff are extremely caring and supportive of pupils and parents. They are hard working and dedicated'. This is a good school which has a number of outstanding features. These include the pastoral care and personal development of pupils, work experience opportunities and the provision for Foundation Stage, which includes 5 to 7 year olds. Visiting multi-agency professionals and resident therapists work together in close cooperation with the school. This benefits well the pupils' health and their fitness to learn. The high quality of speech and language therapy is guiding and supporting the staff in the best use of communication aids. As a result, pupils make good progress in improving their communication skills and gain in confidence.

The achievement of children in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. They benefit from excellent team teaching and thorough assessment of the small steps in learning. Good teaching throughout the school, including in the further education department, results in pupils achieving well. Teachers plan interesting lessons that have activities suitable for all the pupils in each ability and age group. In their lesson planning, there is insufficient focus on, and consistency in defining what pupils will learn and in recording their progress. The curriculum is good because it is well adapted to meet the needs of pupils and students.

The headteacher is passionate about the welfare needs of pupils and families. The school's own 'SHIP' programme (School Home integrated Support Project) is excellent. The school alerts and calls on, the services of an excellent range of professionals who take fast action to support families perceived to have critical needs. There is a regular commitment to allowing the use of the school and grounds by a play scheme (LUPS) in the school holidays. Organised by parents and governors, this greatly benefits families and the young people involved. The school also benefits from the use of the play-scheme bus throughout the school year.

Well supported by her deputy and assistant headteacher, the headteacher leads her senior leadership team and whole staff effectively. They are united in their vision for moving the school forward and have good capacity to improve. They have accurately identified areas that require further development. Since the last inspection, areas for improvement have been addressed well. Monitoring of teaching is regular but there is insufficient emphasis on identifying how pupils have progressed in their learning. Governors give good support and challenge in many practical ways and in seeking to raise achievement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness and efficiency of the post-16 provision reflects the good standard of leadership and management. This ensures students have an interesting, varied and relevant curriculum that prepares them well for when they move on. Students make good progress and achieve vocational qualifications by the time they leave. The quality of teaching and learning is good and students become more confident and independent. All students have several, good work experience opportunities. They contribute very well to the school and the wider community. They gain an understanding of money through lessons, visits and mini-enterprises including car washing, making jewellery and sandwiches for staff. The students and their parents are very pleased with the quality of education provided.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children join the Nursery with very low levels of attainment, and many make outstanding progress and achieve very well. The handling and nursing care given to these children is of a very high standard. Lesson planning focuses closely on what children will learn. Ongoing assessment, finely attuned to children's responses, builds upon tiny steps forward. The curriculum is very well adapted to meet the different learning needs of the children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Focus all lesson planning on what pupils will learn rather than the task they are set, and when monitoring teaching have a sharper focus on the progress of pupils.
- Improve the practice of teachers in recording the pupils' progress towards their learning targets to match the best in the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils join Year 3 with very low levels of attainment, but all groups of pupils make good progress through the school. There is a particularly apt focus on personal development. Pupils' progress in reading and writing has improved since the last inspection and current pupils are well on track to meet their learning targets. It is now good in relation to their learning targets. More vocal students are able to express their ideas with clarity. Those who communicate by sign, symbol or otherwise progress well from their starting points, with good support from their teaching assistants. In Years 10 and 11, students steadily build on their skills in communicating, reading, writing and ICT. The most able are sight word readers. Their phonic skills are insufficiently developed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their behaviour and attitudes are excellent. A few pupils have extensive hospital stays and time for recuperation. This lowers the otherwise good attendance figures. Parents comment that their children enjoy their education. This is because teachers make lessons fun. After a Punch and Judy puppet show performed by a teacher, pupils volunteered to perform the play themselves. They showed in their version that they were grasping the humour of the story. Pupils have an excellent knowledge about staying safe and there are very good opportunities for participating in games, swimming, exercise and dance. They know that fruit is healthy and that brown bread is healthier than white because 'it has more wholegrain in it'. Pupils contribute to the community extremely well, for example, when being responsible for recycling. A few have regular opportunities to integrate into local schools. The school council were recently involved in interviewing candidates for the headteacher post. Collections for charities are regular events. Having received money from 'Children in Need' pupils returned the compliment by raising funds for the same charity. Everyone from Year 10 has opportunities to experience or observe the world of work. Pupils enjoy taking part in day and residential trips such as to West Dean. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development are excellent. All achievements are celebrated which raises pupils' self-esteem. They clearly develop an understanding of right from wrong.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

During the inspection, the whole school participated in a history themed week. Pupils journeyed to each 'time zone' class, entering by the 'Tardis'. Teachers plan multi-sensory experiences such as barrel organ music, making lemonade drinks, dressing up as knights and puppet shows. They give good attention to helping everyone to participate, and as a result, pupils enjoy learning. Reading, writing and basic skills lessons are well focused on assessing pupils' progress as they work towards learning targets. However in other lessons, planning shows what pupils will do rather than what teachers intend pupils to learn. On occasions, this leads to missed opportunities to record small steps forward in learning. Classroom assistants give invaluable support to teachers and pupils. Teachers use good communication aids and resources such as plasma screens and bags of toys and objects to illustrate stories. These engage pupils well and promote their good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. It has improved since the last inspection in breadth, balance and planning. It is well adapted to meet the needs and interests of pupils, because teachers are spreading the practice of planning for groups matched by level of achievement or communication needs. It now addresses National Curriculum subjects appropriately for all year groups. There is a well-developed programme of personal development which plans and tracks pupils' ongoing progress. Enrichment opportunities through visits and visitors, including a recent one from Native American Indians are stimulating and promote understanding. Older students have choices of extra-curricular activities one afternoon a week.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Although pastoral care, guidance and support are outstanding, academic guidance is good. Staff give a high priority to the safety of pupils. Safety and risk assessments are robust. Pupils are confident that their teachers and support staff help them. Improvements to the school meals service and lunchtime plans for pupils have been highly effective in promoting healthy lifestyles. The personal, social and health education and citizenship lessons provide very appropriate support for pupils. Induction arrangements for pupils joining the school are of high quality. Very good help and guidance is given to students in making decisions about what to do when they leave school. There are close links with the careers advisory service.

Academic care and guidance are overall good. The school monitors the progress of all pupils regularly and is using analysis effectively to measure and compare the progress of different groups. There are inconsistencies in how staff record achievement towards individual pupil

targets. This would benefit from a whole school approach. Pupils from Year 10 upwards have an insufficient understanding about how far they are progressing towards their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The leadership of the school is good. Since the last inspection, leadership roles have developed well. Senior managers are involved in some effective evaluation. For example, the use of ICT (information and communication technology) has improved greatly and now the school is focused on adopting the latest technology to help individuals communicate more effectively. Subject managers have clear roles and responsibilities. They have made many changes and improvements such as successfully promoting reading and writing skills, but have had too little opportunity to monitor the teaching of their subjects. New teachers are well supported within the formal programme of induction and monitoring. The school places a high emphasis on safety training and the care of pupils. Governors give good support to the school and make themselves available to parents. Parent governors are involved in providing the over subscribed holiday play scheme at the school for mainly students from 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	16-19
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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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	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	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	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?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	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	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	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

27 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Francis Special School, Fareham, PO14 3BN

I would like to thank all of you for the welcome you gave me when I came to visit your school. I thought history week was great fun and especially enjoyed the Punch and Judy show. I enjoyed talking with your school council and hearing how you helped to choose the new headteacher. You told me you like everything about school and are helping with plans for a games area. I was glad to hear from you about healthy food and exercise.

These are the things I liked about your school.

- Teachers take very good care of you and your families.
- They make learning fun.
- You learn how to look after yourself and to make choices.
- You all have chance to try out work.
- You make good progress.
- You help each other and other people.
- You work hard for your ASDAN awards.

I have asked the school to make these things better.

- Teachers to be clear about what they want you to learn in all lessons.
- Teachers to note down your progress in all lessons.
- When people see you in lessons to make a note of how well you are learning.

I think you can help your teachers by showing them you are enjoying your lessons and continuing to work hard.

With very best wishes

Lily Evans

Lead Inspector