

St Francis of Assisi CE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132810
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	316022
Inspection date	10 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Graeme Clarke

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	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Florrie Hunt
Headteacher	Mr Paul Bramley
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2004
School address	Lowfields Avenue Ingleby Barwick Stockton-on-Tees TS17 5GA
Telephone number	01642 769942
Fax number	01642 764604

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, looking at pupils' work, assessment information, documents, interviews and discussions with staff, a governor and pupils. He evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects: the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage, standards and achievement, and the way that the school uses information to promote the progress of pupils currently in Key Stage 2, particularly in writing. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found much evidence to confirm that the school's own evaluations are justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

St Francis of Assisi is an average sized Church of England primary school with a nursery. The school is oversubscribed. It serves the north of Ingleby Barwick, a new town where socio-economic characteristics are broadly above average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Most pupils are from a White British heritage, with a very small minority from other ethnic groups, mainly of Pakistani origins. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average and none has a Statement of Special Educational Need. The school has the Investors in People accreditation, the Gold Healthy School's award, the Activemark Award and the Heartstart Award for its work to promote health.

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 which provides a good quality of education. Pupils' academic achievement is good and their personal development and well-being are outstanding. The principal reasons why this school is so successful stem from the very effective leadership of the headteacher, and the way that the whole staff team successfully promotes a Christian caring ethos and upholds a clear philosophy that every child does matter. In turn, almost all parents have total confidence in the school and their trust is fully justified. Although a very small minority feel their views are not considered or that bullying is an issue, the overwhelming majority hold the school in very high regard. One parent's comments sum up their views, 'My son has grown in confidence and is making good progress in all his school work since starting at St Francis. I feel all the staff are very friendly, approachable and fully committed, even to after school activities.' Pupils too are fulsome in their praise of it. They like their teachers and other staff, and the friends they make. Many like the school just the way it is and do not wish to change anything.

Pupils achieve exceptionally well during Key Stage 1 to sustain their very high standards when they began Year 1. In the Year 2 assessments of recent years, pupils have reached significantly above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The 2007 results for Year 2 were the highest ever in reading. In Key Stage 2, standards in English, mathematics and science are typically significantly above average but in 2007 they were broadly average overall. Standards in mathematics and science were above average, but in English standards in writing slipped to average and pulled down results. The school analyses its performance diligently and has introduced initiatives to improve all aspects of written work. Inspection findings show that pupils in Key Stage 2 are now making much better progress in their writing. Results at Year 6 are predicted to return to those gained in previous years.

Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development result from a particularly effective combination of good and excellent teaching, a rich variety of experience and opportunities throughout the curriculum, and an exceptionally high level of pastoral care. Assemblies, after school clubs, visitors and visits complement lessons and play a crucial part in extending and widening pupils' learning, and their personal development and well-being. The many displays of pupils' work in classrooms and around the school reflect this excellence. Pupils conduct themselves impeccably well, acting safely and sensibly both in classrooms and in the communal parts of the school. They contribute enthusiastically to lessons and school life. Their positive outlook, care and respect for each other, maturity and confidence, and courtesy towards adults all reflect how the school so successfully helps them develop these attributes. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average. Pupils know the importance of good health and fitness. Many boys and girls take part voluntarily in sports and other activities. They are successful in competitions with nearby schools: the choir was highly placed in the Stockton Music Festival. They help enhance the school and the local community. Through their school council and peer mentoring system pupils support each other. They promote charitable work to help worthy causes. Pupils' strongly developed social and basic skills and their awareness of business prepare them extremely well for their future.

An outstanding curriculum inspires pupils to learn. Teachers and teaching assistants plan lessons very diligently together and share the purpose of the lesson with pupils. Pupils work enthusiastically and industriously at the interesting and challenging activities that teachers provide. Each detailed record of pupils' progress is thoroughly analysed to identify anyone at risk of falling behind. Carefully planned and skilful support is directed to ensure that gifted

and talented pupils, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities all take a full part in lessons and, in turn, make good progress. The school follows a thorough process to set ambitious targets for Key Stage 2 performance in English and mathematics but does not yet use these principles effectively to raise standards with each pupil. In Key Stage 2, teachers' marking congratulates pupils on their accomplishments and gives them help to improve specific aspects of their work. Although the school sets targets to improve English and mathematics for each pupil at the beginning of each term, they do not influence in any precise way the desire of pupils to aspire to higher levels. Importantly, teachers neither refer to them, nor point pupils to ways of meeting them when marking their work.

The headteacher and governors work harmoniously together to ensure the school is well led and managed. Governors ensure they meet all their responsibilities and current government requirements, for example, to safeguard the welfare of pupils. The governors and leadership team have very successfully addressed all issues from the last inspection. They review the school's work thoroughly and have a mostly accurate perspective of its strengths and areas for improvement. They get good value from its resources to ensure pupils' outstanding personal development and improve their academic achievements. They are determined to raise standards even higher. Given the track record of sustained high standards and achievement in Key Stage 1, a successful beginning to improve writing and the high quality of teaching in school, even more ambitious goals are within reach. The school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Most children join the nursery with skills that are broadly typical for their age but a minority exceed them. Parents of new starters are delighted with the way their children settle and enjoy school. Of particular note is the way children follow classroom routines, become engrossed in activities and very happily contribute when learning in a group. Children make outstanding progress because of the very effective and carefully planned provision which successfully combines the outstanding expertise of the teaching team with excellent use of indoor and outdoor facilities. Year-on-year, children make outstanding progress. This is especially noteworthy because a very large proportion, much greater than nationally, leave Reception with skills that far exceed the expectations for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English by improving the quality of writing in Key Stage 2.
- Make better use of pupils' individual targets so that their aspirations are raised and they are better informed about how to improve their work.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
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	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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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	3
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	1
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

11 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Francis of Assisi CE School, Stockton-on-Tees, TS17 5GA

I really enjoyed my visit to your school this week. Thank you for helping me when I came into your classrooms to see you at work. You were exceptionally polite and really helpful. I enjoyed talking with those of you whom I met. It was great to see how confident you are, how much you enjoy coming to school, how you value the friendships you make, and how much you contribute to school life. I was very pleased to find that so many of you like the school just the way it is. I know the headteacher and all the staff are rightly very proud of you.

Yours is a good school. It is very warm and welcoming and well organised. I know that you feel safe and happy because all the adults in the school look after you exceptionally well. Your lessons are good and some are very good. I was impressed with the way you work very hard and like to take part in lessons. Last year those of you in the Reception class and in Year 2 did exceptionally well, especially with reading. Some in Year 6 did really well in the tests, but some did not do so well, especially in the written part of the English test. Many of you are presently making good progress with writing and I have asked the school to help those of you in Years 3 to 6 to do even better. I have also asked the school to set precise targets with you for English and mathematics, and to help you know how to reach higher standards in your work.

You have very many opportunities at St Francis of Assisi Church of England Primary School to learn about life and these should stand you in good stead for the future. I hope that you all do really well.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Clarke

Lead inspector