

# St Francis Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104239
<b>Local Authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	323998
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Don Mason

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	222
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Gough
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Murray
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 January 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Mill Road Shelfield Walsall WS4 1RH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01922 682583
<b>Fax number</b>	01922 685609

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

The great majority of pupils are from White British families. Approximately 10% come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average overall but is much closer to average in Years 5 and 6. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is for children in Nursery and Reception. The school has received the Active Mark, Healthy Schools' Award, Dyslexia Friendly Mark and a BECTA Information and Communication Technology (ICT) award. The school runs an after-school club for its own pupils each day and a breakfast, fitness club two mornings a week.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. This is because pupils' success in meeting the challenging targets set for them, and their overall achievement, are satisfactory. Following strong support from the local authority the school has made significant progress recently, particularly in improving the leadership and management of the school. The school enjoys the strong support of most parents who appreciate its friendly, welcoming ethos and the high levels of care provided for their children. A typical comment from a parent was, 'Saint Francis has a very hard working, caring team of staff who do their best to make learning fun.' Good relationships between staff and pupils, clear guidelines and frequent praise ensure that pupils grow in self-confidence and self-esteem. As a result, their personal development is good.

Children enter the Nursery with skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. Until recently they have made satisfactory progress and have entered Year 1 working within nationally expected levels. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress from Year 1 to Year 6 and standards at the end of Year 6 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement. It is no better because, until recently, pupils' progress was not checked with sufficient rigour. Pupils who were in danger of falling behind or not reaching their target were not identified early enough and not always provided with appropriate support. Although there is more to be done, this situation is being remedied. The school now has a good system in place to check pupils' progress thoroughly and to identify quickly those who require additional support. Standards in writing are lower than in other subjects and a number of initiatives have been introduced to bring about improvement. In particular, pupils are benefiting from better advice about their achievements in writing and how to improve it. Academic guidance is satisfactory overall.

Good examples of teaching in English, mathematics and science were observed during the inspection reflecting the early success of improvement work. However, inconsistencies remain and the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall because of its impact on pupils' achievement over time. The curriculum adequately meets pupils' needs and promotes personal development well. It is well enriched by visits and visitors relevant to the topic in hand and an extensive range of sporting opportunities. The pupils take enthusiastic advantage of a good variety of after-school clubs. They make a satisfactory contribution to the community by taking on responsibilities in school, fund raising and involvement in parish and local events. Plans are in hand to develop the role and responsibilities of the school council and make links with councils in other schools.

Subject leaders for English and mathematics have begun termly meetings with class teachers to talk over the progress made by their pupils, to plan support and to exchange views on the effectiveness of improvement measures which have been introduced. This process of self-evaluation, overseen by the headteacher, represents a significant improvement in leadership and management. However, this has yet to extend to other aspects of the school's work, such as an evaluation of standards in science and the progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Leadership therefore remains satisfactory overall because of its limited impact, so far, on improving standards and achievement. Nonetheless the developments in leadership and assessment, and the positive, enthusiastic attitude of all staff mean that the school's capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The new staff team is creating an environment which is buzzing with excitement. Children are safe, happy and fully engaged in their activities. The good personal development of the children is reflected in their good behaviour, their good listening skills and the high level of concentration they display in their activities. There is a good balance of adult-led tasks and those which the children choose for themselves. Children are confident in initiating activities and making choices. Adults plan exciting learning experiences for the children. They make good use of resources and questioning to stimulate and support learning. The outdoor area is very well used to promote all aspects of learning and children particularly enjoy imaginative activities in the new tree den. The children are well cared for. Good links with parents ensure that children settle in quickly and all have a key worker responsible for their welfare. Leadership is good. Shortcomings in the way staff used assessment information to move children on in their learning have been identified and appropriate action has been taken. In parallel with the main school there has been significant improvement in the way the children's progress is checked. Staff are using the more detailed information to plan activities which provide greater challenge for children. As a result they are now making more rapid progress. Adults are making every effort to consolidate this improvement. The small number of children who attend the after-school club are provided for satisfactorily.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Make rigorous use of the new systems for checking how well pupils are doing to ensure that more reach their challenging targets, especially in writing.
- Sharpen the processes used by leaders at all levels for monitoring and evaluating performance throughout the school.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Standards at the end of Year 6 have remained stubbornly average for several years partly because of weaker standards in writing. Other aspects of poor performance have varied from year to year. For example, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities sometimes make better progress than those nationally and sometimes they achieve less well. This is because the quality of provision for these pupils has not been monitored with sufficient rigour. The improvement in the school's systems for checking pupils' progress means that senior staff are now able to identify these weaker areas at an early stage and take action to remedy them. A number of initiatives, including targeted support for individuals and groups, are beginning to result in improving standards in writing. As a result of disappointing test results, the teaching of science in Year 6 has been reviewed with the result that highly motivated, enthusiastic pupils now engage in a good range of investigative and knowledge-based activities. However, such improvement has yet to be made in science for other year groups. Overall, the improvements in assessment and teaching are new and have yet to impact on national test results.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

The pupils enjoy their school lives. Their good personal development is reflected in their good attendance and the friendly, self-confident manner in which they talk to visitors about their work. They feel safe and secure and say that adults listen to their opinions and worries. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Thoughtful assemblies and regular opportunities for reflection promote the pupils' spiritual and moral development particularly well. High expectations and clear guidelines ensure that pupils behave very well. A small number of emotionally vulnerable pupils make good progress in managing their behaviour because of the calm, patient and supportive manner of the adults who work with them. Pupils' good understanding of healthy lifestyles is reflected in their lunchtime food choices and the high take up of opportunities for physical exercise. They leave the school as mature, confident individuals with good personal skills and sound academic achievements that prepare them satisfactorily for later life.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Lessons are usually well planned and delivered with good pace. Good relationships and interesting activities ensure that pupils display very positive attitudes and good levels of concentration. Because teachers now have better information about their pupils' abilities, the work set is usually well matched to their learning needs. Lower ability pupils are well supported by conscientious teaching assistants. However, there is still too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching, which is satisfactory overall, because of its adequate impact on pupils' learning. In some lessons, for example, there is insufficient challenge for more able pupils. Sometimes, teachers talk to the whole class for too long, reducing the motivation of the pupils. On these occasions, progress is limited because pupils have too little time to work on their activities. Teachers have been working hard to develop pupils' enthusiasm for writing and to ensure that they are well prepared for their writing activities. Good use is made of film clips and animations which excite the pupils and have a particularly positive impact on boys. In a Year 2 lesson, the teacher made effective use of choral speaking to motivate the pupils. Through such strategies, pupils generally are becoming more enthusiastic writers.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum enables pupils to make satisfactory progress in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and good progress in ICT. Lessons in science and personal, social and health education, together with initiatives such as workshops to promote skipping, ensure pupils' good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Visits to investigate the local area and places of interest further afield contribute to the good enrichment of the curriculum and promote pupils' enjoyment and understanding of their environment. Amongst the good range of extra-curricular activities is the morning fitness club which invigorates pupils at the start of their working day. A computer club is provided for Year 4 because this is the year group which, overall, has the least internet connection at home. Pupils regularly take part in choir and orchestra activities in school and in local authority run events. As yet there is no provision for them to learn a modern foreign language. Those who attend the after-school club are happy and safe. They

enjoy taking part in a good range of activities indoors and outside, making full use of the good resources available.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The high quality of pastoral care, including good procedures to protect the most vulnerable, helps pupils to feel safe and happy. The school has close links with parents, the Catholic Schools' Partnership and local authority agencies to promote pupils' personal well-being and learning. The requirements for safeguarding pupils are fully met. Attendance is closely monitored and the reason for absence followed up. The academic guidance provided for pupils is satisfactory and the use of pupil targets to monitor and improve their progress is developing. The best marking is to be found in writing where pupils are given clear advice about their achievements and what they have to do to improve further. However, marking is not always as effective as it could be because pupils do not always respond to the teachers' comments.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Senior staff have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. They are beginning to use the assessment information to check that the improvement measures they introduce have the desired impact on pupils' achievement. The leadership role of the English and mathematics subject leaders has improved significantly in recent months. As a result, the school's self-evaluation is becoming more effective because appropriate action is being taken to remedy identified weaknesses in these subjects. There is a need to extend this developing good practice to other aspects of school life, such as the monitoring of progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and subjects such as science. Governors are proud of the inclusive, happy ethos of the school. They are in the process of establishing formal links between individual governors and subject leaders in order to develop their understanding of how the school is seeking to raise standards. The school's contribution to community cohesion is strong at the local level and satisfactory overall. Effective day-to-day procedures are in place to promote equality and eliminate discrimination. However, the monitoring of the relevant policies and reporting on their impact are not systematic enough.

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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?	3
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	3

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

## Annex B

### Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

26 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Francis Catholic Primary School, Walsall, WS4 1RH

My colleague and I really enjoyed our visit to inspect your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful. We particularly enjoyed visiting your classrooms, seeing the work you were doing and talking to you about your school. We found that your school provides you with a satisfactory education.

Things we found out about your school

- You make satisfactory progress in your work and standards at the end of Year 6 are average.
- You behave very well in school. You enjoy your lessons and get on well with your teachers.
- Teachers have been checking your work more frequently and using the information to plan activities which are helping you to make better progress, especially in writing.
- The adults in school take good care of you so that you feel safe and enjoy your education.

Things we have asked your school to do now to improve further

- Use the more detailed information it has about how well you are doing to make sure that more of you reach your challenging targets, especially in writing.
- Look at everything that happens in school in more detail to make sure that changes that are being made really do help you to make better progress in your work.

You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard, behaving well and always doing your best.

We would like to wish you all the best of luck for the future.

Don Mason

Lead inspector