

St Francis Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120216
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	327232
Inspection date	16 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	265
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
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Curly
Headteacher	Denise Shipstone
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Dalby Road Melton Mowbray LE13 0BP
Telephone number	01664 562891
Fax number	01664 482712

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- standards and achievement in writing across the school, and in mathematics in Years 3 to 6
- boys' achievement throughout the school
- the school's use of assessment to challenge all groups of pupils
- the effectiveness of leadership and management, including the governing body, in maintaining high standards.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, senior staff, the chair of governors, pupils, staff and parents; visits to classes; a scrutiny of pupils' work and staff planning; observations of other aspects of the school day such as break times; and an analysis of parents' questionnaires and school documentation, including data on pupils' progress, records of visits by other external assessors, the school's safeguarding procedures and minutes of meetings. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors 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 school draws many of its pupils from a wide area surrounding the town because of its Catholic nature. Most children are White British. There are an increasing number of pupils from Poland and Asia joining the school, many of whom do not speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding school is very popular with parents who want a Catholic education for their children. Pupils are rightly fond of their school, and say that their teachers are fantastic, learning is fun and that they are valued for their uniqueness. 'We all get along well, we are one big happy family,' said one pupil, speaking for many, and, 'The teachers really care about us.' The success of this school is attributable to the headteacher's relentless drive to ensure all pupils, including those who enter the school speaking little or no English and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve as well as possible. Those pupils identified as gifted and talented are given learning targets that really challenge them. The very good links with secondary schools and other agencies such as health services, education support services and cluster schools ensure that all pupils benefit from continuity in their learning. In this school Every Child matters and exceptionally robust monitoring systems identify the slightest aspect of underperformance which is immediately addressed. For example, standards in mathematics (which dipped slightly last year) show a particular improvement this year, especially in problem solving.

The school is inclusive in all its practices and, as a result, all groups of pupils make outstanding progress. The school has built upon the many strengths noted at the last inspection and has improved pupils' standards and achievement from good to outstanding. Pupils start school with skills that are broadly at the levels expected for their age and make excellent progress so that standards on entry to Year 1 are above average in all areas of learning. Progress throughout Years 1 and 2 is excellent and standards are well above average by Year 2. Pupils build upon this success in Years 3 to 6 and reach standards that are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. Boys' achievement is as outstanding as that of the girls, and pupils are again on track to achieve very high standards in the 2009 national tests. Standards in writing are so high because pupils are given plenty of opportunities to write in all subjects. Very good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) and the high standards also reflect the many opportunities pupils have to hone their research skills. This has a very positive effect on the development of their independent learning skills.

Pupils respond extremely well to the outstanding teaching, which is characterised by very good modelling of basic skills, excellent explanations, very good use of support staff and targeted intervention for pupils who do not quite master skills the first time round. One small weakness relates to the use staff make of assessment information on pupils' learning in their planning and subsequent marking of pupils' work. At present, there are some inconsistencies in approaches between staff, and very occasionally in lessons, tasks do not build upon pupils' prior learning. This results in pupils not being sure what to include in their written work to make even better progress. The school has just introduced target booklets but these are not always referred to either in planning or marking.

Pupils love learning and hang on to their teachers' every word. This can be seen in their very positive attitudes to learning, their exemplary behaviour and the high uptake of an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. The rich experiences offered in an excellent, very broad and exciting curriculum can be seen in the high quality work produced around the school. This makes a wonderful contribution to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils respectfully reflect on their daily actions through prayer and thank God for all gifts of creation. Pupils' involvement with the local church community is outstanding because of their high levels of involvement in

the church liturgy. Pupils have an outstanding awareness of different cultures within the school and of different creeds and pupils' ways of life, which contributes to their excellent knowledge of global communities including France, Poland, India and Sri Lanka. Pupils have funded a well in Africa and sponsor a child in Tanzania. Pupils' enthusiasm for music contributes extremely well to community cohesion and parents rightly appreciate the wide variety of concerts. The wide range of sports activities for both boys and girls are attended enthusiastically, demonstrating pupils' excellent understanding of the need to stay healthy and fit. These and many other activities ensure that the school is extremely well represented in the local community. The skills that pupils develop through these activities, coupled with their very high academic standards, make an excellent contribution to their future economic well-being.

Pupils take their responsibilities as school councillors very seriously and make an excellent contribution to the running of the school. The care, guidance and support given to pupils are outstanding and the provision for child protection and safeguarding meets requirements. This not only ensures that pupils stay safe but also gives them an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Procedures for tracking pupils' good attendance are robust and well known by staff, resulting in good attendance. Procedures for checking progress are of very high quality and are regularly evaluated by the senior management team.

The cornerstone of the school's success is the excellent leadership and management of the headteacher. Her high standards are mirrored by a highly dedicated and competent senior management team who strive for excellence at all levels. Self-evaluation is accurate, systems and procedures for school improvement are robust, and the school knows its areas for development. Governance is exemplary. The governors receive high quality information on all aspects of school life from the headteacher and target resources effectively. It is precisely this attention to detail and a relentless drive to improve that provide a high quality learning experience for pupils and ensure the success of this school. Clear and continual improvement, together with very effective school self-evaluation, demonstrate the school's outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children receive an excellent start to their education because staff have got the balance of teaching basic skills through play just right. The excellent leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage have ensured that all welfare requirements are met and that regular observations of children's progress are undertaken to ascertain the guidance they need in order to make accelerated progress. Achievement is excellent because of outstanding teaching characterised by modelling and supporting all children in learning. Children reach high standards in all areas of learning as a result of high expectations and an emphasis on basic skills, very good relationships between children, parents and staff, very secure monitoring of teaching and learning and the use of very good quality resources. The environment, both indoors and outdoors, is very exciting and exceptionally well planned. Children love reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and many of them can write 'stories' based on the caterpillar's antics. Teaching and learning are outstanding. High quality systems check on the outstanding progress these children make. Excellent relationships contribute to a highly effective environment where children learn very effectively through play. Children feel secure and valued and are not afraid to ask for help when they need it. The school has made excellent progress since the last inspection in developing the Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that staff use assessment information consistently well, both in their lesson planning and marking of pupils' work, so that pupils always know what it is they need to do in order to improve.

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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?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 learners' needs?	1
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?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

17 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Francis Catholic Primary School, Melton Mowbray LE13 0BP

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour, your confidence – especially in a Reception, Years 1 and 2 assembly – and your love of learning. You spoke to us in a very polite and mature way and you were very clear about what you enjoyed most about school. Your headteacher and teachers come out top of all the things you like about school. Yours is an outstanding school and you do exceptionally well in attaining standards that are well above national averages. Your school has many strengths, and here are some of the things we found:

- Your school keeps improving thanks to the outstanding leadership and management of your headteacher and senior staff, and you make excellent gains in learning.
- The curriculum is fun; it is very well planned and enriched with a wonderful range of activities, especially in sport.
- Your behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. You show great respect at prayer time, you value your friends from different cultures and you do some great work in helping those less fortunate than yourselves in other countries.
- The school looks after you very well, which is why you know how to stay healthy and safe.
- Teaching is excellent, and all staff make a great effort to help you learn.
- You have very good skills of independence; you are confident and you use ICT really well for research.
- You make an outstanding contribution to the local community through your participation in the church liturgy and musical recitals.

We have asked your teachers to help you make even better progress by using all the information that they have on your learning in both their planning and their marking of your work. You can help by asking your teachers what else you can do to improve your learning. We wish you good luck in the future.

Yours faithfully

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

Lead inspector