

# St Francis Xavier School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121715
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	327556
<b>Inspection date</b>	5 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christopher Keeler HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	430
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dr J Whiston
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr J McAuley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 March 2006
<b>School address</b>	Darlington Road Richmond North Yorkshire DL10 7DA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01748 823414
<b>Fax number</b>	01748 823946

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; students' personal development and well-being; teaching and learning; care, guidance and support; and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form; national published assessment data; the school's own assessment records; a range of school documentation; observation of the school at work; discussions with staff, students and governors; and parental questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but no evidence was found to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified.

## Description of the school

St Francis Xavier is a small, joint Catholic and Church of England school situated in the town of Richmond, North Yorkshire. It serves young people of both denominations and other backgrounds from the town, the surrounding rural area and a large military base. Nearly all students are of White British heritage. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, though relatively few have a statement of special educational needs. At age 16, students who continue with education or training generally proceed to a neighbouring sixth form or colleges in other towns.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. At the heart of the school is an exceptionally high regard for students' personal development and well-being coupled with a strong duty of care, guidance and support. This is acknowledged by parents, who recognise that each student is valued and supported within an ethos that reflects Christian values and promotes a strong sense of community in which all students thrive.

Students enter school with standards that are slightly above the national average. They make excellent progress throughout Key Stage 3 and attain above average standards. This rate of progress is continued throughout Key Stage 4 and, as a result, standards are extremely high. In 2008, 80% of the students gained five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C. Furthermore, 74% of the students gained five GCSE grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics. This level of performance is well above the national average and has been a consistent theme for the past three years. In 2008 results at GCSE were particularly high in English language, design and technology, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT), physical education (PE) and science. The percentage of students achieving at least two A\* to C grades in science is significantly higher than the national average. Standards in modern foreign languages dipped in 2008 due to long-term staff absence that resulted in inconsistent provision. The school has taken effective steps to rectify the matter and standards are now rising in line with other subjects. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same excellent progress as their peers. The majority of students achieve exceptionally well because teaching is good in almost every respect across the school. Common features of good teaching are characterised by: detailed planning that identifies clear learning objectives; good subject knowledge; questioning that challenges students to think deeply, thereby enhancing their understanding, and lively teacher-pupil interaction through discussion and debates that stimulate students and foster enquiring minds. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide good support, thereby making a positive contribution to students' progress. The quality of marking is generally good with some good examples that are both evaluative and give clear advice to students as to how they could improve. However, this standard is not always consistent within and between departments.

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students' enthusiasm for school is reflected in the high rates of attendance and participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. 'I wake up every morning and feel excited about going to school because I love it.' This comment made by one student captures the essence of what this school is all about. The extent of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students are happy and secure and are given opportunities to grow academically, socially and emotionally and this is why they do so well. Standards of behaviour are exemplary in and out of the classroom. Students accept responsibility and are courteous and considerate towards others, especially those younger than themselves. Bullying is extremely rare, but none the less pupils are very confident that if incidents of bullying were to arise they would be dealt with quickly and effectively. Students have a very good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and are conscious of the dangers associated with drug and alcohol misuse. Students demonstrate a much better understanding of what it means to live in a multicultural society than at the time of the previous inspection. The school council is an excellent forum in which students learn about democratic conventions and the art of communication and compromise. They are developing excellent work place and intellectual skills that will stand them in good

stead in later life. Given the size of the school and the limitations this has on curriculum provision, the quality of the curriculum and other activities is excellent. Statutory requirements are met and the school makes the very best use of the resources at its disposal. The curriculum is very effective in meeting the needs and interests of all students irrespective of ability. An additional vocational qualification, hospitality and catering, has recently been added to the curriculum as a full GCSE and courses in food hygiene, health and safety introduced at Key Stage 3 will enhance the range of qualifications available. All students take religious education at GCSE level. Facilities for PE, design technology, and science are first-rate and used extensively to support learning. The personal, social, health and citizenship education programme is well established throughout the school and given a high priority as a vehicle for developing students' well-being. The school makes good use of visitors and trips to enrich the curriculum. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities that allow students to develop their talents and interests. A very good feature of the curriculum is the provision made for students identified as gifted and talented throughout the school. A well thought out programme tailored to individual needs provides exciting opportunities to acquire and extend academic skills and sporting prowess. A few examples of the opportunities on offer are links with York and Teesside Universities, which enable students to experience tuition in mathematics and philosophy; enterprise projects that introduce students to the world of commerce and production; and a chance to learn Latin.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding and it is this feature that underpins the success of the school. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are in place and there are good links with external agencies to support vulnerable students. Staff know their students well and are always on hand to offer support and guidance. They are totally committed to the welfare of all students and praise and direction are used in equal measure. Students know this and, as a consequence, respect and value their teachers. One of the outcomes is that students participate enthusiastically during lessons and try their best, not just for themselves but to gain recognition from their teachers. This impacts positively on standards and is one of the reasons why students do well. There are good systems in place to track and monitor students' progress as they move through the school. Underachievement is identified at an early stage and targeted support is provided to help students improve their progress. Students are aware of their current and target attainment levels and demonstrate a determination to achieve them.

Outstanding leadership of the headteacher has given the school clear educational direction that has seen standards rise year after year. This success has been built on a strong commitment to high standards of care and respect of the individual. The students truly lie at the heart of this school. Their social and emotional needs always come first and this provides the bedrock from which academic excellence grows. All students are given every opportunity to succeed in everything they do and the curriculum, particularly through personal, social, health and citizenship education, helps students to recognise and value other people from diverse backgrounds and issues. The headteacher is well supported by members of an able and hard-working senior leadership team who share his commitment. Managers at all levels are held to account and expectations are high. Senior managers monitor the quality of teaching and learning regularly and make good use of external advice in order to secure improvements. Heads of year fulfil a role as learning leaders by overseeing the pastoral provision and also keeping a sharp eye on students' progress and intervening when necessary. They carry out this role well and play an important part in promoting excellence. Heads of department evaluate performance in their subjects and implement action plans designed to address perceived weaknesses in provision. The quality of the school's self-evaluation is excellent and the headteacher has a

clear understanding of the strengths and needs of the school. The school's contribution to community cohesion is excellent. The governing body performs its function well and is very supportive of the work of the school. The school has excellent capacity to improve and provides excellent value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that all departments mark work to a high standard with comments that are evaluative and contain clear guidance that will help students 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

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

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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>	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	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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

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

Thank you very much for being so welcoming when I recently visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you, especially the school council, and carefully considered the many things you told me. I was particularly impressed by the courteous way in which you greeted me and the maturity you showed in answering my questions. It is clear that you enjoy being at the school and take part in everything it offers with energy and enthusiasm. You told me that in your opinion St Francis Xavier School is outstanding and I agree.

Here is what I found.

- Students make excellent progress throughout the school and attain high standards.
- Standards of behaviour are exemplary.
- The quality of teaching is good which is why you do so well.
- The care, guidance and support shown by staff is excellent which is why you feel safe and secure.
- The curriculum is outstanding because it meets all of your needs so well.
- The school is exceptionally well led by the headteacher.

I have asked the headteacher to ensure that when your work is marked it tells you how well you have done and what you need to do to improve.

I wish you every success for the future.