

St Francis RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100826
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	335601
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2009
Reporting inspector	George Logan

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 of pupils on the school roll	412
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Peter Ryman
Headteacher	Carol Molloy and Ros Atkinson
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 21 lessons and held meetings with the chair of governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' written work, records of their progress, lesson-planning, playtime activities and the school's self-evaluation documents, including records of teaching and the main improvement plan. Inspection questionnaires were received from staff and from 112 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well pupils make progress, particularly in mathematics in Years 1 and 2 and in writing in Years 3 to 6
- how effectively the teaching enables children to progress and how well teachers use assessment and target-setting to support better learning
- the effectiveness of leadership at all levels
- how successfully the school fulfils its duty to promote community cohesion.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average primary school, with 15 classes. It serves an ethnically diverse area. Almost all pupils are Catholic and all but a few come from minority ethnic groups. Pupils of Black African heritage, mostly from Nigeria and Ghana, form the largest single group. Three-fifths of the pupils do not speak English as their first language, although only a relatively small number are at an early stage of learning English. A very small, but long-established, group of pupils of Irish Traveller heritage attend the school. Significantly more pupils are entitled to free school meals than in most schools. An above-average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The majority of these have speech and language issues or autism. Recently, the number of pupils with high levels of need, including physical disabilities, has increased and 10 pupils have statements of special educational need. Around half the children join the Early Years Foundation Stage in the full-time Nursery. The remainder enter the Reception classes directly. The school has experienced some turbulence in staffing and difficulties in making permanent staff appointments in recent terms.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. It has several good features. It is an ethnically diverse, but very harmonious, community, a haven in a challenging inner-urban setting. Adults provide good pastoral care and support and this is reflected in pupils' good behaviour, good attendance and good attitudes to learning. The school supports pupils' personal development well. Consequently, pupils enjoy school and feel safe there. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles.

Achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 6 standards are broadly average. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with attainment below that expected for their age. Teaching has, recently, been more consistent and progress more rapid in Reception than in Nursery, because of staffing difficulties. In most years children only reach the expected level in a few aspects of the curriculum by the end of Reception. Pupils sustain a steady pace of learning in Years 1 and 2, so that standards at the end of Year 2 are slightly below average, particularly in mathematics. Teaching, though satisfactory overall, does not always provide sufficient challenge to push pupils' learning on rapidly. As a result, progress remains satisfactory, if erratic, in Years 3 to 6. However, for some groups, such as the few Traveller pupils, who attend regularly and acquire sound basic skills, and for pupils whose first language is not English, progress is better. For pupils with additional learning needs, progress is more variable. The school is working hard to improve the skills of learning support staff. The school enables gifted or talented pupils to access specialist outside activities. Otherwise, pupils take part in a satisfactory range of activities. However, outdoor learning opportunities in the Early Years Foundation Stage have not been sufficiently developed.

Teachers use day-to-day assessment satisfactorily to check learning and to plan lessons. However, lessons do not consistently challenge more-able pupils. While work is mostly marked regularly, not all teachers give clear guidance as to what pupils must do to improve. The analysis of assessment data is not sufficiently rigorous to identify underperformance promptly or to improve pupils' progress through setting challenging individual targets.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteachers are ambitious for the school. They have a clear commitment to the Catholic ethos and to pupils' personal development and have steered the school successfully through a challenging period. The school runs smoothly and self-evaluation is accurate. Effective action is being taken to tackle identified weaknesses in mathematics and to sustain the recent focus on writing across the school. However, given the recent staff changes, there is not a sufficiently strategic approach to ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. Governance is satisfactory, although governors have only a limited involvement

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in shaping the school's future direction. Overall, however, the school's capacity for improvement is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have access to a planned, appropriately resourced programme of outdoor learning opportunities as part of their daily provision.
- Ensure that school leaders use assessment and tracking data more effectively to identify priorities for improvement and monitor the impact of actions taken.
- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching, building on existing good practice, by:
 - ensuring, through monitoring, that identified development points are acted upon and embedded in daily practice
 - ensuring that planning consistently provides for the needs of different groups of pupils
 - developing teachers' skills in analysing and interpreting performance data
 - improving the consistency and quality of marking so that pupils have a clear view of what they need to do to improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' achievement does not consistently reflect their positive attitudes or their capacity as active learners. Overall, however, pupils build satisfactorily, if erratically, on their previous learning, although some groups, particularly those who do not speak English as their first language, make more rapid progress. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make better progress than others. While there was evidence of good practice in a lower-set Year 6 English lesson, with some rigorous reinforcement of key teaching points by support staff, this is not always the case.

Standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average. A slight decline in English in 2009 was balanced by improved performance in mathematics and science. Several English lessons seen during the inspection had a good focus on reinforcing writing skills. While standards in Year 2 are slightly below average, this represents satisfactory progress from Reception. However, as was evident in a Year 2 science lesson, there are missed opportunities to encourage more active learning through practical activities. Action to arrest declining standards in mathematics includes an intensive support programme for individuals and this was observed to have a positive impact on learning.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The Catholic ethos underpins the strong sense of inclusiveness and community. Pupils feel generally safe, although a few are anxious in the playground. They have confidence in the adults and show consideration for others. They feel that behaviour is mostly good. Their good social skills and leadership opportunities as peer mediators, together with satisfactory academic skills, indicate that pupils are adequately prepared for their future education.

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The school council provides a good forum for their views. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory overall, although limited engagement with other communities with different characteristics means that pupils' experience of the diversity of life in Britain remains rather restricted.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Although recent staffing issues have affected the consistency of pupils' learning, there is a core of successful teaching which ensures that progress is at least satisfactory. The school recognises the need to improve the consistency and quality of teaching. Teachers benefit from pupils' good attitudes and attendance and relationships are strengths. However, pace is sometimes an issue, with over-lengthy introductions which impede learning. While good practice was seen in a brisk Year 4 physical education lesson, planning does not always ensure sufficiently challenging activities for the more able pupils. Although teachers use questioning well to evaluate pupils' understanding, the use of assessment is variable, as is the analysis of performance data. Individual learning targets in writing and mathematics, where they exist, are too broad, seldom

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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implemented and have no discernible effect on pupils' progress. There is some effective marking, mainly in English, but this varies between classes. Too often it does not tell pupils how to improve their work. In a few classes pupils have begun to evaluate the quality of their own work. There was a good example of self-evaluation in writing in Year 1 where pupils reviewed their use of capital letters, full stops and word spacing. Some teaching assistants are proactive, successfully supporting pupils who need additional help. Others are less effective and this is reflected in the variable progress of these pupils.

The curriculum promotes satisfactory progress in reading and in writing, with some cross-curricular use of writing. There is good provision for developing information and communication technology skills. The partnership with a specialist secondary school has successfully supported developments in sport. The school has a gifted and talented pupil register and is actively supporting identified pupils through a range of outside enrichment activities. Lesson planning is not focused sufficiently closely on individual needs to maximise the impact of these opportunities. There is good provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education, underpinning pupils' good personal development. The range of enrichment activities, visits and visitors, including a residential visit, is extensive, although there are relatively few extra-curricular clubs.

Staff care for pupils well and there are good links with parents and carers. This is evident in the support for pupils from a Traveller background. The school has earned the trust of these families, resulting in good attendance and better progress and learning than is typically found. The learning mentor provides valuable support for pupils with social or emotional needs. Pupils feel that they receive good support. The school works effectively with outside agencies to support vulnerable pupils who have identified needs. Consequently, there have been no exclusions in six years.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

A key strength of this relatively new leadership team is its support for pupils' personal and pastoral development and for the distinctive ethos of the school. There has been resolute action to tackle significant personnel issues and a range of initiatives to deal with academic underperformance. This includes the major input to raising standards in mathematics in Years 1 and 2 and further work on writing in Years 3 to 6. Effective systems are in place to ensure that the school runs smoothly. The monitoring of

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planning and teaching is systematic, although areas for development are not always followed through. There is not enough focus on the analysis of performance data to identify priorities and monitor progress. Though expectations are high, school targets are not monitored often enough to ensure that they are met. At present, there is not a sufficiently incisive strategy for the improvement of teaching and learning. Middle managers are just beginning to lead developments in their subjects.

The governing body has a sound knowledge of the school and of pupils' learning. It is representative of the main ethnic communities. Governors support the leadership well and ensure that statutory requirements are met, including the good procedures for safeguarding pupils. They understand the school's strengths well but are not sufficiently involved in shaping its future direction or in driving improvement.

The school engages well with community interests and with parental expectations. Potential discrimination is tackled resolutely. However, equality of opportunity is satisfactory since not all pupils make as much progress as they should. The school understands community cohesion issues satisfactorily but is more active on local issues than on national or international aspects.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter Nursery, and others enter Reception directly, with a wide range of skills and knowledge. Overall, these are below the levels expected for their age. A small number of pupils have limited experience of spoken English when they first join the school. Most children settle rapidly because of the good induction arrangements and the

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good level of adult support. Children are well cared for and have good relationships with staff. They feel safe and secure and behave well. Satisfactory teaching helps children, including those with additional learning needs, to make steady progress. However, the lack of a permanent teacher in the Nursery has had an impact on the quality of the provision and the outcomes, although children still gain confidence in the use of spoken English and in their social development. This enables them to access the full curriculum when they enter Reception.

The pace of learning picks up in Reception, although it takes time to integrate the many new entrants. Although higher in 2009, because the cohort was particularly able, attainment by the end of Reception is typically below the national average. It tends to be strongest in children's personal development, in aspects of mathematical development and in physical development. In these aspects progress is good. The regular focus on sounds and letters is supporting a steady improvement in children's literacy skills. The outdoor area is not yet sufficiently resourced or routinely integrated into the daily provision. Leadership and management have strengths, but staffing issues have proved time-consuming and this has slowed progress. While the monitoring and recording of progress is thorough and information collected is used quite well to guide planning, the school recognises that it does not analyse available data rigorously enough to enable it to demonstrate the progress children make.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents and carers hold very positive views of the school. While there were few written comments, most were positive. A typical written comment was: 'The school is good and improving. It is helping my son to grow morally and academically.' Less affirmative comments related to pupils not making the progress which parents hoped for, the frequency with which supply staff are used, the quality of school food, the cleanliness of the toilets, the management of pupils' behaviour and acrimonious disputes between parents. The team considered these points carefully. Observations by the team support the view that pupils' progress could be more rapid and consistent. Difficulties in recruitment have led to the increased use of supply staff. The restricted space in the playgrounds can give rise to minor disputes between pupils. That said, the management of behaviour is a strength of the teaching. Most toilets have been refurbished recently and all have air dryers. Whatever parents' perceptions may be, the school cannot be

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responsible for disputes between parents, either within the grounds or elsewhere. Overall, the consensus suggests that this is a caring school where pupils are well supported in their personal development. Inspection findings mostly endorse parents' and carers' positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Francis RC primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 112 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 412 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	82	73	29	26	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	73	65	38	34	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	67	60	43	38	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	61	54	46	41	3	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	63	56	45	40	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	51	46	57	51	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	57	51	51	46	2	2	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	53	47	50	45	2	2	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	39	59	53	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	67	60	40	36	4	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	32	67	60	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	67	60	41	37	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	74	66	35	31	2	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Francis RC Primary School, Peckham SE15 1RQ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and spending time in your lessons. We found that yours is a satisfactory school, with a number of strengths.

Here are our main findings.

- You attend regularly, behave well and work hard.
- The links with the local parish are well developed.
- Standards are average in Year 6, and most of you make steady progress.
- Children in Reception make steady progress, but do particularly well in their personal and physical development and in developing their mathematical abilities.
- The school makes sure that you are cared for well.
- You conduct yourselves safely and have a good understanding of how important it is to eat healthily.
- The curriculum is satisfactory and, although there are not many clubs, you go on a good range of visits and have interesting visitors to school.
- Those of you who find learning difficult are usually well provided for with extra help.

We are asking the school to make some changes so that you do even better.

- Make sure that the Nursery and Reception children have regular opportunities to use the outdoor learning area and ensure that it is well resourced.
- Ensure that school leaders use all the information they have about how well the school is doing to plan what needs to happen next and then to make sure that those ideas work well.
- Improve the teaching, so that you make better and more rapid progress, looking particularly at planning and the way teachers mark your work.

You can help by continuing to work hard and do your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Logan

Lead inspector

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