

St Francis Xavier's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116884
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	338915
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Marie Williams
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Daron
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Fifteen lessons were observed and nine teachers seen. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the chair of governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at information about pupils' progress, staff and pupil surveys and safeguarding procedures. The inspection team analysed 93 responses to parents' and carers' questionnaires.

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

- the progress being made in Key Stage 1, particularly in writing
- how well assessment is used in lessons to help different groups of pupils make suitable progress
- whether leaders have secured sustained improvements to pupils' progress.

Information about the school

St Francis Xavier's Primary receives pupils from a wide geographic area. Few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. An average proportion of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage but higher than average numbers speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is low. More pupils than usual join or leave the school at times other than the normal times for admission and transfer. The school has several recent awards including Healthy Schools status and Activemark.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Francis Xavier's Primary is a good school which provides a delightful and welcoming learning environment for pupils, and enables them to achieve well academically and personally. Pupils enter the school with attainment broadly in line with that expected for their age. By the time they leave Year 6, pupils are attaining above national averages, having made good progress. This good progress is made by all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is very well supported by the good curriculum, where they are given ample opportunity to reflect upon the rich tapestry of the human and natural world.

Pupils' writing skills have improved this year and their progress is now good in Key Stage 2 as a result of a new writing scheme in Years 3 and 4. In Key Stage 1, pupils' writing has also improved but their progress is satisfactory rather than good. This is due in part to them having fewer consistent opportunities to write at length and also to a less effective writing scheme for this age group.

There are many strengths in teaching, particularly in the skilled use of information technology and the very clear explanations which significantly aid pupils' understanding. Teachers use assessment well in English to set individual targets which ensure that all groups make equally good progress from their different starting points. In mathematics, the use of assessment is less effective in some classes and individual targets are not always evident to pupils. As a result, pupils in these classes are not clear about the next steps they need to take to improve and they are not moved on fast enough. For a few pupils, especially the more able, the tasks set in mathematics sometimes lack challenge. Despite this, exceptionally good teaching in other classes and accurate knowledge of each pupil's level of attainment ensures that all groups of pupils make good progress in mathematics over time.

Pupils have outstanding attitudes towards leading healthy lives. There is a very high take-up of sport as they value and understand the importance of exercise. The curriculum ensures, through science, physical education and food technology, for example, that pupils know how to eat a balanced, healthy diet and the majority clearly relish eating plenty of fruit and vegetables.

School leaders have worked effectively as a team to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Senior staff have developed a much more rigorous system for monitoring progress. They have used this to accurately self-evaluate strengths and what needs to be developed to drive some good sustained improvement to progress in several areas, especially for pupils with English as an additional language, who now do

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well. The capacity to improve is therefore good.

Pupils appreciate the good quality care and guidance they receive, and know that when they need support it is there. For this reason, pupils feel safe and behave safely throughout the school. Their good basic skills, excellent social attitudes and strong team work mean that pupils are well prepared for the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the progress made in writing for pupils in Years 1 and 2 by:
 - introducing the writing scheme already being used in Years 3 and 4
 - providing sufficient opportunity for extended writing.
- Improve the way assessment is used to plan lessons in mathematics by:
 - always setting out the next steps in learning clearly for each pupil to see
 - ensuring that individual pupils move through these steps at a fast enough pace
 - providing more immediate challenge in some of the tasks set for more able pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' good achievement, and the way they enjoy and value learning, is reflected in their good attendance and the industrious atmosphere in lessons. Pupils of all abilities make good progress overall in English, mathematics and science. This is in part due to their good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. In one outstanding English lesson, pupils were very thoughtful in their responses to a film clip, working together expertly to analyse their work. For pupils in Key Stage 1, progress in writing has risen to satisfactory this year. One class, for example, worked enthusiastically to write a well-crafted letter about their trip the day before. The good progress in mathematics, however, is not consistent in all year groups and, for a few in some classes, progress slows because they work on things they already understand. Pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those with English as an additional language and those who have a variety of special educational needs and/or disabilities make equally good progress, due to the good support they receive.

Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community especially in the responsibilities they take on, for example, acting as road safety officers and house captains, and in their keen recycling. Pupils' are reflective and enjoy the wonders of the world around them, and show a deep appreciation and respect for each other's differences.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The strong nurturing aspect of the school is exemplified by breakfast club which provides a safe and warm start to the day. The school is particularly effective in encouraging good attendance and, more recently, reducing the number of holidays taken during term time in order to help pupils achieve their best. Teaching staff have a good understanding of pupils' individual learning needs, to enable them to set appropriate work in most lessons. This is why progress is good for the majority despite weaknesses in a few mathematics lessons. Good procedures help pupils settle in well when they join and leave the classes other than at the usual time. There are plenty of lively activities and questioning in lessons motivates, engages and involves pupils well. Good care and guidance ensure that support for those who have difficulties understanding English and for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is skilled and well targeted. Although assessment is accurate, thorough and used well overall, its use varies somewhat between subjects and classes. In English and most other subjects, pupils have some good opportunities to critically evaluate their own and others' work. In mathematics, pupils are not always fully aware of how to reach the next steps in their learning and the tasks set sometimes lack challenge. This is why one or two pupils, especially the more able, sometimes make slower progress in mathematics lessons.

The curriculum is increasingly creative: it is enriched by plenty of clubs, visits, visitors and projects and encourages good development of personal skills. In science, there is a strong focus on practical investigative skills which encourages pupils' enthusiasm for the subject. The school recognises, rightly, a need to increase the opportunities provided for

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encouraging extended writing to all classes, as this is proving successful with the new scheme introduced in Years 3 and 4. Sport and the arts are given high priority and an increased emphasis on information and communication technology is enhancing pupils' skills in using computers in several subjects.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, well supported by senior leaders, has been effective in driving improvement. This has resulted, for example, in the better progress in writing, and improved teaching and learning evident in Key Stage 1. A new and robust system for monitoring and analysing how well groups of pupils are progressing is enabling a more precise focus on what needs to be improved. Responsibilities for increasing progress and embedding ambition are well distributed amongst leaders at all levels and, as a result, the school's overall effectiveness has moved from satisfactory to good. The capacity to improve is good. School leaders are fully aware that they have not yet ensured that some effective areas of practice are universally adopted, particularly with regard to the use of assessment to plan lessons and to the teaching of writing. The school makes the most of good links with outside providers and other schools, especially in supporting sport and in increasing subject expertise.

Good governance is evidenced by a strong range of skills, rigorous training, and a good level of challenge to hold the school to account and support improvement. The school engages well with parents and carers with plenty of opportunity for consultation, regular homework, a parents and carers forum, regular bulletins and invitations to join in with school events. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory overall. The actions taken to keep pupils safe are robust and effective but some policies lack the detail expected of best practice. Pupils are keen to describe how all of them have equal opportunities to do well and take part in events and there is no evidence of discrimination. The promotion of community cohesion is good, with some exceptionally strong links locally and internationally to encourage pupils in their very evident respect for those who are different from themselves.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good links with parents and pre-school providers ensure that children have a smooth start in Reception. Children achieve well because activities capture their interest and are accurately matched to their prior attainment. They make good progress in all areas of learning and enter Year 1 with skills which are at least average and sometimes above for their age, including in literacy and numeracy. This progress is supported by skilled and well-targeted teaching during focused group work. Occasionally, when children work independently, adults miss opportunities to intervene swiftly enough to support them in making the most of their learning. Children's personal skills are given a high priority and, as a result, they quickly learn school routines, take turns and share with each other. A rich curriculum is reflected in the stimulating classroom and outside environment, full of busy, happy children exploring things for themselves. For example, in one session they were painting, writing letters, building volcanoes in the sand, and making a drain pipe for 'incy wincy spider'. The good teaching, care, guidance and support stem from effective leadership, where careful assessment is used to provide well for individuals and to identify where improvements are needed. Leadership has been especially effective recently in improving and securing equally good progress for children who have additional needs or difficulties.

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

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents and carers are very positive about the school, particularly appreciating the fact that their children enjoy school, are kept safe and helped to lead healthy lives. One parent typically commented, 'We are very pleased with the education our child receives. She is stretched and challenged and given opportunities to be an independent learner.' The concerns of a few parents and carers regarding meeting pupils' particular needs and managing their behaviour are not supported by inspection evidence. Inspectors found behaviour to be good. Parents and carers are supported to help their children's learning with regular homework and formative marking, although a lack of clarity regarding targets in mathematics may have contributed to this concern by a few.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Francis Xavier's 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 93 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 205 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	60	36	39	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	54	39	42	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	31	33	53	58	6	7	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	34	51	55	8	9	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	39	42	47	51	5	5	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	29	52	56	12	13	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	40	52	56	3	3	0	0
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)	40	43	41	44	6	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	34	44	47	13	14	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	40	41	44	11	12	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	29	50	55	4	4	5	5
The school is led and managed effectively	28	30	54	59	2	2	4	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	53	36	39	4	4	4	4

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



21 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Francis Xavier's Primary School, Hereford, HR1 1DT

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons. Yours is a good school with many interesting things going on, just as you said. Staff work hard to keep developing the school and, for this reason, your work is improving all the time. Skilful teaching helps you to make good progress and do well. We like the way you really enjoy your learning and always try to do your best. You told us that your teachers make lessons fun and interesting. Your attainment is still improving, especially in writing in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics, and so we have asked the school to:

- make sure you all get a chance to use the new writing scheme and to write at length more often
- set out the next steps in your learning more clearly in mathematics and ensure you all move through these rapidly enough
- make sure that those who learn mathematics quickly always have enough challenge in the tasks set.

We suggest that you discuss these issues with your teachers, and help them by working hard and sharing your ideas with them.

You show a mature attitude to taking on responsibility and contribute well to school life and the community. You were keen to tell us that the school keeps you safe and looks after you well. It is especially impressive to see how well you are helping yourselves by eating such a healthy diet and taking plenty of exercise. Your behaviour is good, particularly in the way you value learning and play such an active part in lessons. You show a very considerate understanding and respect for others, including those who have different beliefs and ways of living. We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Potheary

Lead inspector

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