

# St Francis of Assisi RC Primary School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134598
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	341481
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 June 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Brian Dower

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

---

<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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	263
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Miss M Reid
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr M Holden
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Blakehall Skelmersdale Lancashire WN8 9AZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01695 558560
<b>Fax number</b>	01695 558560
<b>Email address</b>	bursar@sfoa.lancs.sch.uk

---

<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 June 2010
<b>Inspection number</b>	341481

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2010

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 17 lessons and observed 11 teachers. They held meetings with seven governors, staff, groups of pupils and representatives of the local authority. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including monitoring and assessment records, pupils' books and files, minutes of governors' meetings, the school's improvement planning and curriculum and lesson plans. They analysed 122 questionnaire returns from parents and carers, together with 36 from staff and 105 from pupils.

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

- the progress pupils make and their levels of attainment in English and mathematics
- pupils' ability to use their basic skills flexibly and well across the curriculum
- the use of assessments to set appropriately challenging learning activities for all groups
- the rigour of monitoring to ensure that pupils are doing as well as possible
- oral and written feedback to show pupils how to improve
- the ability of leaders and managers to secure and sustain improvements.

## Information about the school

The school is larger than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high; that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. Almost all pupils are White British. A very small minority are from a different ethnic background. The school's leadership team comprises an associate headteacher from another school who was appointed because of staffing difficulties. He is supported by two assistant headteachers. The school has a number of awards, including the Healthy Schools, Learning Excellence and International School awards.

**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**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. Pupils' attainment is improving rapidly from the low levels of recent years. Children make good learning gains in the Early Years Foundation Stage and progress well. The pace of learning dips in Key Stage 1 to a satisfactory level. The attainment of pupils in Years 5 and 6 is now at nationally expected levels and their learning and progress are good. The overall levels at which pupils achieve is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and has improved, and it underpins their good personal qualities. Pupils know right from wrong and are sensitive to the feelings and needs of others. They work hard and behave well. The older pupils undertake a range of responsibilities in school and all contribute to the local and wider communities. They say they feel safe and secure in school and this is apparent in their enthusiasm for all it has to offer. Pupils eat healthily at school and take plenty of exercise. They are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their lives.

Attainment by the end of Year 6 has risen significantly because of improvements in provision and focused leadership. Rigorous monitoring is ensuring that weaknesses in learning are identified early and support is timely and effective. There is a flexible approach to grouping the older pupils to match provision more closely to their needs. Although good practice was seen in Key Stage 1, the monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 sometimes lacks rigour and there is not a consistent approach in guiding them on how to improve. Across the school, teachers are not challenging pupils to explain their thinking at length. There is not a planned and consistent approach to the development of pupils' listening skills and their ability to evaluate for themselves how well they are doing.

Self-evaluation is accurate. The school knows its strengths and areas for improvement and has appropriate plans in place to tackle its shortcomings. Staffing difficulties have recently been resolved. Improvements have been driven by the strong leadership and management of the associate headteacher and assistant headteachers. As a result, there is a sense of purpose and common endeavour and morale is high. Staff are committed to pupils' welfare and success. The school gives satisfactory value for money. The track record of change and success under the current leadership is have a good impact on improving pupils' attainment overall and shows that the school has a good capacity to build on what has already been achieved.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rate of pupils' progress and accelerate learning across Key Stage 1 by:

**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

- making more effective use of assessment information to match learning activities to pupils' needs
- regular and rigorous monitoring of pupils' work to ensure that all are progressing well
- ensuring that pupils are clear about what they have to do to improve.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school by:
  - implementing a planned and consistent approach to developing pupils' skills at listening
  - developing the range, rigour and depth of teachers' questioning
  - extending opportunities for pupils to evaluate for themselves how well they are doing.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

In lessons pupils throughout the school work well in groups and enjoy each other's company. Pupils enjoy their work and the pace of learning is quickening. Their levels of achievement are rising. Lesson observations, school records and the scrutiny of books show that the older pupils are now making strong gains in their learning. At Key Stage 2 this is so for all groups, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those few from minority ethnic backgrounds. Attainment in English has improved because pupils are adapting their extended writing for different purposes; the improvements in mathematics are driven by better problem-solving skills. The pace of learning of many of the Key Stage 1 pupils is not as rapid, particularly in mathematics. Letter formation is often not accurate and writing is sometimes disorganised. Their grasp of punctuation and grammar is insufficiently developed for their age. Pupils make good use of information and communication technology to find out things for themselves and to present their work in a variety of forms. They are confident when speaking but there are pupils across the key stages who, although well behaved, do not always listen carefully enough to what others are saying. Teachers do not question them directly to ensure that they remain alert and attentive. Attendance remains below average but improving.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

**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

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school and this has resulted in uneven progress. In Key Stage 2, teaching is typically stronger because teachers use information about pupils' progress well to plan work that provides a greater challenge and, consequently, pupils make good progress. In the best lessons, the quality of dialogue between pupils and teachers is good and this challenges pupils' thinking and encourages them to give detailed answers. These features are not so evident in Key Stage 1. Speaking skills are not so rapidly developed because questioning lacks rigour and, consequently, progress in these classes is satisfactory rather than good. Pupils are beginning to assess their own performance but this is not evident in all classes. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is conscientious but is not yet consistent in providing pupils with clear guidance on how to take the next steps in their learning.

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. It is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, along with many visits and visitors that add to pupils' enjoyment. The school has rightly focused on providing pupils with greater opportunities to write in a variety of ways across subjects and this has resulted in a significant improvement in attainment by the end of Year 6. Opportunities for creative work are not sufficiently developed and the school has this as a priority for improvement. The pastoral care within the curriculum is strong, as is the focus on healthy lifestyles and staying safe. Pupils receive the guidance and support they need and these contribute well to their good personal development. The school is employing a range of strategies to improve attendance. These include rigorous monitoring and systems to follow up absences. These, together with partnerships with parents and carers, and outside

**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

agencies, are beginning to secure improvements.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

### How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers have an ambitious vision for the school and much that was seen on inspection shows that they are well on the way to making it a reality. The associate headteacher knows what is needed to change satisfactory to good and has implemented systems and training programmes to ensure that teaching improves. These measures have already accelerated the rate of progress at Key Stage 2. He has developed the leadership skills of those around him. As a result, the staff work as a highly effective team. There are close links with parents and carers and effective partnerships with other schools and outside agencies to promote pupils' welfare and academic development. Community cohesion is promoted well. Christian values underpin the school's work, creating a harmonious and cohesive learning community. It is strengthened through its links with the local and wider community and with Zimema School in South Africa. The focus is on the needs of the pupil as an individual to ensure that any barriers to learning are removed and there is an equal opportunity for all to succeed. Measures are now being taken to close the attainment gap between Key Stages 1 and 2. Safe working is evident in daily routines and safety audits are undertaken regularly. All the required documentation and procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place and understood by staff. Governors are supportive and closely involved in the day-to-day life of the school. They play their part in evaluating the school's performance and setting the agenda for improvement. As well as recognising what the school's leaders and staff have already achieved, they are asking the right questions to keep the momentum of improvement going.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

When they start school, the level of children's skills varies. Overall, it is mostly well below that expected for their age, in particular in their social, emotional and language development. They settle quickly because of effective induction procedures and good communication with parents and carers established from day one. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals and achieve well, improving to below expected levels by the start of Year 1. The foundations of good personal skills are laid early on and serve the children well, for example, on transfer to Year 1. Children are happy and secure and sensitive to the feelings of others. They have the confidence to work independently. This is because of caring and supportive relationships and staff's understanding of how young children learn. Staff have created the right balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. Observations and assessments are used well to monitor progress but their use in planning children's next steps in learning sometimes lacks precision. Good use is made of a wide range of attractive and stimulating resources to promote children's development. The outdoor area is a lively learning environment, providing extensive opportunities for children to develop their physical skills and discover things for themselves. Staff work well as a team, committed to children's welfare and to ensuring safe working. The leading teacher is rigorous in evaluating provision and practice and has set appropriate priorities to improve on what has already been achieved.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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



**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

Almost half of the parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Of these, parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Hardly any concerns were raised and those few that were related to individual problems which have been taken up by the school. There was no pattern of dissatisfaction. The school's own recent survey of the views of parents and carers revealed extensive appreciation of the work of teachers and teaching assistants.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Francis of Assisi 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 122 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 263 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	65	42	34	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	88	72	31	25	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	68	56	47	39	5	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	74	61	43	35	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	84	69	34	28	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	73	60	41	34	3	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	77	63	43	35	1	1	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)	69	57	41	34	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	72	59	44	36	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	59	48	54	44	3	2	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	66	54	49	40	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	67	55	48	39	4	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	86	70	32	26	1	1	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

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](http://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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



11 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Francis of Assisi RC Primary School, Skelmersdale, WN8 9AZ

Thank you for the warm welcome we received when we visited your school. We enjoyed our time with you and were impressed by how hard you are working and your good behaviour. You helped us understand your school by talking openly about your work and your involvement in activities outside of lessons.

We judge that your school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. Standards are rising rapidly and the older pupils are making good progress in English and mathematics. The youngest children in the school also make good progress. The pace of learning dips in Years 1 and 2 to a satisfactory level. We have asked that pupils in these years are given more challenging work to do to accelerate their learning, that their progress is checked regularly and that they have more detailed guidance on how to improve.

You told us how much you enjoy school and that everyone gets on well together. You like your teachers and the teaching assistants because they are always there for you if you have a problem. We judge that your school is a very happy and lively place in which to learn and we saw many fun activities taking place. You all do a lot to help out in school and you show your concern for others through your fundraising events. You clearly have the personal qualities for success when you move on to the secondary school.

There are always things to do to make your school even better. We have asked that teachers encourage you to talk more about your work when answering questions and that everyone listens carefully when others are speaking. We have also asked that you are given more opportunities to assess for yourselves how well you are doing. You can help by continuing to work hard and support each other.

Our best wishes to you.

Yours sincerely

Mr Brian Dower

Lead Inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**