

St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School

Blakehall, Skelmersdale, Lancashire, WN8 9AZ

Inspection dates

21–22 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Teaching is good. As a result, pupils make good progress in lessons and over time.
- By the end of Year 6, attainment in reading and writing is broadly average and in mathematics it is below average but improving strongly. Pupils' progress from their various starting points is good in both English and mathematics as they move through the school.
- Carefully tailored support for pupils with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils enables these pupils to make good progress and to participate fully in activities.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils have very positive attitudes, enjoy coming to school and have very good relationships with each other and with adults. They feel safe in school.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, strongly supported by the assistant headteachers and governors, provides clear direction. Senior leaders have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school further. Actions taken to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards in English and mathematics have proved successful. Attendance and punctuality have also improved and attendance is now broadly average.
- The school works hard to ensure all pupils have an equal opportunity and works closely with parents to achieve this.
- Good promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables them to thrive in a very supportive learning community.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Work is not always precisely enough matched to pupils' needs and capabilities so that some pupils, particularly those of middle ability, do not always achieve their full potential, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils' writing is sometimes marred by inaccuracies in spelling or handwriting.
- Pupils' knowledge of letters and the sounds they represent (phonics) is not always effectively reinforced in guided reading sessions.
- Subject leaders are not yet fully involved in driving improvement in teaching and learning in their subjects and across the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 part-lessons and made short visits to other activities led by teachers and trained assistants. Of these observations three were carried out jointly with the headteacher and the assistant headteacher.
- Two groups of pupils met with inspectors and inspectors talked to a number of pupils in lessons and around the school. Discussions were also held with staff, including senior leaders. Meetings were conducted with the Chair and members of the Governing Body and with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 24 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own surveys of parents' views. They also took into account 34 responses to the staff questionnaire. They also held discussions with some parents.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work with senior leaders and read a range of documents. These included documents about the school's strategies to enable leaders to gain an accurate view of its performance, school improvement plans, pupils' current progress, policies and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Judith Tolley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Frances Farnorth	Additional Inspector
Pamela Davenport	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School is a larger than average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is low, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium funding (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is much higher than that usually found.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is higher than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children attend the Nursery on a part-time basis and the Reception classes on a full-time basis.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been changes in staff; several new teachers have joined the school.
- There is a breakfast club and after-school provision run by the governors.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently outstanding across the school and thereby raise standards and further increase pupils' rate of progress in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that pupils, particularly those of middle ability, achieve their full potential, particularly in mathematics
 - making sure pupils are always given the guidance they need to improve their work, particularly the accuracy of their spelling and their handwriting
 - making sure pupils are always given good guidance in applying their knowledge of letters and the sounds they represent in guided reading sessions, especially in Key Stage 1.
- Further develop the role of subject leaders by ensuring they are fully involved in improving the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects and across the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has an accurate understanding of the performance of the school and provides clear direction. As a result, there has been an improvement in the standards pupils reach and the progress they make in writing, mathematics and in reading. Regular monitoring procedures check pupils' progress, hold teachers to account and identify training needs. The school has introduced whole school policies for assessment and marking and this has been an important factor in securing recent improvements in teaching and learning.
- The school works hard to ensure good relations are fostered, discrimination is not tolerated and all pupils have an equal opportunity to achieve their potential. The school works closely with parents and pupils through its Nurture Group and the learning mentors to remove barriers to learning. Pupil premium funding is used to good effect to support disadvantaged pupils. As a result, gaps in the performance of disadvantaged pupils have closed in reading and writing and are closing rapidly in mathematics.
- Similarly, sports funding is used to good effect both to provide specialist coaching for pupils, increase the range of extra-curricular activities offered and to improve the quality of teaching in physical education across the school. This has also led to increased participation rates in extra-curricular and sports activities across the school.
- Subject leaders are involved in the school's self-evaluation and school improvement planning procedures but they are, as yet, at the early stages of developing their roles, for instance, in monitoring teaching and learning in their subjects, and in working alongside teachers to improve their practice.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, meets pupils' needs and aspirations well and prepares them well for citizenship in modern Britain. Pupils clearly enjoy the opportunities they have to apply their mathematics in real-life situations as well as to develop their skills as geographers, historians and scientists. The curriculum is enriched by themed activities such as 'Trashion Week', music, art, drama and French. Pupils also take part in regular trips outside school, including residential visits. Together and through the school's strong links with the high school, all these opportunities extend pupils' learning outside the classroom.
- Safeguarding procedures are robust and meet government requirements.
- The school works closely with parents and actively encourages them to be involved in the school's work and their children's learning through, for instance, workshops and other activities, such as the 'Inspire Day', 'Stay and Play' and 'Come and Read' events. Parents say they value these opportunities to see at first-hand how their children learn and the regular opportunities they have to talk to teachers and to be involved in their children's learning. The school works closely with families whose children do not attend regularly enough. As a result, persistent absence has decreased and attendance and punctuality have improved.
- The local authority provides light-touch support for this good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas which need to be improved. Its members regularly check the school's performance, including data that show pupils' standards of attainment and progress, and can talk confidently about how the school is narrowing gaps in the performance of different groups through successful intervention. They have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and the performance of staff, including how good performance is rewarded and any underperformance is tackled. The efficiency of spending is scrutinised, the effectiveness of the use of primary sports funding and of pupil premium funding, for example. They are actively involved in the life of the school and have strong, positive relationships with senior leaders. As a result, they are able to challenge and support the school and to hold leaders very effectively to account.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are courteous and polite. In lessons and around the school it is clear that they have very good relationships with each other and with adults in the school. Older pupils help younger pupils around the school and in the playground.
- Pupils take responsibility very seriously and are proud of their contribution to the school, for example as school councillors.
- Pupils come to lessons equipped and ready to work. They take pride in their school and take care of their

classrooms and playground. They work responsibly and with enthusiasm. On rare occasions, they lose concentration when activities are too easy or the pace of learning slows. They listen carefully to others and respect each other's views.

- Some pupils enter into a lively written dialogue with their teachers about how to improve their work; however this is not always the case.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say they feel safe and are confident that any poor behaviour is dealt with promptly and effectively. They are aware of the different forms of bullying, such as name-calling, homophobic bullying and cyber-bullying that can take place and know how to deal with it.
- Pupils know how to stay safe and have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They are enthusiastic about the wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, that are provided and which have a positive impact on their health and well-being.
- Pupils who may have challenging behaviour are supported very effectively through the Nurture Group and, as a result, they are able to learn effectively and make good progress alongside their classmates. Incidences of poor behaviour are very rare.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good across the school over time and leads to good progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together and ask pupils searching questions to see how much they have understood. Year 6 pupils made swift progress understanding how to use metaphors to describe discrimination as a result of clear demonstrations coupled with very effective questioning and went on confidently to discuss their ideas in groups and create their own. Very close monitoring of individual progress and further questioning by the teacher enabled them to refine their ideas successfully.
- Year 2 pupils made good progress in understanding and applying compass points in giving directions because activities, such as working with robots on a grid, excited their interest and were well matched to their needs. Their progress was monitored closely by the teacher and the level of challenge increased as they mastered each step. However, this is not always the case. On occasions, pupils find tasks too easy or too difficult because work is not always so well matched to their capabilities. In particular, the progress of pupils of middle ability is sometimes slowed because on occasions they find the tasks they are set easy and do not always have the opportunity to attempt more challenging work.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and there are examples of outstanding practice. Where this is the case information about pupils' progress determines next steps for individual pupils and this is taken into account in lesson planning. Pupils themselves maintain a dialogue with teachers about what they need to do next and are given extra challenges to complete. However, marking and advice is not always to this high standard. Pupils do not always receive the specific guidance they need to help them improve their work, particularly the accuracy of their spelling and their handwriting.
- Overall reading is taught effectively but the effectiveness of reading sessions when guided by an adult varies across the school. In some lessons, particularly in Key Stage 1, pupils have difficulty recognising words they have met in their phonics lessons and they are not always given the help they need to do this.
- Similarly in lessons where they practise their grammar, spelling and punctuation, the help they are given to understand the questions varies in quality so that some pupils struggle to understand what they have to do.
- The impact of teaching on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have frequent opportunities to reflect, to empathise with others and to increase their understanding of cultures and faiths other than their own.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The proportion of pupils making and exceeding the progress expected of them from their starting points are in line with national figures in reading and writing. In mathematics, the proportions making the progress expected of them are in line with national figures and the proportions doing better than this are increasing. Most children enter Year 1 with skills and knowledge below what is typical for their age. They continue to make good progress as they move through the school so that standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are broadly average.

- Over the last three years standards have risen in all subjects. Standards in mathematics have improved rapidly because of a whole-school focus on mathematics and are now close to those in reading and writing.
- Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards in reading, writing and mathematics have risen over the last year and the rate of pupils' progress has also increased so that the proportion of pupils making more than the progress expected of them has also increased. A higher proportion of pupils are now on track to make good progress in relation to their starting points.
- The most able pupils usually make good progress from their starting points in mathematics, reading and writing, with some reaching the highest levels by the end of Year 6. However, the school has not yet focused well enough on planning how to move pupils of middle ability on to extra challenges either of their skills or thinking when they find tasks set for them easy to cope with.
- Pupils write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences and use a good range of vocabulary and structures. However, inaccuracies in spelling and untidy handwriting sometimes mar their work. Results in the English Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation tests are significantly below the national average. This is because pupils sometimes have difficulty understanding what the questions are asking them to do.
- Progress in reading is good. Pupils are taught phonics (letters and the sounds they make) effectively and most are able to apply their knowledge in reading and writing.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same good progress as their peers as a result of the extra help they are given, both in class and in groups. Teaching assistants usually provide effective support, enabling these pupils to participate successfully in whole-class activities.
- The extra support, such as help in the classroom and support from teaching assistants that the school provides with the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, enables these pupils to reach their targets and to make the same good progress as their peers. Gaps between the attainment of these pupils in English and their classmates have closed and in mathematics they are closing rapidly. Over the last three years, pupils have moved from up to one year to half a term behind the rest in mathematics. In mathematics and writing, they reach at least the same standards as other pupils in the school and in reading they reach higher standards than other pupils and all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

The early years provision

is good

- Children make good progress and achieve well in the Nursery and Reception classes as a result of good teaching. Many children start in the early years provision with skills that are below what are typical for their age.
- Because of very well-established routines and very effective procedures for making sure their transition from home or pre-school settings is a smooth one, children settle in quickly, behave well and are kept safe. They clearly enjoy the activities planned for them, take turns and learn and play well together.
- Because staff take every opportunity to engage children in conversation, they make particularly good progress in developing their communication, language, personal and social skills. As a result, although most are still working towards a good level of development when they enter Year 1, they are confident learners, well prepared for the Key Stage 1 curriculum.
- Activities led by teachers and teaching assistants are well planned and designed to excite and interest children. For instance, children in the Reception class were absorbed in following clues to track the exploits of Goldilocks and the Three Bears around the school, discussing what they meant and noting down what they had found.
- The provision is well led and managed. Adults work together very effectively to ensure all children are able to make good progress. They monitor individual progress regularly and use this information effectively to plan next steps for children's learning. The steps they make are annotated in their learning journeys, so that parents can track the progress their child is making.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	134598
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	453624

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	262
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Reid
Headteacher	Terry Naylor
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2013
Telephone number	01695 558560
Fax number	01695 558560
Email address	bursar@sfoa.lancs.sch.uk

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