

St Francis' Catholic Primary School

Maryland Park, London, E15 1HB

Inspection dates 22–23 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not enough pupils make good progress, particularly in writing. Too few pupils reach the higher levels of attainment by the end of Year 2. Too few reach higher levels in writing by Year 6.
- The information that the teachers collect about what pupils know and can do is not always used effectively. Some work is too easy for pupils and too hard for others.
- In some lessons teachers do not check how well pupils are doing and adjust the activity to secure faster rates of learning and progress.
- Teaching is not consistently good enough for pupils to make good progress over time, especially in writing. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length or to use their writing skills in other subjects.
- Not all teachers mark pupils' work well enough so that pupils know how to improve. Marking in subjects other than English and mathematics does not help pupils to improve their writing skills further.
- Staff in the early years do not use information well enough to build on children's learning and to measure their progress from their starting points.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour has improved and is good. Pupils are polite and keen to do their best. They feel safe and are looked after well.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Music, in particular, provides pupils with memorable and enjoyable learning experiences.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the levels expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics is rising.
- Strong leadership from the headteacher has driven improvements and developed the skills of other leaders. This gives the school the capacity to keep improving.
- Leaders, including members of the governing body, have raised expectations and have eradicated weak teaching. They are determined to secure further improvements rapidly.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including information on pupils' current attainment and progress, improvement planning, the use of pupil premium and sport funding, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors visited 16 lessons, of which three were observed jointly with senior leaders. They looked at pupils' work, sometimes with senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed break times and lunch time, as well as attending an assembly.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils to talk to them about their work.
- Inspectors met senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- The team analysed the 52 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke briefly with some parents and carers who attended the African drumming assembly.
- Inspectors analysed 31 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Evidence from monitoring inspections in May and December of 2013 and in March and June of 2014 was also taken into account.

Inspection team

Jane Wotherspoon, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mary Hinds

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- When the school was inspected in January 2013, it was deemed to require special measures. Improvements were required to the quality of teaching and to leadership and management, including governance.
- There have been significant changes in staff since the inspection in 2013, including at senior level. The headteacher joined the school in September 2013 along with several new senior staff and teachers. Five teachers joined the school in September 2014.
- The school is larger than average. It provides part-time places for nursery-aged children who attend either five mornings or five afternoons.
- Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with those from Black African and Black Caribbean heritages together forming about half the school. About a third of pupils speak English as an additional language; this is higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average. The funding is used to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus and those that have statements of special educational needs are broadly average.
- In 2013, the school met the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure consistently good or better teaching across all year groups and subjects to improve rates of pupils' progress by:
 - planning activities that are not too easy or too hard for pupils of different abilities, and especially to challenge the more-able pupils
 - changing activities in response to pupils' understanding so that the learning is at a faster pace in lessons
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write at length and to use their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum
 - making sure that the good quality marking in some year groups happens in every class and all subjects so that pupils have detailed feedback about what they have done well and what they need to do next.
- Build on the recent improvements to provision in the early years by:
 - securing greater consistency in the way that records of children's individual learning are compiled and the information is used to ensure activities build on what children can do already
 - making sure that observations of children's learning are transferred into an accurate record of their starting points from which their progress can be measured.

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Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides good leadership. She has driven rapid improvements since joining the school a year ago. She has not held back from making difficult decisions and taking determined action to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, both the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are improving strongly. Both staff and governors share her high aspirations.
- Senior leaders check the impact of their work in improving the quality of teaching rigorously. Priorities for improvement are based on robust evidence and accurate information about pupils' performance. The recent sharp focus on reading has been highly successful.
- The headteacher has chosen new middle leaders carefully to bolster the effectiveness of leadership and management and to strengthen the school's capacity to improve. She has invested much time and expertise to strengthen their skills as leaders. They are fully responsible and held to account for their areas of responsibility including the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. For example, the new early years leader has already made significant changes to the provision in this key stage.
- All staff are held to account for the progress their pupils make, including support staff. They are set challenging targets based on individual professional needs and linked to the school's priorities. Progress towards their targets is reviewed regularly. Staff feel well supported and make full use of training and support to improve their practice further.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination effectively. Staff have created an ethos in which all pupils are valued and which encourages them to value the contributions of others. Leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively so that all pupils have access to a full range of subjects and activities.
- The subjects, themes and topics that pupils are taught are broad and relevant to their interests and needs. Pupils have many visits and visitors to enrich their learning. While teachers focus on creating opportunities for pupils to write in English and in other subjects, they do not ensure that pupils write for extended periods of time. Furthermore, they do not reinforce literacy skills through their marking of other subjects.
- Pupils have good opportunities to broaden their experience and understanding of the world and of life in modern Britain. Religious festivals are celebrated as is the diversity of cultures within the school. The Catholic ethos permeates school life. Pupils' personal development is promoted effectively through a range of opportunities to take on responsibilities and to work in the service of others.
- The primary sport funding is used well. Teachers have benefited from working alongside sports coaches to improve their teaching of physical education. Pupils are fitter and healthier. They say that they enjoy a much wider range of sporting activities.
- The local authority has provided valuable support for the school during its time in special measures. Officers have worked with leaders to strengthen the quality of teaching, including eliminating inadequate teaching. They have also supported governors through a programme of training tailored to their needs.
- The governance of the school:
 - Governors are as ambitious for the school as the headteacher. They are much more adept at holding senior leaders to account for the quality of their work than in the past. A range of training enables them to make better use of data. The appointment of new governors has strengthened the governing body and more members are taking an active role. Minutes from their meetings show that governors leave no stone unturned. They ask leaders challenging questions, and they have begun to gather their own independent information through a planned programme of visits linked to the school's priorities.
 - Governors have reviewed pupil premium spending and have a good understanding of the impact this has on the achievement of those pupils who are entitled to additional support.
 - Governors have supported leaders in taking tough decisions to improve the quality of teaching. They ensure that any increases in teachers' pay are linked to their performance. They set the headteacher's targets and review progress diligently.
 - Governors check that arrangements to keep pupils safe are up to date and meet current requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils appreciate the clear system for rewards and sanctions that are

implemented consistently by all staff. They like the recognition they get for trying their best and behaving well. Equally, they understand the consequences of any inappropriate behaviour. The number of incidents is small given the size of the school. The school's evaluation of the impact of the behaviour policy shows its positive effect in improving behaviour over time.

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and they rise to the teachers' high expectations. They enjoy school and are keen to learn; this has a positive impact on their achievement.
- Pupils are respectful and kind to others. They listen and cooperate well together, both inside and outside the classroom. They take pride in their work and, as a result, the presentation of their work has improved immeasurably.
- The school's values are promoted well through strong relationships between adults and pupils, and through assemblies. Pupils genuinely enjoy celebrating each other's achievements. For example, pupils listened intently to their friends playing the African drums and at the end of the performance applauded spontaneously.
- Pupils welcome the opportunities that they are provided to sing, to learn to play a musical instrument and to attend sports clubs. The older pupils appreciate the residential visits arranged in Year 6.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have confidence that adults will sort out their concerns. The learning mentor provides good support and advice for pupils. There are few incidents of bullying. Pupils have a good understanding of all types of bullying, including cyber bullying. They are able to demonstrate maturity in keeping themselves safe, including when using the internet. Attendance is above average and the learning mentors follow up lateness and absence rigorously.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good. The mixed picture of teaching quality over time is still present. However, the quality of teaching is improving and weaknesses are being eradicated. Importantly, teachers reflect on their practice and are keen to improve.
- Pockets of good teaching lead to good achievement; for example, the systematic and consistent approach to teaching reading has led to much success. As a result, pupils make good progress in reading. Senior leaders are working hard to achieve the same level of consistency in the teaching of writing and mathematics.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work shows mainly consistent approaches in marking. At its best, teachers' marking gives pupils clear pointers of what to do next. Time is allowed for pupils to follow up on comments and so consolidate their learning. Marking in other subjects is more variable. There are not enough examples of pupils writing at length. This leads to lost opportunities to maximise learning and for pupils to use their skills across subjects.
- By and large, activities engage pupils and make them keen to learn. The work is not always matched to the right levels. In particular, teachers do not always expect enough of the more-able pupils who are capable of achieving more. This is especially evident in subjects other than English and mathematics where often all pupils are given the same tasks.
- The teaching and learning policy sets out clear expectations of the kind of environment that teachers should create in their classroom to which all teachers adhere. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and relationships are positive so pupils want to do well for their teachers.
- Where teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress, teachers' expectations of what pupils will have learnt by the end of the lesson are patently clear. Activities are presented in an interesting way that enthuse pupils. Where teaching is not so strong, pupils' learning is not pushed on at a fast enough pace, especially for more-able pupils. This feature was apparent in lessons during the inspection and is evident in the pupils' written work.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children start the nursery class with skills, knowledge and understanding which are sometimes below what is typical for their age. Some children have poor language and communication skills and/or speak little English. In the past, children have not always achieved as well as they should in this key stage, but progress is now beginning to speed up.
- In 2014, attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 was broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Most pupils made the progress expected of them during Key Stage 2 except in writing.

Pupils' written work is improving as they learn to edit their work, but pupils do not write at length or in a sustained way in other subjects.

- In 2014, few pupils reached the higher levels in all subjects in Key Stage 1, and in writing in Key Stage 2. Most-able pupils are not always challenged enough in lessons to make the progress they should.
- Throughout all key stages, pupils' progress is beginning to speed up and, as a result, attainment is rising in most year groups. Better teaching means that there is now much less variability in the rates of progress than in the past.
- In 2013 those pupils eligible for the pupil premium made slower progress than all other pupils and the attainment gap in Year 6 was just over a year in mathematics, almost a term and a half in reading and a term in writing. In 2014, school information shows that this gap has almost closed. This is the result of targeted teaching to boost the achievement of these pupils.
- Likewise, there have been improvements in pupils' knowledge of phonics (the link between letters and the sounds they represent). The proportion meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 check is now in line with the national average.
- The school's systematic approach to teaching reading has improved pupils' reading skills significantly. Pupils read fluently and have a real love of reading. Attainment in reading is rising.
- Those pupils who are at risk of underachieving are identified quickly and have additional support to close any potential gaps in their learning. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils, including those that speak English as an additional language.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to all other pupils. They have targeted support to meet their needs from their teachers and from teaching assistants.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Provision in the early years continues to improve. Children choose from a wide range of interesting and varied activities. More everyday activities are provided now to support children's mathematical development. New climbing equipment provides a healthy challenge for children's risk taking and the development of physical skills.
- Children are confident to explore and investigate because they feel safe and are kept safe. They play cooperatively together and take turns well. Adults model expected behaviour and, as a result, children show respect and consideration for others.
- Small numbers in the nursery mean that children have plenty of space to explore their surroundings and learn about the world around them. A determined focus on developing children's communication and language skills helps those who are quiet or who speak little English to catch up quickly. Adults teach children new words and model how to speak clearly in sentences.
- Despite some weaknesses in the provision last year, attainment at the end of the Reception Year was much better in 2014 than in 2013. Although communication and language, reading and writing are weaker aspects of children's learning, the proportion meeting expected levels in these areas was higher than the national figures. This group of children was well prepared for Year 1.
- The new leader has made a positive start. She is well aware of aspects that require further improvement and has appropriate plans to develop provision further. The new system for making observations of children's learning is promising. Nevertheless, it is undermined by inconsistencies in the way that staff compile the records of children's learning so that they can use the information to build on what children can already do.
- The quality and frequency of observations of children's learning are better than in the past. However, the information is not used to create an accurate record of children's starting points in order to measure their progress over time.
- Links with parents are productive and staff seek to engage parents in their children's learning. For example, during inspection, a presentation of the work children have been doing linked to Black History Month was well attended by parents.

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	102770
Local authority	Newham
Inspection number	447357

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	450
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Ely
Headteacher	Natasha Scott
Date of previous school inspection	January 2013
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