

St Francis Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102770
Local Authority	Newham
Inspection number	335968
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Gordon Ewing

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	402
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	William Rugarabamu
Headteacher	Peter Coleman
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They visited 19 lessons, observing all 15 class teachers at least once. This involved a total of 50% of inspectors' time. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, members of staff and groups of pupils, and informal discussions were conducted with some parents. Inspectors observed the school's work, including the systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress, the work pupils had produced in their books and the quality of teachers' planning and marking. Inspectors took account of questionnaires completed by 152 parents and carers and 48 older pupils.

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

- the effectiveness of the teaching provided for all pupils across the school, especially in judging how the school ensures that pupils of all abilities are achieving as well as they can
- how well assessment is used to ensure that pupils' progress is tracked effectively
- the effectiveness of the school's work in promoting pupils' personal development and well-being
- how effectively the school has responded to the key issues for improvement identified at the last inspection in January 2007
- the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in embedding and driving ambition so that outcomes for pupils are secure and improving.

Information about the school

St Francis Catholic Primary School is larger-than-average. A majority of pupils are of African and Caribbean heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average; the largest group consists of pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage caters for children in two part-time Nursery classes and two full-time Reception classes. There are two classes in each of Years 1 to 6.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Francis Catholic Primary School provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. Notable strengths include good quality pastoral care and a curriculum that is increasingly vibrant and focused on developing the whole child. The school works hard to ensure that pupils, especially those regarded as vulnerable, settle quickly and enjoy school. As one girl reported, 'It is a really, really friendly school.'

Children enter the Nursery with skills close to those expected for their age, though they demonstrate weaker skills in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and move to Year 1 with above average standards. Subsequently, pupils go on to reach broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. This represents satisfactory achievement, taking into account their starting points. However, rates of progress vary considerably. Black African and Caribbean pupils make good progress in comparison to their peers nationally. However, patterns of boys' and girls' progress in English are inconsistent from one key stage to the next key stage. Furthermore, attainment in writing is below average and more able pupils are not making sufficient progress in English and science because teaching does not effectively meet their needs. These pupils reported confidently that they are challenged in mathematics because the teaching is well tailored to their abilities; they are set demanding targets regularly and teachers check on their progress systematically. Inspection evidence confirms their views.

Pupils are well cared for and establish good relationships quickly. Procedures to ensure pupils and staff are safe are good. Pupils' good attendance reflects their evident enthusiasm for learning. Both parents' and pupils' views, expressed through the questionnaires, indicate some concerns about behaviour. However, inspection evidence shows that pupils behave well in and around school and they are respectful and supportive of each other. Behaviour does deteriorate in lessons where teaching is less challenging or where teachers talk for too long. In these lessons pupils become passive and inattentive learners. The school has developed appropriate systems to track pupils' progress regularly but the analysis of their progress lacks rigour, for example in identifying why more able pupils are not reaching the higher levels of which they are capable.

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory. The school's self-evaluation is detailed and comprehensive, if somewhat overgenerous. The lack of precision in evaluating the impact of the school's work on outcomes for pupils impairs opportunities to tackle some key inconsistencies, for example in improving teaching which, currently, varies from inadequate to good. However, balancing these weaknesses

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with the school's other strengths in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the effective work of some subject leaders and in the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, the school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the end of the summer term 2010, raise standards in writing by:
 - monitoring pupils' writing on a three-week cycle against clear targets
 - developing speaking and listening skills as part of the 'Talk for Writing' initiative and improving the use of grammar through 'Grammar for Writing'
 - increasing opportunities for middle managers to monitor lessons and pupils' work with a focus on writing.
- By the end of the summer term 2010, improve teachers' marking, assessment and target setting by:
 - undertaking regular monitoring of marking and the scrutiny of pupils' work
 - providing training and support so that the school's existing marking and assessment policies are implemented consistently
 - tracking how pupils' learning targets are used to regularly celebrate learning as well as to set further challenges.
- By the end of the summer term 2010, ensure that lesson activities are consistently challenging for all pupils, and especially for the more able, by:
 - providing training to improve planning, questioning and the quality of teaching so that learning is more challenging and tuned to individual need
 - allocating time for subject leaders to provide guidance and support so that more able pupils achieve the levels of which they are capable
 - regularly seeking the views of more able pupils to gauge the impact of the above actions.

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

Pupils make more consistent progress in mathematics and reading than in writing because effective strategies, including well-focused target setting and structured guided reading, ensure that standards are improving. Standards in writing remain below average, especially for younger boys. The school acknowledges that recent intensive strategies to improve reading have reduced the focus on improving writing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Where activities are adapted to meet their needs and where teaching assistants ably prompt, guide and question pupils, they make more consistent progress. In a good mathematics lesson, pupils were actively involved in a range of tasks involving volume, mass, capacity and linear measurements. They worked collaboratively, exercised sensible choices and demonstrated good skills in converting units of measurement, for example, 320 g to

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0.32 kg. One teaching assistant worked closely with an individual pupil observing and recording small steps in learning and making notes for future activities. Across the class there were high levels of engagement because the activities were challenging and well paced. In some lessons, teaching assistants are ineffective because they are not given sufficient opportunity or information to support individual pupils' learning effectively.

The school is a cohesive and harmonious community. Pupils relate well to each other, regardless of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and racist incidents are extremely rare. They have a good awareness of how to lead a healthy lifestyle, for example in their knowledge of what constitutes a healthy packed lunch. Pupils contribute well to the school community and beyond through such activities as becoming peer mediators, in musical performances in the wider community and in raising funds for the Haiti earthquake appeal. School councillors are enthusiastic and keen to play an even greater role in shaping the future of the school. Pupils' satisfactory achievement in literacy, numeracy and in information and communication technology, combined with their good attendance and positive attitudes to learning, prepare them adequately for life's future challenges.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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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How effective is the provision?

The quality of pupils' learning is directly linked to the quality of teaching. Where teaching is consistently good, pupils are engaged and active learners. In one such lesson the teacher developed pupils' understanding of how to write the story of Red Riding Hood for different audiences; this included higher-order questions to challenge pupils' thinking and to focus their writing. Consequently, their story beginnings were colourful, well constructed and effectively tuned to the specific target audience. A common feature of weaker teaching was that work was not matched well enough to pupils' needs. In particular, both more able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities were presented with identical tasks. This made it more difficult for teaching assistants to adapt the activities, so some pupils struggled to complete tasks. More able pupils finished work quickly and had to wait for others to catch up. At times, some teachers' marking is of a good quality offering pupils praise and guidance on how to improve their work. Overall, however, marking is of variable quality and when individual targets are set they are not consistently checked or extended when pupils demonstrate that these have been achieved. Teachers' unimaginative use of interactive whiteboards limits opportunities for pupils to respond to stimulating lesson activities or to develop higher order thinking skills.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and, at times, vibrant. Provision for pupils' personal development is good and plays a key part in developing good relationships and positive attitudes. The introduction of themed activities such as International Week and World Book Day bring greater life and meaning to pupils' experiences. The school's extra-curricular provision is a particular strength. There is a good range of very well attended clubs, from sports such as karate and basketball to the arts, including origami, drama and the Wider Opportunities music scheme. Links with sports organisations, secondary schools and specialist providers ensure that pupils develop their own interests and skills beyond the classroom. Pupils take part in a wide range of other educational visits to museums, theatres, exhibitions and a centre for outdoor education.

Pastoral care is strong and support to vulnerable pupils is sensitive and effective. The school works tirelessly to establish links with families and is ably assisted by the family support worker. Pupils who need strategies to improve behaviour are well supported by the learning mentor in the Reflection Room, resulting in improved attitudes, confidence and achievement.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team is well respected by parents and pupils alike. As one parent commented, 'The headteacher is very effective and caring and the staff are very committed to pupils.' Governors have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses but are still developing the strategies required to systematically evaluate the school's work. They take effective steps to ensure that pupils and staff are safe. Although the school has a comprehensive range of data to track pupils' performance, this is not used to best effect in evaluating how well individual pupils are achieving. Consequently, the school's view of standards and the progress that pupils make is sometimes inaccurate. While pupils are set appropriate targets, strategies to ensure that these targets are met are not robust enough to ensure good progress. The school has not consistently ensured that the provision for particular groups of pupils, such as more able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, consistently meets their specific needs. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory; the good outcomes for pupils' personal development are not equalled by similar outcomes in their achievement.

Parents and carers, while supportive of the school, clearly feel that the school needs to do more in responding to their suggestions and concerns. The school has established a good range of effective partnerships to seek professional advice for specific pupils, especially those considered vulnerable.

The school is active in building a cohesive community beyond the confines of the school through such initiatives as the recently established links with other schools in the United Kingdom and Ghana. Leaders are aware that there is more to do to evaluate the impact of the school's growing participation in activities that engage global communities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children learn and develop well in relation to their starting points. They make good progress towards the early learning goals so that, by the time they leave the Reception class, most children achieve higher than expected levels in all areas. They develop good personal attitudes that enable them to exercise independence and respect for one another. Children relish opportunities to be active, for example in outside play where they use a range of equipment safely and co-operatively.

Teaching is good in both the Nursery and Reception. Observation and assessment are used well to plan activities to meet the needs of different groups and to keep track of their progress. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities, which foster purposeful play and independence. All staff pay good attention to welfare, health and safety. Learning environments are welcoming and organised to engage and motivate learners. Children's work, especially in the Nursery, is displayed attractively. However, some resources are a bit tired and shabby, especially outside. The use of outside areas has improved since the last inspection but more needs to be done to ensure that opportunities for learning outside embrace all aspects of the early learning goals.

Most areas of weakness have been addressed since the last inspection, especially in the quality of teaching, but more needs to be done to improve the quality of baseline testing and the analysis of children's attainment on entry. The temporary arrangements, in the absence of a permanent leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage, are satisfactory.

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	3

Views of parents and carers

Approximately one quarter of parents and carers returned completed questionnaires. The responses of the very large majority were positive about their child's overall experience at school. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about the school's management of misbehaviour and the leadership's response to parents and carers' suggestions and concerns. With regard to the former, inspection evidence showed that pupils reported convincingly that most misbehaviour was dealt with

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effectively and swiftly. Behaviour in lessons and around the school was judged as good, though when teaching was insufficiently stimulating, pupils sometimes became inattentive and engaged in low-level disruption. Regarding the latter, in discussions with parents at the start and the end of the day, inspectors found similarly mixed opinions about the school's response to their views. Written comments pointed out that the school often gave too little notice of important events. Inspectors agree that this is an area where communication could be improved.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Francis Catholic 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 152 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 402 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	43	73	48	11	7	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	72	47	73	48	5	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	65	43	73	48	10	7	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	56	37	81	53	9	6	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	61	41	77	51	6	4	3	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	36	83	55	10	7	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	39	85	56	5	3	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	45	30	76	50	13	9	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	24	90	59	15	10	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	29	83	55	15	10	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	29	85	56	19	13	7	5
The school is led and managed effectively	51	34	79	52	9	6	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	41	74	49	8	5	4	3

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

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

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

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

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

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

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

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



8 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Francis Catholic Primary School, Stratford, E15 1HB

The whole inspection team enjoyed its recent visit to your school to see you at work. You made us feel very welcome and most of you spoke positively about your school life. This letter sets out some of the things we found.

You reported that you enjoy school and that you learn a lot while you are there. Most of your parents and carers are happy with the school, too. In particular, we liked these things about your school:

- you behave well, especially when lessons are interesting, and get on well together as a whole-school community
- your attendance is really good. Well done
- most of you feel safe and secure and thoroughly enjoy lessons
- the staff work hard to ensure that you develop as well-rounded individuals and develop good attitudes to learning
- you are keen to improve your school and you play your part well by taking on responsibilities such as being a school councillor, peer mediator or playground buddy
- the school offers you lots of after-school clubs that improve your physical and personal development.

Everyone at St Francis Catholic Primary wants the school to be even better and to achieve this we have asked the staff and governors to:

- help those of you who find learning easy to do even better, especially in English, mathematics and science
- improve standards of writing to those levels you achieve in mathematics and reading
- improve teachers' marking, target setting and advice to you so that you are more confident in knowing what you have to do to improve your work and learning.

We wish you all every success in your future education and life.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Ewing

Lead Inspector

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