



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
St Francis RC Primary School

Education Bradford

Dates of inspection: 28-29 January 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

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Basic information about the school

Name of school:	St Francis RC Primary School
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Headteacher:	Mr P Gibbons
Address of school:	Myers Lane Bradford West Yorkshire BD2 4ES
Telephone:	01274 638520
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, address as above
Chair of governors:	Mr P Shackleton
Local education authority area:	Bradford
Unique reference number:	107332
Name of reporting inspector:	Mr J Richardson HMI
Dates of inspection:	28-29 January 2004

Introduction

1. St Francis RC Primary School is situated in Bradford. It is much bigger than average, having 439 pupils on roll. At 1.6 per cent, the proportion of the pupils whose first language is not English is slightly higher than the national average. Around 15 per cent of the pupils have designated special educational needs, including four who have a Statement of Special Educational Need. Just under seven per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below average.
2. The school was inspected in March 2002. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.
3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of March 2002. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on four occasions to monitor the progress being made.
4. In January 2004, two HMI inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of March 2002.

Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:
 - overall, the pupils' standards of attainment are at or just below national expectations. Standards are rising and these gains are reflected in the work of most classes. Nonetheless, across the school there remains scope for further improvement in the standards the pupils achieve;
 - most of the pupils make good progress, including the higher-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Most of the pupils know what they are expected to learn and how this builds on previous work. The quality of learning was never less than satisfactory and was good or better in around two thirds of the lessons;
 - the pupils' attitudes and behaviour were generally good in lessons. Their behaviour around the site was never less than satisfactory and was managed effectively by the staff;
 - the level of attendance, at 94.6 per cent for the last school year, is average;
 - provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school successfully translates Catholic teaching and practice into a framework which guides every area of its life;

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- revisions to planning and guidance ensure that the school's curriculum is firmly based on national requirements. Thorough implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy has underpinned the rise in standards. Provision for the pupils who have special educational needs is good, with arrangements that meet the requirements of the national Code of Practice. There is good provision in the Foundation Stage;
 - there are good systems for assessing the pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science, for tracking their progress and for setting individual pupil targets. These systems are an integral part of teaching and learning;
 - the quality of teaching has improved significantly since the school's inspection in March 2002. It was at least satisfactory, and good or better in two thirds of the lessons. Lessons are well planned, prepared and organised, with appropriately challenging learning objectives that are shared with the pupils and based on the effective use of assessment information;
 - changes in the school's leadership have been managed well. The substantive headteacher provides good leadership, with clear and firm educational direction that has united the staff in a commitment to raising standards through improving the quality of learning. He has established robust systems and procedures for bringing about the necessary improvements, and strategic planning is based on a clear vision for the school;
 - the deputy headteacher has played a key role in securing improvements, particularly in Key Stage 1, and she has provided good leadership in developing the curriculum and the school's system for assessment. The co-ordinators of the core subjects are clear about their roles and make a generally effective contribution towards improving provision; however, the co-ordination of the foundation subjects is at an earlier stage of development;
 - the governors are active in the school and fulfil their responsibility to oversee its performance;
 - there are secure systems for monitoring the quality of teaching, scrutinising the pupils' work, analysing test data and checking the teachers' planning. Information from these and other activities is incorporated into a well-planned annual school self-review that involves the governing body and leads to the formulation of the school improvement plan, which sets well-judged priorities for future work;
 - in the light of improvements to standards, to the quality of teaching and to leadership and management, the school now provides satisfactory value for money;
 - Education Bradford has provided good support in many areas. Advice to the management and training, together with the work of the literacy and numeracy consultants, have contributed to improvements. The school has received well-considered support for developing provision for the pupils who have special
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educational needs and has benefited from the assistance of leading teachers and advanced skills teachers.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- continue to raise standards;
- further develop the role of the co-ordinators.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. Overall, the pupils' standards of attainment are at or just below national expectations. Standards are rising and these gains are reflected in the work of most classes. Nonetheless, across the school there remains scope for further improvement in the standards the pupils achieve.

8. The proportion of the pupils who achieved the expected Level 2 or above in the 2003 Key Stage 1 statutory tests was higher in all the core subjects than in 2002. In reading, the proportion rose from 84 to 95 per cent, in writing from 86 to 89 per cent and in mathematics from 89 to 95 per cent. The results for reading are in the upper quarter of all schools and in the upper 40 per cent of those from similar schools. The results for writing are in the upper 40 per cent of all schools and are broadly in line with those of similar schools. Those for mathematics are broadly in line with those from all schools but in the lowest 40 per cent of those from similar schools. These results represent an improvement in the pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1.

9. The picture at the end of Key Stage 2 is similarly positive. The proportion of the pupils who achieved the expected Level 4 or above in the 2003 Key Stage 2 statutory tests was higher in all the core subjects than in 2002. In English, the proportion climbed from 63 to 68 per cent, in mathematics from 61 to 66 per cent and in science from 74 to 86 per cent. These results are in the lowest 40 per cent of all schools and the lowest quarter of similar schools.

10. Progress for the pupils in the Foundation Stage is good and most of the pupils achieve the standard expected by the end of the reception year, with the higher-attaining pupils often exceeding this level. The higher-attaining pupils write simple sentences independently using correct punctuation.

11. In Key Stages 1 and 2 most of the pupils make good progress, including the higher-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. These pupils know what they are expected to learn and how this builds on previous work. The quality of learning was never less than satisfactory and was good or better in around two thirds of the lessons.

12. The pupils' skills in speaking and listening have improved and are generally in line with the expectations for their age. Most pupils listen carefully to instructions and explanations, rarely needing them repeated. Many of the pupils listen well to each other, particularly when they are asked to discuss in pairs. The pupils at the end of both key stages are confident to address the class and to justify their answers by reference to a text or, in mathematics, to their reasoning.

13. By Year 2, the pupils have a secure knowledge of phonics, underpinning their sound standards in reading and spelling. The majority of the pupils read a range of books of appropriate difficulty with confidence. They recognise enough words on sight to read at a reasonable speed and with understanding, and they use relevant strategies to read unknown words. They explain the plot of a story and predict what is likely to happen. By Year 6, the pupils read confidently and fluently, enlivening speech to highlight particular characters. They analyse texts and recognise different stylistic features.

14. Much work has gone into improving the pupils' writing and this is beginning to have an impact. By Year 2, many of the pupils write in correctly punctuated sentences, sequencing ideas and spelling many of the common words correctly. Their handwriting is legible, with generally consistent use of lower case letters, but it varies in size. By Year 6, the pupils write at length and for a variety of purposes using handwriting that is generally well formed. Their spelling is sound overall and punctuation is reasonably accurate, including the use of speech marks and paragraphs.

15. In mathematics, by the end of Year 2 most of the pupils achieve the standards expected for their age, although some are working below this level. They use a range of strategies for mental calculation, including subtracting 11 by subtracting 10 and then adjusting. They choose and use appropriate operations and ways of calculation to solve problems involving money. The majority of the pupils in Year 6 achieve standards in line with those expected for their age. They find simple percentages of whole numbers using a range of mental strategies and use all four operations to solve problems set out in words. They use calculators efficiently, estimating their answers beforehand. They have a quick recall of number facts and use these and place value to derive new facts.

16. In science, the pupils cover an appropriate range of topics and many reach the standards expected for their age. At the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils describe what they have done and found clearly using, for example, diagrams, charts and writing. In a Year 2 science lesson, pupils understood the idea of a fair test and identified the variables in an experiment. There is a similar picture in Key Stage 2. In a Year 3 science lesson, for instance, pupils explained how shadows are made and observed and recorded how their shadows changed during the day, making and testing predictions.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were generally good in lessons. Their behaviour around the site was never less than satisfactory and was managed effectively by the staff. Many of the pupils in Key Stage 2 have very good attitudes to their learning. They understand their teachers' routines and expectations; in many classes, issues of behaviour do not arise, because the pupils know exactly how they should behave. They organise themselves well and are supportive of each other.

18. In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 there was a small group of pupils who found it difficult to behave appropriately. Their disruptive behaviour absorbed too much of the teachers' time and, on occasions, slowed the pace of learning. The school has worked hard to identify strategies to manage this behaviour, using a consultant from Education Bradford to observe the pupils and agree an approach which is matched to the individual pupil's needs.

19. The level of attendance, at 94.6 per cent for the last school year, is average.

20. Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school successfully translates Catholic teaching and practice into a framework which guides every area of its life. Policies and systems refer to Christian teaching in seeking to value and support each individual in the school. Daily worship and prayers encourage the pupils to reflect on how they treat each other and on their responsibility to others.

21. The pupils are introduced to the beliefs and values of other religions. During class worship, the pupils were absorbed by the teacher's description of a Muslim festival and fascinated to see a prayer mat. Displays, both in the classrooms and the general areas, celebrate the school's Catholic life and values.

22. The positive relationships between the staff and the pupils make an important contribution to building an ethos which promotes the pupils' self-esteem and confidence. The pupils in a Year 5 class, for example, were able to offer their ideas and build on mistakes because the teacher had established a climate of trust.

23. The learning mentor has provided good support for the pupils. She has worked with them on raising money for charity and provided opportunities for them to take on responsibilities through a 'job club'. The learning mentor has developed after-school clubs, as well as welcoming parents to the school. These activities have contributed to the increasingly rich and varied experiences being provided for the pupils. A programme of visits to historical buildings and theatres has also valuably extended provision.

The quality of education

24. Revisions to planning and guidance ensure that the school's curriculum is firmly based on national requirements. An overview of the curriculum is complemented by medium-term subject plans and by detailed weekly programmes of work for each class. Shared planning and common formats provide consistency across the school. Thorough implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy has underpinned the rise in standards.

25. Work in information and communication technology (ICT) has developed quickly under the leadership of the recently appointed co-ordinator. The ICT suite is fully timetabled and the work is matched well to the pupils' levels of skill. The use of ICT across the curriculum is improving as teachers acquire knowledge of the software, including internet resources, that might enhance the pupils' learning. There are sound plans for further developments.

26. The provision for the pupils in the Foundation Stage is good and is managed well by the co-ordinator. The teachers in the Foundation Stage unit plan together and activities are generally accurately matched to the pupils' developing needs. Grouping arrangements provide appropriate challenge for the higher-attaining pupils while retaining sufficient flexibility. The environment in the unit is stimulating and supports learning and personal development. There is an appropriate balance of adult-led activities and those requiring the pupils to make choices. There are good arrangements for the pupils' transition to Key Stage 1.

27. The provision and co-ordination for the pupils who have special educational needs are good, with procedures that meet the national Code of Practice. Where appropriate, the pupils follow individual education plans that include practical and achievable targets. There are regular reviews of progress and the teachers plan carefully to meet these pupils' needs. This planning is shared with classroom assistants, who give good support to the pupils in class.

28. There are good systems for assessing the pupils' attainment in the core subjects, for tracking their progress and for setting individual targets, which are an integral part of teaching and are shown clearly in the marking in most lessons. Targets for English and mathematics are prominently displayed in most classrooms and some are located in the pupils' books. Reference is sometimes made to targets when work is marked. The system provides a reliable basis from which to set whole-school targets.

29. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the school's inspection in March 2002. It was at least satisfactory, and good or better in two thirds of the lessons. Lessons are well planned, prepared and organised, with appropriately challenging learning objectives that are shared with the pupils and based on the effective use of assessment information. Tasks are accurately matched to most of the pupils' different learning needs. Many of the teachers use a wide variety of effective strategies to promote speaking and listening, including paired discussion. A brisk pace is maintained through the use of timescales and parameters for follow-up tasks, and attractive and stimulating displays in many of the classrooms are used effectively to reinforce the pupils' learning. The management of the pupils' behaviour is unobtrusive and based on a culture of praise and reward, underpinned by good relationships. The additional adults in many of the classrooms make a good contribution towards the pupils' learning and are deployed well. Information and communication technology is used effectively in some lessons.

30. The best lessons also involve: teachers providing good support for the pupils to enable them to achieve high standards and continually harrising and cajoling the pupils to do their best; strategies that encourage the pupils to become more independent; a strong emphasis on the development of the pupils' literacy skills; and the very effective use of good work done by some pupils to show the rest of the class what is expected and how they could improve their work.

Leadership and management

31. Changes in the school's leadership have been managed well. The substantive headteacher provides effective leadership, with explicit and firm educational direction that has united the staff in a commitment to raising standards through improving the quality of

learning. He has established robust systems and procedures for bringing about the necessary improvements, and strategic planning is based on a clear vision for the school.

32. The deputy headteacher has played a key role in securing improvements, particularly in Key Stage 1, and she has provided good leadership in developing the curriculum and the school's system for assessment. The co-ordinators of the core subjects are clear about their roles and make a generally effective contribution towards improving provision. They provide useful models for others to follow, as different subjects become the focus of development, but the co-ordination of the foundation subjects is at an earlier stage of development.

33. The governors are active in the school and fulfil their responsibility to oversee its performance, for instance through the action plan committee that meets regularly to monitor the progress that the school is making.

34. Staff in their different capacities have worked hard to improve the school. Teamwork is evident in the significant contributions made by classroom assistants and in the consistency of approach from class to class. Those recently appointed have been enabled to play their part.

35. There are secure systems for monitoring the quality of teaching, scrutinising the pupils' work, analysing test data and checking the teachers' planning. Information from these and other activities is incorporated into a well-planned annual school self-review that involves the governing body and leads to the formulation of the school improvement plan, which sets well-judged priorities for future work.

36. In the light of improvements to standards, to the quality of teaching and to leadership and management, the school now provides satisfactory value for money.

37. Education Bradford has provided good support in many areas. Advice to the management and training, together with the work of the literacy and numeracy consultants have contributed to improvements. The school has received well-considered support for developing provision for the pupils who have special educational needs and has benefited from the assistance of leading teachers and advanced skills teachers.

Implementation of the action plan

38. The inspection report of March 2002 required the school to address six key issues. These principally related to: raising standards; improving leadership and management; improving the quality of teaching; providing a curriculum according to national requirements; developing an effective assessment system; and providing equal opportunities for all of the pupils to learn. Overall, good progress has been made and most tasks have been completed.

39. The school uses the results of its generally thorough analysis of information about the pupils' achievements in national test and examinations to direct extra resources to those groups of the pupils who have underachieved. Recent results are an indicator of a rising trend of improvement, but there is still some way to go.

40. Changes in the leadership of the school and subsequent restructuring of the senior management team, underpinned by well-considered job descriptions and systems of accountability, have been supported by effective training from Education Bradford. The co-ordinators of the core subjects now play a key role in leading improvements. The co-ordination of the foundation subjects is, however, not similarly developed.

41. Training for teachers has been well focused on areas of weakness and, with support from Education Bradford, a good programme has been implemented for monitoring classroom practice and providing advice.

42. The school's curriculum is now based on national requirements and is closely monitored.

43. The school has developed a good system for collecting, analysing and monitoring information about the pupils' attainment. The system enables the school to track the pupils' progress and it forms a secure base from which to set appropriately challenging targets.

44. Provision for those pupils who have special educational needs is now good and follows the national Code of Practice. They are enabled to access the curriculum effectively and their progress is closely monitored.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in March 2002. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) in September 2002, and in January, May and October 2003 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of March 2002.

In January 2004, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Twenty one lessons or parts of lessons, and two registration sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunch times and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, the chair of governors and a representative from Education Bradford, and informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of March 2002 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

Notes

