

St Francis Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107332
Local Authority	Bradford
Inspection number	324563
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Fiona Gowers

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	293
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Friis
Headteacher	Mr D Copley
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Myers Lane Bradford West Yorkshire BD2 4ES
Telephone number	01274 638520
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average Catholic primary school serves a socially and economically mixed area. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is well below average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups has increased since the last inspection, but remains below the national average. Very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. A broadly average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of a Nursery and Reception class based in a recently renovated unit. The current headteacher joined the school in January 2009.

The school has received the Activemark and Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with the section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

The recently appointed headteacher has quickly gained the confidence of staff, pupils and parents and has correctly identified areas of weakness in the school. However, the school is faced with a history of underachievement. Recent actions taken to address weaknesses have not yet had time to become embedded, due to the short length of time the headteacher has been in post.

Pupils get off to an exceptionally strong start to their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make very rapid progress in the highly stimulating learning environment and a significant proportion of pupils attain well above the expected level by the time they join Year 1. However, this rapid rate of progress is not sustained further up the school. Rates of progress are inconsistent and the pace of learning slows significantly. As a result, achievement is inadequate in Key Stages 1 and 2 for all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Although standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average, they are not high enough given the pupils' well above average starting points in Year 1. In particular, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels at the end of Year 6 is below average, especially in mathematics and science.

Teaching is inadequate overall because the quality varies so significantly across the school. This leads to the uneven and insufficient progress pupils make in the different key stages, year groups and subjects. In too many lessons activities are not adapted to meet the range of pupils' needs. This is because assessment information is often inaccurate. Consequently, assessment information is not used effectively to plan work which builds on what pupils already know or to provide them with enough challenge to improve their work and to make the progress they should. In addition, planning lacks rigour and often focuses on the activities the pupils will undertake, rather than on what they will learn. There are some examples of good teaching. Where this occurs, pupils make better progress because they work at an appropriate level of challenge and at a much faster pace. However, typically, teaching does not provide enough challenge for more able pupils, in particular. The curriculum is satisfactory and has strengths in the way it provides for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy a variety of enrichment activities, such as entering and succeeding in competitions with the choir.

The school provides a caring environment which promotes pupils' well-being. Relationships are positive and pupils say that they would find someone to help with a problem. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure. This helps them to develop positive personal and social skills and promotes good behaviour. Pupils enjoy their time at school and attendance levels are broadly average. They confidently explain how to keep safe, fit and healthy. Pupils are encouraged through the school council to be proactive in making a positive contribution within school and in the local community. For example, they successfully lobbied the local council to address problems of dog fouling in the area. Opportunities to work with others in a group and average basic skills mean that pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

Issues identified in the previous inspection report have not been addressed successfully and this has led to significantly declining rates of progress. Governance, whilst supportive, lacks rigour and has failed to hold the school to account. As a result of these weaknesses, the quality of leadership and management and the extent to which governors discharge their responsibilities are inadequate. Consequently, the school is unable at this stage to demonstrate that it has the capacity to secure the necessary improvements. It provides inadequate value for money. School leadership has now identified some appropriate priorities for improvement. However, the criteria by which these improvements can be measured are not clear enough. This makes it very difficult for school leaders, staff and governors to monitor the success of school initiatives, to ensure they are addressing areas of weakness and to bring about the required improvements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Early Years Foundation Stage is a model of excellent learning and personal development for children. When they join the Nursery, children's skills are generally in line with those typical for their age. Parents confirm that their children settle extremely quickly into the Nursery, because of the very positive relationships and excellent welfare arrangements. This very strong partnership with parents is maintained through 'Exploring Together Workshops', when parents enjoy the opportunity to come into school on one Saturday each term and work alongside their children and school staff. Children feel extremely safe and secure and develop a real thirst for learning. They grow significantly in confidence and are very proud to share their accomplishments; whether it is explaining how to build a den, how to solve a problem, or how to measure each others' head circumference and compare results! Staff have very high expectations. Very regular and reliable assessments ensure that learning activities continue to stretch and challenge children. Staff intervene skilfully as children learn, providing encouragement and really getting them thinking. In this extremely stimulating environment children make very rapid progress and by the time children join Year 1, their skills are often well above those expected for their age. Leadership is exceptionally strong and the highly committed staff team continually focus on how they can improve the provision further, encouraging children to be independent learners and to do as well as they possibly can.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement in Key Stages 1 and 2, particularly of the more able pupils.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good and has the necessary rigour, pace and challenge in all classes.
- Improve the accuracy of assessments and use assessment information systematically to build on what pupils already know and to show pupils clearly how they can improve their work further.
- Ensure that leaders take swift and effective action to address the weaknesses and to improve the school's performance, and that they plan and measure the impact of their actions against clear criteria.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The achievement of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is inadequate in Key Stages 1 and 2. Standards are not high enough given that by the end of the

Early Years Foundation Stage many pupils achieve well beyond the goals for learning expected of children of this age. Standards at the end of Year 2 are generally broadly average and sometimes slightly above average. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have declined significantly since the last inspection. At the end of Year 6, standards are generally broadly average, although they dropped to below average in 2008. In particular, there is significant underachievement amongst more able pupils. This is because teachers' expectations are often too low. Targets for the end of Key Stage 2 are not demanding enough, given pupils' starting points, and there is a lack of challenge in many classes. Work in pupils' books indicates many pupils are not making enough progress. Work is not targeted at an appropriate level because of unreliable assessments. Too often pupils of all ability groups are provided with work that is too easy and with the same level of challenge, regardless of ability and need.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. This was exemplified in a whole-school assembly where the headteacher engaged with all pupils on the topic of taking responsibility for your actions and being able to say sorry. Other faiths are celebrated frequently through themed days. Pupils are thoughtful and reflective and say the 'statements to live by' help them make good choices. Most pupils behave well, although a small minority become a little restless in lessons that are less effective. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They respond well to the opportunity to fund-raise for an African school or for Red Nose Day, or to develop their negotiating skills through school council activities and 'applying' for jobs in school. Levels of attendance are broadly average and any concerns are swiftly picked up and monitored. The curriculum and enrichment activities, such as working with specialist sports coaches, help pupils develop a good understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles. Most pupils are prepared adequately for their future lives through competent literacy and numeracy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Too much teaching is inadequate and this leads to pupils making insufficient progress in their learning. Where teaching has weaknesses or is inadequate, the pace of learning is very slow because work is not pitched at the right level of challenge to get the best from all pupils. As a result, many pupils do not learn enough. Assessment information is not accurate or used to ensure pupils' skills are built upon as they move from year to year. This has led to a significant legacy of underachievement. In too many lessons, activities are not adapted to meet the range of pupils' needs and low expectations lead to a lack of challenge for the more able pupils. Work set is often too easy or all pupils are given the same piece of work to complete. Although some teaching is more effective, overall the quality of teaching is not strong enough to overcome this legacy. The quality of marking is inconsistent and lacks rigour. As a result, many pupils do not know how well they are doing or how they can improve their work further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and statutory requirements are met. The school is working hard to improve the curriculum further. For example, links between subjects are emerging to add relevance to pupils' learning. In addition, the school is seeking specialist consultant support to develop and apply a consistent calculations policy, in order to raise standards in mathematics. However, such developments have yet to improve pupils' achievement. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is a strength and supports good levels of personal development and well-being. The curriculum is enriched by themed weeks, such as 'Anti-bullying Week' and healthy eating initiatives. Pupils enjoy attending after-school clubs and activities, for example, where sports specialists from other schools run dance or boxercise sessions, as well as joining the choir and learning to play an instrument such as the ukulele. Additional programmes to support pupils with English as an additional language, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are in place. However, arrangements for providing additional support to underachieving pupils have yet to show impact.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Pastoral care is given a high priority but overall, the care, guidance and support provided are inadequate because academic guidance is weak and inconsistent. Many pupils are not clear about how well they are doing and are not given enough guidance on how they can improve further. However, the school recognises that there needs to be a much greater emphasis upon setting challenging targets in a more systematic and consistent way to promote significantly higher levels of attainment. A new system has been introduced whereby more vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are identified early so that plans can be put in place to meet their particular needs. Parents appreciate the strong pastoral support provided and feel their children are well looked after. A group of older pupils agreed that they 'feel very comfortable' with staff in school and that they would be able 'to tell them anything'. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Improvement since the previous inspection has been inadequate. Standards have fallen, targets have not been challenging enough, levels of achievement have been unsatisfactory and the quality of teaching and learning has declined. Consequently, governance and the overall quality of leadership and management are inadequate and the school is unable to demonstrate sufficient capacity to improve. While the governors are very supportive of the school, they recognise that they have not held the school to account for the inadequate progress since the previous inspection. They have not always had up-to-date information on which to formulate the questions in order to challenge the school. However, they are currently engaged on further training to improve their effectiveness as a 'critical friend' in the school improvement process. The recently appointed headteacher has swiftly identified weaknesses in teaching and learning. As a result, the staff team and governors have a better awareness of the need to raise standards and improve provision. Staff members ensure that all pupils, including vulnerable groups, have equal opportunities to enjoy and contribute to school life. Community cohesion is satisfactory,

supported by strong links with the church and the local community, as well as established links in other countries, such as in Africa. Leaders have begun to put systems in place to monitor teaching and learning more effectively. However, they recognise the need to ensure that systems to track pupils' progress are based on reliable assessment information. Priorities for improvement have been identified but plans do not describe intended outcomes precisely or clearly. This makes it difficult for leaders, governors and staff to monitor and evaluate the success of school initiatives and to ensure that weaknesses are eradicated.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	4
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we inspected your school. You told us you enjoy coming to school and we could see how happy you are at St. Francis'. Your parents are supportive of your school and think you are well looked after. They also told us they are pleased with the recent changes your new headteacher is making to the school.

Adults in school work very hard to look after you and make sure you are safe and happy. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make excellent progress because they have many exciting activities and very good teaching. However, we found that many of you in Key Stages 1 and 2 are not learning as well as you should. We have judged that your school is not as good as it should be and needs 'special measures'. This means that your school will get extra help to make sure it improves and provides you with the education you deserve. Inspectors will make visits to check everything is going to plan.

We want you to make much faster progress in all of your lessons, especially those of you who are capable of reaching much higher standards. To make sure this happens we have asked your school to ensure there are more good lessons that really challenge you and get you thinking hard. We have asked your headteacher and teachers to carefully check how well you are doing with your work and to show you more clearly how to improve your work further. This will help you learn more and more, as you move from class to class. We also want your headteacher, teachers and governors to plan to make your school much better and to check that the work they do is successful and really helping you learn as well as you can.

You can help by always trying your best and continuing to behave well and come to school regularly.

We wish you all the very best in the future.