



Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

INSPECTION REPORT

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary

Telephone:
e-mail address: office@stfrancis

DfES Number: 938 3340

Headteacher: Mrs Bernadette Connor
Chair of Governors: Mr Malcolm Braganza

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: March 15th 2012
Date of previous inspection: 27th January 2009

Lead Inspector: Mrs Catherine Walker
Associate Inspector: Mr Stephen Beck

Description of School

St Francis of Assisi is a two form entry voluntary aided Catholic Primary School in the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. It is maintained by West Sussex Local Authority. There are currently 418 pupils on roll, 83% are Catholic. The school serves the Crawley and Horley parishes.

This is a larger-than-average-size primary school situated in Crawley, a large multi-cultural new town. The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is higher than the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language (24%). The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is increasing and broadly in line with the national average (7%). The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. In the last two years there has been a significant increase in the number of pupils with Statements. In 2009 2 pupils had a statement of educational needs; in 2012 there are 6, with two statements pending statutory assessment.

On leaving St Francis, the majority of pupils transfer to St Wilfrid's, the local Catholic Secondary School. A small percentage seek private education and move on to Worth Abbey, Christ's Hospital or Reigate Grammar.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

The provision of Catholic education at St Francis Primary School is good with a number of outstanding attributes. It is a secure, supportive community underpinned by a strong Catholic ethos. Pupils are respected, affirmed and supported. This encourages them to be confident and provides a positive climate for work. Positive relationships exist between all members of the school community. These have been established by a close working partnership between home, parish and the local community.

At St Francis, the dignity of every individual is highly valued. Great emphasis is placed on ensuring faith is nurtured in a way that strives to meet the needs of all. This means that Christ is at the centre of everything that takes place in St Francis. The school recognises the uniqueness of every individual, and seeks to educate, promote and support the individual's journey of faith. This is achieved through bringing the Gospel values, and the teaching of the Catholic Church, into every aspect of school life.

The Mission Statement "every child can discover their true potential and grow closer to Christ" enables the Catholic ethos of the school to be clearly articulated and

understood. This gives a clear vision for the school and sets high expectations in all areas of school life.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last inspection in 2009 the school has partly addressed the key issues.

A clear cycle of performance management has been established with targets being linked to the teaching of religious education.

The school is acutely aware of the need to review curriculum planning to develop a whole school approach to education in personal relationships, including sex education and linking it with religious education in line with Diocesan guidelines.

Pupils' understanding of community at local and global level is beginning to be established through various projects the school has undertaken. This now needs to be further embedded so pupils have a clearer understanding of the impact they have as global citizens.

Grade 2

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school's self-evaluation shows excellent capacity for ongoing improvement. The headteacher's energy and drive have moved the school forward significantly and she demonstrates a clear vision for the school's needs and development. She is strongly supported by the newly appointed religious education leadership team, parish priest, the chair of governors, the active and knowledgeable governing body and the hardworking, committed staff. The school also makes good use of diocesan support. The headteacher's collegiate approach provides opportunities for the development of future leaders and will enable dispersed leadership to flourish. Senior leaders have correctly identified priorities for improvement and have put strategies in place to address and achieve them.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- For the RE leadership team to further improve assessment procedures in order to lead the school forward to higher standards of achievement.
- To extend the EPR policy to include a whole school approach to delivering sex education in line with diocesan guidelines.
- To develop consistent approaches to constructive marking across the school.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The headteacher has moved the school rapidly forward over the last three years and nurtured a very strong Catholic ethos. This has enabled pupils' spiritual, moral and social development to flourish. The work of the senior RE leadership team demonstrates the school's commitment to addressing key areas for development with pace and determination.

Governors visit the school regularly and work well together to ably support the school, fulfilling their role conscientiously as they monitor the Catholic life of the school. A group of governors provide support and guidance for the school and report regularly to the full governing body.

It is commendable how the school has managed significant works to update the school building alongside staff changes.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

The spiritual and moral development of all pupils is central to the school's core purpose. Whole school, key stage and class-based liturgies are carefully planned to celebrate learning and to offer pupils different ways of praising God. Newly introduced booklets and Worship Boxes support and encourage pupils in planning their own liturgies. Pupils regularly prepare independent liturgies with increasing confidence, although this is still at an early stage.

The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school. He leads whole school collective worship and supports class worship, making a considerable impact on the spiritual life of the community. Mass is celebrated every Thursday before school for staff, parents and pupils. A good programme of whole school and key stage assemblies, based on the liturgical year and supporting the religious education programme, is planned to engage pupils at all levels of ability. All pupils observed during the inspection participated in prayer with reverence and respect, demonstrating a developing awareness of the importance of prayer in their daily lives. Prayer corners throughout the school are of a consistently high standard. The purposefully displayed questions encourage pupils to reflect on their own spiritual development.

Parents, grandparents, governors and parishioners regularly join pupils for worship and liturgical celebrations in the school and both churches. They are involved in the faith journey of the pupils as a whole school community rather than being passive observers. Music is at the heart of all liturgies as witnessed during the Year 5 assembly and during lunchtime prayers. This provision would now benefit by greater engagement of the school community throughout the celebration. Increased pupil initiation would support this.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school promote community cohesion?

This is a welcoming inclusive community where pupils live out the Mission Statement : “This is a place where we can all belong, where diversity and difference is celebrated”. Diversity is welcomed as enriching the school’s provision. Pastoral care is excellent. Strong links with the wider community also nurture cohesion.

As they take on leadership roles, older pupils demonstrate a mature sense of responsibility and independence. Peer Mediators and Playground Leaders contribute effectively to creating a happy playground. Relationships are harmonious at all levels and pupils are quick to recognise the need for reconciliation.

While recognising their own good fortune, pupils show concern for those less fortunate than themselves and enthusiastically participate in a range of fundraising activities. The school mission statement invites pupils to “actively seek to make a difference.” Pupils respond readily by contributing positively to the life of the local community and nationally through an extensive range of charitable activities; namely support for the homeless, the hospice, local council, local and national environmental projects and Sport Relief. On a global level the school supports Mission Together, Children in Romania, CAFOD and Black History Month, Fairtrade, as well as working towards developing involvement with charities internationally.

The Catholic ethos of the school is tangible as people from all groups are drawn into this cohesive community.

Grade 2

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Achievement and standards in religious education are good. The ability of pupils on entry to Reception is below national averages. The pupils make good progress within the Foundation Stage, which is built on in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils come from a wide range of pre-school settings, reflecting the rich diversity of the school’s catchment area and community. By the end of Key Stage 2 data suggests pupils maintain this progress. Pupils are gaining religious literacy at a very good rate. They are able to express their understanding of religious topics with confidence verbally. Pupils’ books would now benefit from greater consistency of coverage of work. Standards achieved are broadly in line with those achieved in other core subjects. Pupils show an increasing awareness of how this applies to their own lives. The high calibre of pupils’ work displayed around the school reflects the consistent approach across all aspects of the RE curriculum.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The overall quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good. All lessons observed during the inspection were at least satisfactory with some having good and occasionally outstanding features. Lessons are based on the Diocesan programme of study for Religious Education and teachers use both medium term plans and teacher developed short term planning to match the needs of their pupils. Lesson objectives are identified in lesson plans and in pupil's exercise books in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 classes. In the strongest lessons these objectives are then revisited. During the Religious Education lessons observed, as part of the inspection, teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge. Where teaching is outstanding, creative approaches to lessons are used. In a Key Stage 2 class, children were asked "How Jesus' actions during Maundy Thursday can influence us today?" Pupils were asked to take on the role of reporters and interview Jesus and Peter. Skilful questioning affirmed pupils' understanding. Pupils enjoy their lessons. One pupil reinforced this by saying "RE gives us a chance to reflect and be closer to God."

Classroom management and engagement with pupils is a strength across the school. All pupils show respect towards each other and behaviour is exemplary. Classroom support is most effective when operating discretely and good practice in this area could now be effectively shared. Talk partners greatly enhanced the learning for all groups of pupils.

Pupils' work is marked carefully with affirming comments. Some marking is interactive with good replies from pupils and there is some evidence of peer and self-assessment. These practices now need to be shared throughout the school.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

Religious education is considered fundamental to the expression and delivery of the school ethos. Consequently it permeates the whole school day, with 10% of curriculum time being specifically designated to the "Here I Am" programme. A well balanced curriculum, promotes pupils' all round development and contributes significantly to their spiritual and moral development. It encourages self-esteem by providing excellent opportunities for discussion, reflection and drama. Creative cross-curricular links are made with other subject areas, so that the use of art, literacy, ICT and singing enriches religious education and makes it more meaningful.

The religious education curriculum is well resourced, so that teachers have the books and artefacts needed to support teaching and learning.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

The school provided an excellent self-evaluation form that demonstrated a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, which the inspectors have been able to validate. The headteacher is ably supported by the Religious Education leadership team. Together they give very good leadership for the subject and ensure Religious Education is given a very high status within the school. One parent championed this by saying "The leadership of the school provides a good foundation for developing a Catholic ethos at St Francis."

In a short time, the headteacher and newly formed Religious Education leadership team have introduced planning assessment and moderation but this is only just beginning to impact on pupil progress. Their monitoring role is highly focused to provide positive feedback and targets to staff, ensuring that standards continue to rise. As a consequence, religious education has a very high status within the school and capacity to improve.

Grade 2