

Inspection of St Francis CofE Primary School

Aiken Road, Taw Hill, Swindon, Wiltshire SN25 1UH

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 12 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Francis CofE Primary describe the school as a friendly place where there is something for everyone. They talk confidently about how the school's values help them to develop a love of learning, be kind and appreciate what makes everyone unique.

Pupils respond well to the new systems that are in place to promote positive behaviour. They understand and follow the school rules, both in and outside the classroom. This starts in the Nursery, where children are polite and respond well to the routines that are in place. Pupils enjoy earning bronze, silver and gold tokens when they work hard or behave well.

Staff build positive relationships with pupils. This helps pupils feel safe. Pupils say that adults are kind and willing to listen. As a result, they trust adults to help them with any worries or concerns they may have.

Pupils participate in a wide range of clubs and sporting opportunities, such as football, gardening and cooking. They are keen to take on responsibilities by becoming house captains, assembly monitors and play rangers. Pupils say these roles build their confidence and give them a sense of achievement.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has a clear vision for what all pupils can achieve. An ambitious and broad curriculum has been designed well. It makes clear the precise knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn and when.

The school prioritises teaching pupils to read. Staff and pupils share a love of reading. Pupils read a range of texts with increasing fluency and accuracy. They say that reading helps them to create new worlds in their minds.

As soon as children start in the Nursery, adults help them to develop their language and communication skills. Children in the Reception Year benefit from this positive start. They learn and remember new sounds well. The school ensures that the books that pupils read are well matched to the sounds they are learning. This helps them to gain confidence and fluency. If pupils fall behind, they receive the support they need to help them to catch up quickly.

Teachers develop pupils' mathematical understanding well. They explain new concepts clearly and model mathematical vocabulary effectively. This starts in the early years, where children confidently use words such as 'bigger' and 'taller' when comparing objects. As they move through the school, pupils build on this. For example, older pupils use their mathematical knowledge well to solve more complex problems involving line graphs.

In some wider curriculum subjects, the school is developing the systems to check on what pupils know and remember. Assessment in these areas is not yet used well enough to identify gaps in learning or to deepen pupils' understanding. For example, in computing, while some pupils can recall their current learning about databases, others struggle to remember what they have learned before about creating simple computer programmes. This hampers the progress that some pupils make through the curriculum.

The school has effective systems in place to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Adults know these pupils well. Most individual support plans are precise and routinely reviewed. Adaptations to learning enable most pupils with SEND to progress well through the curriculum.

Pupils show positive attitudes to learning. They take pride in their work and are eager to share their learning with adults. Pupils across the school play well together. They enjoy the range of activities available to them during social times that develop their teamwork skills and creativity. Attendance is a high priority for the school. Any pupil absence is followed up quickly. When pupils do not attend often enough, the school takes appropriate and swift action to address this.

The school supports pupils' personal development well. Pupils develop a mature understanding of different faiths and cultures. They talk confidently about protected characteristics. Pupils know why tolerance is important in the modern world they live in. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to learn new skills during the enrichment days. As a result, pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governors have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. They use this understanding well to support and hold the school to account. Staff value the training they receive, which helps them to deliver the curriculum well.

Most parents speak highly about the school. Many comment on the school's role in the local community and the positive start children make. However, some parents feel that their concerns are not considered carefully enough.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Assessment is in its infancy in some wider curriculum subjects. Sometimes, it is not used well enough to check that pupils have remembered the knowledge they have been taught. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and do not build their knowledge well over time. The school needs to ensure that assessment is used effectively across all subjects and use this information to inform future learning.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	134151
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10297964
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	452
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Elizabeth Read
Headteacher	Hester Millsop
Website	www.stfrancis.swindon.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 March 2012, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Bristol. The last section 48 inspection took place in March 2017, when the school was judged to be outstanding.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2022.
- The school has provision for three-year-olds.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, staff, pupils and representatives from the governing body. The lead inspector held telephone conversations with a representative from the local authority and the diocese and with the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, art and computing. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- Additionally, inspectors spoke to pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ben Jordan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Hilary Goddard	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Lucas	Ofsted Inspector

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