

Inspection of a good school: St Francis CofE (Aided) Junior School

Scholars Path, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham DL5 7HB

Inspection date:

12 June 2024

Outcome

St Francis CofE (Aided) Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a nurturing and aspirational school. Pupils benefit from the caring atmosphere it provides. Pupils and families feel valued and cared for. The carefully curated spaces, such as the 'Hobbit hole' and 'Nurture room', bring a homely feel to the school. This helps to create an inclusive environment where pupils feel at ease.

The school is ambitious for all pupils. The school motto, 'Let your light shine bright', is lived out by pupils and staff. The newly introduced curriculum helps pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve well. Pupils are encouraged to believe that they can achieve anything they want to.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. There is a positive learning atmosphere. Pupils enjoy lessons and contribute well. Staff manage occasional instances of bullying carefully. Pupils are safe and happy at St Francis.

The school has carefully chosen ways to broaden pupils' experience. Pupils benefit from a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and wider opportunities. For example, they enjoy taking part in cooking and sporting clubs.

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

The school has high expectations of pupils from the beginning of their journey at St Francis. The curriculum is designed to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their learning. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to discuss their learning in every lesson. Staff check to make sure that pupils learn and remember what they have been taught. Teachers adapt the curriculum to help pupils fill any gaps in their knowledge. As a result, pupils achieve well by the end of key stage 2.

The well-being of pupils is a high priority, particularly for pupils who are disadvantaged or those with SEND. Pupils benefit from the sensory resources, special rooms and pastoral

support provided by the school. Most pupils with SEND are well supported in lessons. Staff know the needs of these pupils well and provide the precise help they need to be successful. However, when pupils with SEND join the school, sometimes, the school takes too long to put the appropriate support in place.

Reading is an important part of school life. The school has prioritised the development of pupils' reading knowledge. Pupils have daily reading skills lessons. These have improved pupils' comprehension and reading fluency. The school checks pupils' progress in reading regularly. However, some pupils who need extra help do not receive it regularly enough. This means that some pupils do not learn to read with fluency as quickly as they could.

The school teaches pupils how to recognise some of the risks they might face and how to manage them. Pupils have regular opportunities for reflection and learn how to contribute to their community. Pupils value collective worship time. This contributes well to pupils' moral and spiritual growth. Pupils are highly engaged in the extra-curricular activities the school offers. The school develops pupils' confidence through debating and sporting competitions. Pupils value the range of leadership opportunities available to them. Pupils are proud to hold these roles. They help pupils to care about their school and the wider world.

The school has prioritised improving behaviour in the classroom. This is now well embedded. Pupils meet the high expectations the school has of them. Teachers praise pupils often. Pupils are motivated by the rewards they can earn. They are keen to do well. However, some pupils do not attend school regularly enough, or are late to school. As a result, they miss important learning, which means they develop gaps in their knowledge.

Governors are committed to the school and the local community. The expertise of the newly appointed governors adds strength to the existing governing body. The school's partnership with the diocese and local authority has improved staff's subject expertise and curriculum development. Recent changes to how teachers check pupils' progress has reduced staff's workload. Staff are happy working at St Francis.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils who need help to become fluent and confident readers do not receive this regularly enough. As a result, some pupils do not become proficient readers as quickly as they could. The school should ensure that gaps in pupils' reading knowledge are addressed quickly and effectively.
- The current transition mechanisms for understanding pupils' SEND are not effective enough. There is a delay in ensuring that new pupils with SEND receive the support

they should. The school should review the transition arrangements for pupils joining the school to ensure that they receive timely and effective support.

- Too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough or are late for school too often. These pupils do not make the progress they are capable of because they miss important learning. The school should strengthen the processes to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2015.

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	114267
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10346299
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Bowes
Headteacher	Lisa Lakey
Website	www.stfrancisjunior.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 June 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Church of England school. The school's last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools took place in June 2017.
- The school provides a breakfast club and after-school childcare.
- The school uses two registered alternative education providers.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- 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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke to senior leaders, including members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority and the diocese.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors listened to pupils from different year groups read.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 also spoke to leaders, teachers, governors and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors analysed the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. They reviewed answers from the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses.

Inspection team

Georgina Chinaka, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kathryn Fenwick

Ofsted Inspector

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