

St Francis Catholic Primary School

Address: Mill Road, Shelfield, Walsall, West Midlands, WS4 1RH

Unique reference number (URN): 104239

Inspection report: 7 July 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve well. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make secure progress over time. As a result, pupils are well prepared for secondary school. At the end of Year 6, attainment is typically close to national averages.

Year 4 multiplication check outcomes have improved following a period of weaker performance. Pupils' recall of multiplication facts has improved through regular practice and targeted support. Similarly, phonics outcomes have improved following the introduction of a revised approach to the teaching of early reading.

As pupils move through the school they secure foundations in reading, mathematics and increasingly in writing. Pupils generally achieve well across the wider curriculum. They build knowledge securely and apply what they have learned through practical and investigative work, such as in science. Across the wider curriculum, tasks are not always matched precisely to pupils' differing abilities and this leads to some variation in progress.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Attendance for most pupils is positive. Pupils enjoy school and value the opportunities available to them. Staff check attendance closely and work with families to address barriers to regular attendance. They provide tailored support, including regular discussions with families and work with external agencies. Overall attendance is broadly in line with national figures. Attendance is lower for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, leaders' targeted work is helping to improve attendance for this group. Increasing numbers of pupils with SEND now attend more regularly than previously.

The school is a calm and harmonious environment. Pupils walk around school sensibly. They hold doors open and greet each other and adults with a smile. Lessons are typically purposeful. Most pupils focus on their work and contribute appropriately. At social times, pupils treat others with respect. In the playground, team games organised by sports coaches and trained pupil play leaders help pupils to enjoy breaktimes safely. Incidents of bullying and discriminatory behaviour are rare. Staff deal with concerns quickly. Pupils who need additional support to manage their emotions benefit from personalised strategies. Breathing techniques such as 'smell the flowers, blow out the candle' help pupils respond calmly to different situations.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a well-organised curriculum that helps pupils build knowledge and skills progressively over time. Pupils talk confidently about learning in subjects such as science and design technology because teachers revisit important knowledge before introducing new ideas.

Leaders have prioritised the teaching of writing and handwriting. This work is increasingly leading to better outcomes. Pupils enjoy writing because teachers plan engaging activities.

They spoke excitedly about receiving a letter from the 'Big Bad Wolf' asking them to convince a judge of his innocence. They were eager to write a response and explained how these creative activities encourage them to use their imagination and improve their writing. Staff continue to benefit from training linked to a revised phonics approach. This training is helping staff to teach early reading consistently. As a result, younger pupils develop secure foundations for reading.

Teaching is typically effective. Teachers usually explain learning clearly and check pupils' understanding before moving learning on or asking pupils to complete tasks independently. Sometimes, across the wider curriculum, teaching does not consistently meet pupils needs. Occasionally, tasks are not adapted precisely enough for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In addition, opportunities for the most able pupils to excel are sometimes missed.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children make a positive start in early years. Leaders understand the needs of children well. They have refined provision to strengthen children's communication, early reading and vocabulary development from the moment they join the school. As a result, children make secure progress through the curriculum and are well prepared for Year 1.

Children settle quickly. They benefit from warm relationships with adults. These positive relationships help children feel safe, secure and confident to explore their environment. Children learn and play happily together. Staff identify children who need extra help promptly and ensure they receive appropriate support.

The curriculum is thoughtfully planned from Nursery into Reception. Stories often sit at the heart of learning and capture children's interest well. When exploring a story about pirates for example, children use new vocabulary and engage enthusiastically in early reading and writing. Indoors, children benefit from high-quality interactions with staff and purposeful activities. However, this is not always the case outdoors, where opportunities to extend learning are sometimes missed. As a result, some children do not build as securely on what they already know.

Children learn about the natural world through first-hand experiences. They enjoy observing tadpoles in the school pond and discussing changes over time. Experiences such as this promote curiosity and early scientific understanding.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

St Francis is a school where everyone is made to feel welcome. Leaders and staff have established a caring and inclusive culture where pupils are known well. Staff work closely with families to identify any barriers to learning and wellbeing. They secure help from external professionals when needed. This ensures pupils receive timely support and take a full part in school life.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) generally achieve well from their different starting points. Teachers typically adapt learning successfully by using practical resources and break learning into manageable steps so that pupils engage

positively, develop confidence and experience success. Occasionally, adaptations are not matched precisely enough to pupils' needs. When this happens, some pupils become overly reliant on an adult to complete their work.

Leaders support vulnerable pupils successfully. They work effectively with different professionals and educational settings. They communicate regularly with alternative providers to discuss pupils' engagement and the impact of support on pupils' education and wellbeing.

Leaders have strengthened the way they use additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Support is now more closely tailored to individual barriers to learning, including attendance and emotional wellbeing. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are well supported to participate in learning and wider school opportunities.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders have maintained a clear focus on pupils' education and wellbeing during a period without the substantive headteacher. The acting headteacher and other leaders have provided stability and continuity. They have continued to prioritise improvements in early reading, writing and attendance. Their work is having a positive impact on pupils.

Leaders at different levels know the school well and have an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development. They collect a wide range of information about the school's work. However, in some areas of the school's work they do not always use this information precisely enough to identify priorities sharply and check consistently that their actions are making the intended difference to pupils' experiences and outcomes.

Governors fulfil their statutory duties appropriately and provide both support and challenge. They are continually seeking to improve the way in which they work. They are taking effective steps, including working with the local authority, to strengthen their strategic oversight of the school.

Staff value the culture leaders have created. They describe leaders as approachable and supportive and appreciate the consideration given to workload and wellbeing. Staff benefit from training, coaching and support from external partners. This helps them to strengthen their practice. Parents and carers value the welcoming and inclusive culture that leaders have created and appreciate the school's commitment to supporting their children to succeed. Leaders work positively with parents, external agencies, the local authority and the diocese to support pupils and strengthen the school's provision.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Pupils at St Francis are caring young people. The school's values of kindness, gratitude, service, resilience, responsibility and compassion underpin pupils' personal development and shape daily life across the school. Leaders have developed a personal development and wellbeing programme that helps pupils grow socially, morally and culturally and develop a sound understanding of British Values.

Pupils have a growing understanding of different cultures and beliefs. During Enrichment Week, each class studies a different country in depth. For example, pupils learning about Japan make sushi while exploring its culture, traditions and food. Listening to music from around the world also helps pupils develop an appreciation of different musical traditions.

Pastoral support is a positive feature of the school. Leaders know pupils and families well and respond effectively to individual needs. Emotional wellbeing provision for individuals and groups of pupils helps pupils develop confidence and manage emotions successfully. Pupils know how to stay safe and healthy. They understand online safety and know how to seek help from a trusted adult. Learning about healthy relationships and road, water and fire safety helps pupils understand risks and make sensible choices.

Leadership opportunities help pupils build confidence and responsibility. Play leaders and sports leaders enjoy organising activities. Sports leaders receive basic first-aid training and learn how to respond appropriately in an emergency. Faith Ambassadors gather pupils' views, help select charities to support and contribute to community projects, such as local litter-picking initiatives.

Leaders ensure that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities, participate in wider opportunities. Pupils particularly enjoy using the pop-up swimming pool and taking part in the mini-Olympics. While these experiences contribute positively to pupils' personal development, pupils would benefit from a broader range of opportunities throughout the year, a view shared by some pupils and parents and carers.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils enjoy coming to St Francis. They describe their school as a caring, compassionate and welcoming place to learn. Pupils feel that they belong because staff know them well and understand their individual needs. Adults listen to pupils and support them to overcome any difficulties they may be facing. This helps pupils who face barriers to learning or wellbeing take a full part in school life alongside their peers.

Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education because they develop secure knowledge and skills by the end of key stage 2. They speak positively about their learning. Practical activities help pupils understand and remember new ideas. For example, younger pupils act out quarter turns and half turns in mathematics, while older pupils redesign a parachute and investigate how air resistance affects its movement. These experiences help pupils apply their learning confidently in different contexts.

Pupils build positive relationships with one another and treat each other with respect. They speak thoughtfully about equality and fairness. They behave generally well in lessons. At social times they enjoy playing together. Bullying is not a problem. Adults deal with any concerns quickly. Pupils feel safe in school and understand how to keep themselves safe online. They know which adults they can talk to if they are worried and trust staff to help them. Most pupils attend school regularly.

Pupils take part in activities beyond the classroom that add to their learning and personal development. They contribute positively to the wider community by supporting charities and taking flowers to local care home residents. Within school, pupils take responsibility through leadership roles and by organising sports activities for younger pupils. These experiences help pupils develop a sense of responsibility and understand how they can make a positive difference.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that, across the wider curriculum, teaching is adapted precisely to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and to ensure that the most able pupils continue to deepen and extend their learning.
 - Leaders should broaden the range of wider opportunities available to pupils throughout the year so that their personal development is strengthened further.
 - Leaders should refine outdoor learning in the early years so that children benefit from the same high-quality interactions and learning opportunities that they experience indoors.
 - Leaders and governors should strengthen strategic oversight of the school's work by using information with greater precision to identify priorities sharply and evaluate the impact of improvement work.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Peter Gough.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the acting headteacher, other leaders, a range of staff and pupils. Inspectors also met with representatives from the governing body. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority and a representative from the diocese.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

Since the previous inspection, there have been some changes in staffing. The assistant headteacher took on the role of deputy headteacher in January 2026. Several new teachers have also been appointed. The substantive headteacher was absent at the time of the inspection. The deputy headteacher was serving as acting headteacher.

The school makes use of two alternative provisions, including one that is unregistered.

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. The most recent section 48 inspection was in March 2023.

Acting headteacher: Allison Wright

Lead inspector:

Usha Devi, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Declan McCauley, Ofsted Inspector

Madeleine Griffin, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 7 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

212

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

210

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

34.90%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.30%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

15.57%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	73%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	67%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	75%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	75%	60%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	84%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	78%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	84%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	88%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	77%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	67%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	81%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	81%	71%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	81%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	78%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	84%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	81%	73%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	64%	46%	Above
2024/25 (final)	54%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	73%	46%	Above
2022/23 (final)	67%	44%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	78%	62%	Above
2024/25 (final)	69%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	82%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	83%	60%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	69%	59%	Above
2024/25 (final)	54%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	82%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	75%	58%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	75%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	77%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	73%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	75%	59%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	64%	68%	-4 pp
2024/25 (final)	54%	69%	-15 pp
2023/24 (final)	73%	67%	5 pp
2022/23 (final)	67%	66%	0 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	78%	80%	-2 pp
2024/25 (final)	69%	81%	-12 pp
2023/24 (final)	82%	80%	2 pp
2022/23 (final)	83%	78%	5 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	69%	78%	-8 pp
2024/25 (final)	54%	78%	-24 pp
2023/24 (final)	82%	78%	4 pp
2022/23 (final)	75%	77%	-2 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	75%	80%	-5 pp
2024/25 (final)	77%	81%	-4 pp
2023/24 (final)	73%	79%	-7 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	75%	79%	-4 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	5.8%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	4.9%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.4%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	14.8%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.1%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	21.8%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional 

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard 

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard 

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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