

Inspection of St Francis Catholic Primary School, South Ascot

Coronation Road, Ascot, Berkshire SL5 9HG

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 July 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Rhona Miccoli. This school is part of Mother Teresa Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Bill James, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Kenny.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Francis Catholic Primary School, South Ascot under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged St Francis Catholic Primary School, South Ascot to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their role within the school community. They take the school's values to heart, and live up to the 'golden rules'. Above all, they show kindness and consideration for one another. Older pupils act as 'buddies' and mentors for younger peers. This helps to reinforce routines, behaviour and the culture of learning within the school.

Standards of achievement are very high for all pupils. This stems from the aspirational approach the school takes from the moment children arrive in early years. Staff have a clear sense of every pupil's potential to succeed. Disadvantaged pupils, although few in number, develop the same depth and mastery in learning as their classmates.

The school continues to provide an excellent education for its pupils in the face of significant challenges. Last year more than half of the school site was deemed unusable due to reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). The school's response has been remarkable, with pupils moving first to marquees and then to temporary classrooms. Spaces for play and outdoor learning have been entirely reconfigured as well. Throughout this, the school has kept an unwavering focus on ensuring that every pupil achieves the best they possibly can.

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

The school sets out a highly ambitious programme of knowledge and skills for pupils to learn. This enables pupils to encounter new ideas and concepts. In art and design, for example, pupils learn about the works and techniques of great artists. This enhances their cultural understanding, as well as developing an appreciation of the skills of famous artists. Learning is sequenced carefully at every stage. In mathematics, children in reception develop a firm grasp of number and shape. As they move up through the school, this strong start supports pupils to calculate and solve problems with increasing accuracy and confidence. Although not yet fully evident in national tests, pupils achieve exceptionally well in mathematics.

Teachers provide tasks that match the aspirations of the curriculum. For pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), staff make subtle but effective adaptations to their learning. This supports all pupils' learning to the fullest possible extent. For example, in history pupils use their knowledge of Anglo-Saxon England to consider the importance of Alfred the Great. Teachers provide prompts and key vocabulary, so that all pupils can evaluate thoughtfully. By providing guidance and correcting pupils' misconceptions as they learn, teachers make sure that all pupils are keeping up. In science, this helps pupils to plan their own investigations. Teachers' understanding of what pupils are learning also helps to pick up on potential SEND needs. Across the curriculum, pupils develop rich and detailed knowledge, regardless of their starting points.

Published outcomes are consistently above national averages. Last year's slightly lower scores in reading prompted leaders to redouble their focus on this area. Staff deliver precise support to enable weaker readers to catch up. All pupils benefit from enjoyable and ambitious stories and other texts. Consequently, pupils of every age develop fluency and confidence in their reading. This helps them to be strongly prepared for the next stage in their education.

Behaviour throughout the school is exemplary. Staff in early years set high expectations of how children should interact as they play and learn. Positive habits and routines for learning are embedded swiftly. This provides a secure foundation for pupils' learning as they move up through the school. Pupils' attendance is strong. When they are absent, staff support them to catch up on learning they have missed. If families struggle with attendance, the school takes thoughtful and effective steps to bring about improvement.

All pupils benefit from an exceptionally broad programme for their personal development. Exciting trips help to spark pupils' curiosity about topics like archaeology. Opportunities like the parent-led 'inspire week' give pupils a sense of possible future careers. At the same time, it reinforces the importance of the school's values, such as perseverance and creativity. The school teaches all pupils about staying healthy, both physically and mentally. If pupils need additional support to deal with any worries, the school makes sure that this is in place so that they can continue to learn.

Leaders, supported by governors and the trust, have maintained their focus on delivering an outstanding education despite the challenges the school has faced. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about how the school engages with them. Staff see that leaders are considerate of their welfare too. The resulting sense of community at the school is palpable. At the core of this are the pupils, whose interests are always at the forefront of leaders' thinking.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	141818
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	10321997
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Kenny
Headteacher	Rhona Miccoli
Website	www.stfrancisprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- St Francis Catholic Primary School, South Ascot converted to become an academy in September 2015 as part of the Frassati Catholic Academy Trust. In February 2024, the Frassati Catholic Academy Trust merged with the Mother Teresa Academy Trust, of which the school is now part.
- St Francis Catholic Primary School, South Ascot is a Catholic converter academy. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in May 2018. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place before April 2026.
- The school does not currently use any alternative providers.
- In 2023, a significant portion of the school's buildings were found to contain reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). Since that time, these parts of the school have not been used, and the school has moved pupils into alternative classrooms that are now in place on the school site.

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 school leaders including the headteacher and senior leaders. The inspectors also met representatives from the local governing board and the board of trustees, and with the chief executive officer of the trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, art and design, 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. The inspectors also discussed the curriculum and provision for pupils with SEND, and sampled work from across other areas of the curriculum.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, governors, staff, parents, pupils and the local authority; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts the pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Daniel Botting, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Diane Charman

Ofsted Inspector

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