

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101460
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	363654
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Clive Dunn

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Siobhan Sherlock
Headteacher	Mary Ryan
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They saw 15 lessons taught by eight staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils, parents and carers, staff and a representative of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at planning, monitoring, a range of policy documents and records, governing body meeting minutes and a range of pupils' work. They also analysed 133 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 111 from pupils and 15 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether progress is consistent enough across the school to be outstanding overall as indicated by the school, as indicated by the school.
- How finely customised is the provision to meet the needs of different groups.
- How robust is the school's evaluation of its own performance, including the involvement of leaders at different levels.
- What are the key factors which contribute to the personal development outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. Most pupils are from a range of minority ethnic groups, with the majority being of Black African heritage. The large majority of pupils speak English as an additional language; much higher than the proportion typically seen, but very few are at the early stages of English language acquisition. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. In January 2011, St John Fisher achieved accreditation as a 'Dyslexia Friendly' school.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

'St John Fisher teachers are so friendly, welcoming and approachable' was how one parent summed up the family atmosphere that pervades this effective school. The overwhelmingly positive views of parents and carers reflect the school's outstanding engagement with them. All the staff, including the headteacher, know every child extremely well as an individual. The high quality care and pupils' positive attitudes to learning are both key factors in the school's success. An extensive range of partnerships significantly enriches and enhances the school's provision, making an excellent contribution to pupils' outstanding outcomes, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and adoption of healthy lifestyles. Pupils say they always feel safe at school, and high levels of attendance reflect both this and their excellent enjoyment of school.

Significant improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage since the previous inspection mean that children get off to a good start. This good progress continues through Key Stage 1 but is more limited in Years 3 and 4, where progress is only satisfactory. Here, teachers sometimes miss opportunities, taken in classes for younger pupils, to develop pupils' literacy skills further by focusing carefully on the quality of their spoken language. Progress starts to accelerate again in Year 5, and is particularly rapid in Year 6, so that by the end of Key Stage 2, attainment is high. Pupils' high attainment and good progress overall, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, means that their achievement is outstanding. The school's tracking of the progress of individual pupils is meticulous. Leaders also analyse the performance of different groups annually. However, though they frequently monitor individual progress to ensure that gaps are closing, they do not draw this information together regularly enough to check that the progress of targeted groups is sufficient to eradicate gaps completely.

Teaching is good overall, but the quality of individual lessons ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. Where the quality is less than outstanding, it is often because there is insufficient challenge to promote rapid progress for groups at different levels. In most lessons, teachers ensure that pupils' engagement is at least good. They ensure that pupils understand well what they are learning and why, though sometimes there is a tendency for adults to direct too much of the lesson. Although teachers actively involve pupils in whole-class introductions to lessons, and mostly conduct these at a brisk pace, they sometimes include too much explanation, which shortens the time available for pupils to work independently or collaboratively.

As well as securing a number of outstanding features, the school has improved other important areas from satisfactory to good, including the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This reflects the school's good capacity for sustained improvement. The rapidly increasing effectiveness of the governing body, another area

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that is now good, makes an important contribution to this capacity. Governors, and leaders at all levels, have an accurate picture overall of the school's performance. There are good quality plans in place to tackle areas requiring further improvement. Considering the outcomes its pupils achieve, the school provides outstanding value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure progress for all groups is consistently at least good, particularly in Years 3 and 4, by:
 - increasing opportunities to develop and extend the quality of pupils' spoken language to support improvements in their writing
 - using the school's detailed systems for tracking individual pupil progress to analyse the performance of different groups more regularly in order to target and evaluate improvements.
- By April 2012, ensure that all teaching is at least good and increase the proportion that is outstanding by:
 - allowing pupils greater independence in their learning, including shortening the proportion of time spent on whole-class introductions, in some lessons
 - using all available assessment information to ensure teaching and tasks for pupils are consistently customised to meet the needs of different groups.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Children start in the Reception Year with skills below the levels expected, but because of their good and sometimes outstanding progress, they enter Year 1 attaining levels that are at least in line with the national average. The inconsistency in rates of progress across the rest of the school means that, overall, progress is good rather than outstanding. Pupils' high attainment is evident in their performance in English and mathematics in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in line with their peers because teaching assistants support their learning effectively. Where necessary, these pupils are also able to practise and improve their skills in the supportive environment of small-group sessions, reflected in the 'Dyslexia Friendly' status the school has recently achieved. Pupils are keen to do well, as demonstrated in an information and communication technology lesson in Year 6, where they worked quickly and purposefully on a spreadsheet, planning how many shrubs and plants they needed in the school garden. Similar enthusiasm was evident in a mathematics lesson in Year 2, where more able pupils, in particular, responded positively to the challenge of designing their own tables to collect data. Sometimes teachers miss opportunities to maximise the impact of pupils' good behaviour and attitudes on their progress, by not allowing them to work with greater independence. That said, when given the opportunity, pupils' successful application of their basic skills prepares them well for the next stage in their education and life beyond. In a mathematics lesson in Year 5, pupils' initially steady progress during the whole-class introduction notably improved when they began work on their independent tasks. This was because these matched the different abilities in the class well, and pupils

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were required to think and reason for themselves in order to make decisions relating to probability.

Pupils mix well in different activities throughout the day and have an excellent understanding about what constitutes unsafe situations. They are entirely confident that adults deal promptly and effectively with any issues that do arise, though this is seldom required. Through speaking extremely confidently and knowledgeably about healthy lifestyles, pupils act as ambassadors for health promotion. They keenly take action to improve their health, such as engaging enthusiastically in relevant extra-curricular activities or, if they bring a packed lunch, ensuring it is healthy, nutritious and balanced. Pupils willingly take on additional responsibilities, such as membership of the 'playground squad', who wear their fluorescent jackets with pride as they maturely carry out their duties. In addition to raising money for various charities, pupils engage in events such as the local carnival. Strong moral values shared throughout the school give pupils a clear understanding of right and wrong, and they are able to think deeply about others' needs when reflecting on moral dilemmas. Enthusiastic singing, drumming and other music-making, combined with high quality displays of a wide range of artwork, including large and impressive African masks, reflect pupils' eager participation in cultural and multi-cultural activities. Through these and other activities, pupils gain a very good direct insight into their own and others' cultures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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How effective is the provision?

The strong sense of this school as a close-knit family, central to the headteacher's priorities and the school's ethos, underpins the exceptional level of care which it provides for pupils. There is a strong determination at all levels to ensure that every child can succeed. The school works proactively with other agencies to break down potential barriers to achievement for pupils who are potentially vulnerable. Imaginative planning broadens pupils' experiences, such as in the 'Friday Challenge', where pupils work in mixed-age groups to develop their problem-solving skills. The curriculum is significantly enhanced by the school's extensive partnerships, particularly in sports and the arts. Small-group sessions effectively enable pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those at risk of underachievement, to keep pace with their peers. Teaching assistants conduct these sessions purposefully, ensuring a strong focus throughout on the key learning points. However, teachers do not always fully customise the curriculum sufficiently in lessons to meet the needs of different groups.

Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils know their detailed individual targets and teachers regularly refer to these in lessons. Two boys in Year 5 spoke animatedly about being involved in reviewing how well they are doing and deciding what their next steps should be. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to link marking to pupils' targets, and, while marking celebrates pupils' success, it does not consistently show pupils how to improve their work. Teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 listen carefully to the quality of pupils' verbal responses and take opportunities to give them immediate feedback, for example to get words in the correct order. This supports pupils, most of whom speak English as an additional language, to extend their rapidly developing English skills in a way that in turn enhances their good progress in writing. This was just one strong feature of an outstanding English lesson in Year 1. The teacher very effectively drew the learning together at the end of a lesson that contained excellent opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively to deepen their understanding of alliteration in poetry. Effective questioning enabled pupils to make links in their learning while the teaching assistant reinforced key learning points for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Finally, the teacher encouraged pupils to take home the poem they had been exploring to share with their parents and carers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team works effectively together, combining varied individual strengths and skills to secure improvement. The school has devised plans for improvement

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that are fit for purpose, address appropriate areas and set challenging targets. Leaders at different levels contribute to the accurate monitoring of the quality of the school's provision. However, following classroom observations, not all leaders feed back their judgements about the overall quality to teachers, and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain. A number of changes over the last year to the way the governing body operates have significantly increased its effectiveness. The introduction of links between classes and individual governors has increased the frequency of monitoring visits. Key staff have attended governing body meetings to discuss focus areas or to present new policies, enabling more robust discussion. The governing body uses all of this, and other information provided by the school, to ask leaders appropriately challenging questions, showing that they share their drive for improvement. Established and robust safeguarding procedures, monitored by the governing body to check they meet statutory requirements, protect pupils and promote their safety and well-being. The school works proactively with other agencies to safeguard its pupils and to ensure that staff have appropriate training to carry out their role. Excellent partnerships, including those with higher education establishments, support extensive ongoing professional development for staff. The school reaches out to other schools to share its own best practice and learn from that of others.

The school is strongly committed to ensuring that each individual pupil achieves as well as he or she can. It does not tolerate any discrimination and there have been no reported racist incidents in recent years. The school uses an extremely broad range of mechanisms, both informal and formal, to secure its excellent engagement with parents and carers, from coffee mornings to sending home termly written reports showing their children's progress against national expectations. The school's community cohesion analysis reflects its clear understanding of its context and identifies areas requiring development. Resulting links with other schools, both locally and internationally, have had a clear impact and are beginning to extend pupils' understanding of communities not represented within the school itself. The school itself is a cohesive community and pupils mix notably well.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's obvious enjoyment and willingness to engage with the good range of activities provided reflect their feelings of safety. Positive relationships with adults combine with the bright, attractive, carefully planned areas, both inside and out, to create a very positive learning environment. Children mix well and make good progress developing their negotiation, cooperation and other social skills. There is an effective balance between extensive opportunities for children to select their own activities, and focused adult-led sessions, such as guided reading. However, they do not have enough chances to learn for themselves in creative activities. Children get into good habits towards adopting a healthy lifestyle, from enthusiastic engagement in the varied physical development opportunities to choosing individually when they have fruit, water and milk. They make a good contribution by clearing away after their snacks and by keenly taking on roles such as 'register monitor' or 'cloakroom monitor'.

Children make at least good progress across all areas of learning, and make significant gains in aspects of communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development. For example, three boys busied themselves with a variety of books in researching mini-beasts to write fact sheets, while another group reinforced their knowledge of number by fishing for numbered ducks in the water. Attractive displays celebrate children's achievements in writing, as well as children's carefully written shopping lists more informally pinned-up around the 'garden centre' role-play area. While still good, the school has identified correctly that creative development is an area for further improvement. Sometimes adults direct creative activities too much, or children follow a set pattern, which limits their opportunities to make their own choices or express their individual creativity. Leaders ensure that adults' accurate observations and assessments of children's capabilities effectively track children's progress towards the early learning goals.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents and carers returned a questionnaire, which is nearly double the average response rate. Those that answered each question were unanimous in their view that the school keeps their children safe, informs them of their children's progress, helps them to support their children's learning, and the school is led and managed effectively. The overwhelming majority agreed with most areas. A very small minority disagreed that the school takes account of their views and suggestions. The inspection found that, as part of the school's excellent engagement with parents and carers, there are a wide variety of clear and effective mechanisms for gathering the views of parents and carers and that the school uses these views to influence decisions. Inspectors took note of the very few written comments, which included positive remarks, as well as a few areas of concern. Inspectors discussed these concerns with school leaders.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St John Fisher Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 133 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 206 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	103	77	27	20	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	106	80	26	20	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	91	68	42	32	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	81	61	47	35	3	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	91	68	40	30	0	0	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	73	55	59	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	67	50	60	45	1	1	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	60	45	62	47	0	0	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	54	41	70	53	3	2	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	83	62	45	34	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	59	44	59	42	6	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	75	56	54	41	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	91	68	41	31	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



17 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John Fisher Catholic Primary School, Erith DA18 4BA

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you. We are very grateful for how you helped us to find out all about your school and to those of you who answered our questionnaire. You told us that you enjoy school and always feel safe when you are there; this is also shown by your high attendance. We can see why St John Fisher is a good school. Here are some of the things we found out.

- Your achievement, adoption of healthy lifestyles, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are all outstanding.
- You have good attitudes to learning and behave well.
- Adults in school care for you a great deal and want each of you to do the very best that you can.
- Teaching is good overall, and some of it is outstanding.
- The school works extremely well with your parents and carers, and other professionals.
- Children in the Reception class do well because adults look after them well and give them interesting things to do.

Those responsible for running the school have made good plans to make it even better for you. To help them with this, we have asked them to make sure you all make at least good progress all of the time, particularly in Years 3 and 4, by helping you to improve your speaking skills, and looking at how well different groups of you are doing more often. We have also asked them to make all teaching consistently at least good and increase the number of outstanding lessons, by allowing you to work independently, in pairs, or in groups for more of the lesson, and making sure that tasks are never too easy or too hard.

You can all help by keeping up your positive attitudes to learning and always trying your very best, particularly when given tasks to do without direction from an adult.

Yours sincerely

Clive Dunn Lead inspector

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