

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103452
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	376908
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Smith HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Ingram
Headteacher	Anna Murphy
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 10 lessons taught by seven teachers, and held meetings with staff, pupils and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, interrogated the school's assessment records and looked at the minutes of the meetings of the governing body, aspects of community work and safeguarding procedures, the minutes of meetings with the School Improvement Partner, evaluations and school action plans and evaluations. They also scrutinised 51 parent and carer questionnaires, 20 staff questionnaires and 81 pupil questionnaires.

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

- The reasons for the significant fall in pupils' achievement and how well the school has responded to reverse the downward trend.
- How well leaders and managers, at all levels and including members of the governing body, have an accurate overview of the school and how they have brought about improvements to the quality of provision.
- How well pupils make progress across Key Stage 2, particularly girls in English.

Information about the school

The school is slightly smaller than most primary schools. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and the proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is average. A lower than average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with special education needs and/or disabilities is above average. Since the previous inspection a new headteacher has been appointed and there have been significant changes to staff in 2011. The school has a number of prestigious awards including the Leading Aspect Award for inclusion and the Healthy School Award.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school continues to provide excellent care and support for pupils. Its very strong spiritual awareness and family ethos means that pupils feel extremely safe. The highly caring culture supports pupils and their parents and carers very well. However, considerable staffing disruption has meant achievement has fallen significantly and is satisfactory. Similarly, the progress made by pupils is satisfactory and, consequently, the school is judged to provide a satisfactory standard of education. Attainment is average. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is inconsistent, sometimes good and occasionally outstanding, but some lessons fail to fully engage pupils hence the pace of learning in these is satisfactory.

The thematic curriculum, which incorporates elements from science and a variety of different foundation subjects, is mainly taught in the afternoons. It is still in its early stages of implementation and as such has not yet made a significant impact upon improving standards. In the best examples, pupils extend their writing in different subjects and the standards are similar in their topic books as in their writing books. However, neither this, nor the way in which pupils use mathematical applications within their topic work, is consistent across all classes. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start. They are well supported in their early work in gaining communication skills. However, there are occasions when there is an imbalance between child-initiated and adult-directed activities. This does not always allow opportunities for children to demonstrate their learning and development through their own purposeful choices across all areas of learning.

The school has made significant changes to senior and subject leadership. Some staff are new to post and have quickly asserted themselves and show the clear potential to bring about improvements. Assessment records show that achievement is starting to rise and that issues with progress for girls within English has been remedied. The school monitors the quality of work in classrooms and has identified areas of weakness. However, support has not yet brought about and embedded the desired improvements. Evaluations are sometimes overgenerous because they fail to take account of the full implications of achievement. The school develops a variety of improvement and action plans to bring about the identified improvements. However, the success criteria are not always sufficiently linked to clearly measurable outcomes. The school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5

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inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement by:
 - increasing the pace of learning in lessons so that pupils consistently make good or better progress towards their challenging targets
 - embedding opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in realistic scenarios within the themed curriculum.

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding lessons by:
 - rigorously monitoring the quality of teaching and learning to identify specific areas of improvement for individual teachers
 - using the identified areas to provide bespoke support for teachers in need of additional help
 - monitoring the impact of this support on outcomes.

- Improve the accuracy of self-evaluation and the quality action planning by
 - ensuring that evaluations take account of the full range of outcomes
 - success criteria are linked to quantifiable outcomes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge in line with those expected for their age. Standards in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 have shown a steady decline and they are now average. Pupils make satisfactory progress. Observations of lessons and analysis of pupils' work shows that girls now make satisfactory progress in English. Pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities progress at a similar rate to their peers. Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals often make better progress. The school has introduced a reading improvement programme. This is having a marked improvement in Year 2 where the teacher, who is leading on this initiative, is particularly skilled in supporting pupils to improve their reading. Pupils who lack confidence in mathematics are effectively supported by a teaching assistant who is skilled in improving confidence with number. This is being used with increasing effectiveness across all years within the school. The school tracks the progress made by pupils and records show that the downward trend has been halted. When pupils make the best progress, they are highly engaged and enjoy lessons. For example, a group Year 6 pupils were enjoying being challenged by an investigation involving the relationship between the solution to a multiplication and the original numbers used. Overall achievement and enjoyment are satisfactory.

Pupils feel very safe and many say they trust adults will deal effectively with rare incidents of bullying or misbehaviour. They have a very good understanding of health issues and many pupils take part in a very wide range of sporting activities. The school is rightly proud of its many awards, including that for keeping healthy. Older

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pupils are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of mental health and well-being, with the school providing opportunities for pupils to meditate to help them deal with stress.

Pupils have a very high understanding of spirituality. They take their faith very seriously and they make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community. They readily support a wide variety of charities and particularly enjoyed a visit from the trainee guide dogs. Pupils’ good behaviour is indicative of their moral understanding, including being aware of the rights and wrongs in differing areas of life. They are sociable and respect the opinions and views of each other. They also have a good cultural awareness. They know about a wide variety of cultures locally and across the world. For example, displays within the hall shows links between different countries and their art. Attendance is above average and the school has been successful in significantly reducing the proportion of pupils who persistently have too much time off school.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	1
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	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good and outstanding elements. In the best lessons, teachers share learning objectives with the pupils helping them to understand what is expected. Good planning and direction for teaching assistants enables them to provide support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are good opportunities for pupils to reflect and share ideas with others, and to work collaboratively in groups. In the very

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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best lessons, pupils are highly motivated because teachers ensure there is continual challenge and enjoyment. Hence, learning is of a high quality. However, this is not consistent and these good elements are missing from some lessons and, consequently, learning is only satisfactory.

In some books teachers use marking very well to engage pupils in a learning dialogue. Pupils respond to teachers’ comments to extend their learning. However, at times, this depth of marking is not present and pupils are not given guidance on how to improve. The new curriculum is still in its early days. There are a wide variety of areas identified with science playing a central part. In the best examples, pupils were extending their writing and using mathematics in context but this is not consistent. The curriculum is extended by a wide variety of visits and visitors.

Staff care for pupils extremely well and safeguarding is a very high priority. Almost all pupils say in their questionnaire responses that they feel safe and very well cared for, and all know an adult to whom they can turn for help and support. The school’s systems to support pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable are very well established. Staff are able to demonstrate where they have made significant differences to the welfare of individuals, including pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities. They are also very effective in working with the increasing number of pupils who have transferred to the school at times other than the start of the Reception Year. These pupils often have complex problems, including behavioural issues. This often means they make better progress than they were doing previously. Pupils are very well supported as they are guided towards their next phase of education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers now have a clear ambition on how to improve the school’s effectiveness and staff are very supportive. They have been successful in halting the decline in standards. Many areas of improvement are relatively new and they have not had the full impact on improving the quality of the provision and raising standards. All members of staff who submitted questionnaires said they felt proud to work at the school.

The school ensures that pupils have a good overview of life in the local area, across multi-cultural Britain and the wider world. Members of the governing body are very

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supportive of the school and readily give up a great deal of time to help. They have committees empowered to oversee the major areas of the school. However, at times governors have not been sufficiently challenging to ensure they have an accurate overview of how well the pupils are achieving. The governing body ensures that resources are used efficiently so that the school provides satisfactory value for money and it is very successful in ensuring safeguarding is of the highest quality.

The school engages well with parents and carers who feel well supported. The inclusive nature of the school, together with analysis of assessment data to identify any underachievement of individuals or groups, has enabled the school to ensure satisfactory equality of opportunity. There are good links established with local pre-school providers, other local schools and organisations. Joint work with a variety of external agencies is key to the outstanding care provided both for pupils and also for their parents and carers.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage teacher ably leads a committed team ensuring that the welfare, learning and development needs of the children are well met. Good assessment and intervention strategies ensure that all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress. As they move into Year 1 most children have achieved well in language, literacy, problem-solving, communication, reasoning and numeracy.

Provision for children to develop skills in reading and writing is good. A strong emphasis is placed on the teaching of the sounds that letters make. Children proudly display their developing competency when successfully working on a computer by

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making up and sounding out three letter words. Children make independent choices and concentrate well while engaged in adult-directed activities during literacy and numeracy focused sessions. However, they do not always have sufficient opportunities to explore and follow their own interests across all of the areas of learning. Learning opportunities are limited in the outdoor area, which has been identified as an area for improvement.

Safeguarding and children’s welfare have a high priority and children know how to keep themselves safe. The children soon learn the rules of being part of a group and respond to the high expectations of adults; as a result, they quickly adapt to routines and willingly join in with tidying up. Children play well together. They share resources fairly when making collage pictures with feathers and make sure the tops are replaced on the special glittery pens.

A key strength is the relationships developed with parents and carers where good induction procedures ensure that children settle quickly and happily come to school. A programme of workshops and use of information and communication technology, through the interactive environment, encourages parents and carers to become involved in their child’s learning. This fosters positive home-school links.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
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

An average proportion of questionnaires was received. The views of parents and carers were far more positive than those normally seen. One parent commented: ‘My daughter is always keen to go to school since she was in Reception. Now that she is in Year 2, her attitude towards going to school remains the same. Hence, the school is her second family and she always enjoys learning.’ A number of parents made similar comments. While the great majority of parents were happy with the school, a few mentioned individual concerns. These included the crush when collecting children from school, the inconsiderate parking by some parents and the lack of opportunities for children to learn music. These issues were considered during the inspection and discussed with the headteacher.

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 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 204 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	69	15	29	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	65	18	35	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	29	57	21	41	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	63	17	33	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	61	18	35	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	28	55	20	39	3	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	53	23	45	1	2	0	0
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)	24	47	20	39	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	30	59	19	37	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	43	21	41	3	6	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	49	20	39	3	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	57	19	37	3	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	33	65	17	33	1	2	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.

10 November 2011

Dear Pupils



Inspection of St John Fisher Catholic Primary School, West Heath, B31 3PN

You may remember that I recently visited your school with two other inspectors. I would like to thank you all for making us so welcome and being so polite and helpful. We had a chance to talk with many of you and it was really pleasing to hear how much you enjoy school and how safe you feel. You like your teachers and helpers and you always try to do your best. You said that there is always somebody to talk to if you have any problems. You behave yourselves well in school and we noticed how kind you are to each other – this is brilliant to see! I would also like to ask you to thank your parents and carers for filling in a form that let us know about your school.

We judge that St John Fisher is a satisfactory school. This means that there are more strengths than weaknesses. We found that you receive excellent care, support and help from the teachers and that nearly all of you enjoy school. We were also impressed with the excellent way you try to keep healthy and what an outstanding contribution you make to the local community. We were also impressed with how you support charity, for example by raising funds to train the guide dogs.

There are many good things in your school but we think there are some particular areas to work on to make it even better. We think there are times when some of you do not do as well as you could; we have asked the school to make sure that teaching always helps you to make good progress. We think that when you do your theme work you should be expected to do longer pieces of written work, similar to that which you do in your writing books, and you should use mathematics in a meaningful way. Your headteacher, the staff and the governing body want the school to continue to improve. We have asked them to check how well you are learning and then to see how they can make teaching even better. We also want them to make sure that when they write improvement plans they can measure how well they do.

Thank you once again for being so helpful and remember to always enjoy your learning.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

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