

# St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104476
<b>Local authority</b>	Knowsley
<b>Inspection number</b>	377088
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 June 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Kevin Johnson

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	173
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Leake MBE, JP
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joanne Farrimond
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Tithebarn Road Knowsley Prescot L34 0HA
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Kevin Johnson  
Terry Bond

Additional Inspector  
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 12 lessons or parts of lessons taught by seven teachers, talked to pupils and reviewed some of their work. Meetings were held with staff and members of the governing body. Also taken into account were 58 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and those completed by pupils and members of staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection. They also looked at a wide range of documentation which included that relating to safeguarding, the curriculum, the school's self-evaluation, the minutes of governing body meetings, national assessment data and the school's assessments.

## Information about the school

Almost all pupils are White British in this smaller than average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. An average proportion of pupils is supported by school action plus or has a statement of special educational needs.

Among the school's recent awards are the Eco Green Flag, Activemark and Artsmark, as well as Healthy School status. The school provides additional care by way of a breakfast club and after-school club during term time.

The school meets current floor standards, which are the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because, despite pupils' good achievement, in some lessons the rate of pupils' progress slows. Nevertheless, there has been good improvement in key areas of the school's work since the previous inspection. The quality of care and support provided for those pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable is exceptional.
- Children enter Reception with skills that are below those typically expected for their age, particularly their language and communication skills. They are taught well and make good progress in all that they do. Good progress overall continues through the school but it is sometimes intermittent. Attainment is currently average at the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good and some outstanding lessons are taught. Teachers plan imaginatively and make learning enjoyable. However, pupils are not always challenged sufficiently through marking, and through expectations of their writing over time.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are invariably polite and are extremely attentive in lessons. Their attitudes to learning are excellent. Pupils feel entirely safe in school, a view fully endorsed by parents and carers. Above average attendance is a measure of how much pupils enjoy school.
- Leaders' strong ambition for the school's success is fully shared at all levels as well as with parents and carers. Governance is a strength of the school and, alongside good leadership and management of teaching, has enhanced its capacity for further improvement. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Academic performance is checked robustly to ensure that the school meets its targets.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching even further to improve pupils' progress and achievement by:
  - ensuring that there is greater challenge and sufficiently high expectation of what pupils can achieve, particularly in their writing
  - enabling pupils to check their progress consistently during lessons to ensure they remain on target to reach lesson objectives
  - marking work in all subjects to the good standard seen in literacy books so that pupils are clear about how to improve, and ensuring that marking is always followed up by pupils.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

From generally below expected starting points, children in Reception learn and develop well. Their personal and social skills are fostered so that behaviour and levels of independence exceed expectations by the time they transfer to Year 1. Early development of language and communication skills is well provided for through a good range of activities. Good teaching of letters and their sounds results in children tackling early reading and writing confidently. By the end of Reception children work securely within their expected levels and a few exceed them in some areas of learning.

Pupils make good year-on-year progress overall as they move through the school. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 is currently average and showing an upward trend. Attainment in 2010 and 2011 was well above average in English and above average in mathematics. Currently, school assessments and pupils' work indicate average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Nevertheless, this represents good progress and achievement from earlier starting points. Work in some books, however, shows limited amounts of writing, for example, and too narrow a range for pupils to make better than good progress. By the time pupils leave the school they read suitably challenging books accurately.

In lessons, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent and are a major contribution to their good learning and progress. They listen well, share ideas confidently and enjoy the way teachers plan imaginative openings to lessons. For example, one classroom was turned into a modern day 'crime scene' and a 'highwayman' arrived in another. This role play gets learning off to a good start by capturing pupils' attention, stimulating discussion and building excellent relationships. Pupils work effectively in groups and support one another very well by discussing solutions to problems or testing out their ideas. All pupils say that they learn a lot in lessons. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are happy with the progress their children make.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs learn well and make good step-by-step progress. The quality of planning for them and the way in which their

progress is monitored are exceptional. The school monitors the progress of other groups who are considered to be potentially vulnerable equally well. As a result, there are no significant trends or gaps in the performance of different groups of pupils.

### **Quality of teaching**

Lessons are always well planned and take full account of pupils varying abilities. Teachers use a range of methods and resources, including use of the playground, to stimulate learning. They are not averse to adding some drama to lessons by dressing as story characters to encourage imaginative talk for writing. First class relationships underpin teachers' very effective management of pupils. They value pupils' ideas, and build self-esteem well so pupils feel confident about 'having a go' during discussions. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together. They oversee learning in the classroom and provide skilled support where it is needed. This means that the teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well structured and results in them making good progress.

In the outstanding lessons, expectations are consistently very high and the pace of learning is not allowed to drop. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject rubs off on the pupils who rise to every new challenge and use the opportunities they are given to share work with partners and assess their progress. However, teachers do not routinely allow for pupils to check their own progress during lessons to make sure that they are working at the right pace to meet lesson objectives. This results, for example, in some work not being finished and writing not being sufficiently extended to show how and where challenges have been met.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good and used well to link ideas across different subjects. There was excellent purpose to pupils' learning in science, for example, when they investigated ways of testing 'loads' on different surfaces to reduce friction. Their work was linked to history and how similar problems were solved in the past. Importantly, pupils learned that predictions are not always accurate and further scientific testing is often needed.

Teachers mark work in literacy books well but across all subjects the quality of marking is inconsistent and some comments are unhelpful to pupils in showing them how to improve. Pupils' books indicate that teachers comments are not always followed up, leaving no noticeable improvement in the next piece of work.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils typically behave extremely well in lessons and around the school. Their extremely positive attitudes to learning makes a significant contribution to their good progress. Parents and carers, and pupils themselves, share highly positive views about behaviour and safety. Pupils are fully aware of social and moral boundaries. Their respect for, and caring attitudes towards, others underpin their excellent relationships. Through whole-school topics such as 'My Liverpool Home' and links with pupils in Romanian and contrasting United Kingdom schools, they are well aware of differing cultural lifestyles. A recent 'cultural month' in the school was highly praised by parents and carers. Pupils contribute willingly to school life, for example,

through the school council and by promoting the 'green' message through their eco-club activities.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school at all times. They are confident of adult help if they need it. They understand the different forms that bullying can take, including name calling and misuse of the internet and mobile phones, but are adamant that such incidents would be swiftly dealt with should they occur. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe outside of school. Road safety and other relevant learning about possible hazards, including peer pressure, keeps them alert to potentially dangerous situations. Pupils' attendance is above the national average and the thriving breakfast club contributes to good punctuality. Parents and carers greatly appreciate the care and levels of safety offered before and after school.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher's vision and drive for improvement, and the strong teamwork of the staff, are at the heart of the school's good improvement over time. Senior leaders support the headteacher well. They maintain high expectations, are role models for other staff members and share a crucial role in the monitoring and accurate evaluation of the school's performance. Staff members typically comment on how well they feel supported by the well-managed professional development made available to them. This has improved teachers' subject knowledge and classroom skills and enhanced leadership qualities, effectively increasing the schools capacity for sustained improvement. Target-setting, and the checking of pupils' progress towards them, has also improved because revised systems have increased teachers' accountability for the accuracy of assessments and pupils' progress. Performance management has also played a key role in bringing about improvement.

Governance has improved since the previous inspection and is a strength of the overall leadership. The governing body has an excellent understanding of all aspects of school life. It provides purposeful challenge with regard to standards, quality of teaching and the curriculum. All statutory duties are dealt with very efficiently including procedures for safeguarding which fully meet all requirements. The school strongly opposes all forms of discrimination and to that end the governing body is watchful over the performances of all groups to ensure their equality of opportunity.

The engaging curriculum provides interest and enjoyment for pupils and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, for example, in helping them to develop excellent personal skills, especially their attitudes to school, and their independence. The curriculum is planned creatively and enables pupils to contribute their own ideas and develop skills across different subjects. A good selection of activities outside of lesson time provides many opportunities for pupils to nurture their personal skills and interests.

## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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



## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



29 June 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of St John Fisher Catholic Primary School, Prescot, L34 0HA**

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. We enjoyed being in your extremely friendly school and were highly impressed by your outstanding behaviour and politeness. It was a pleasure to talk to you about school, and you told us about many good things. We also enjoyed reading your questionnaires. I can say now that we agree with you about how safe you feel, how you take care of one another and how much you enjoy your lessons. Well done also for your above average attendance.

St John Fisher is a good school. You make good progress and achieve well by the time you leave. The standards you reach in English and mathematics are the same as the national average. You are taught well because your teachers work hard to make lessons enjoyable. Your headteacher and other staff members work well as a team to plan interesting ways for you to learn and to make sure you have all that you need to make the most of school.

Even though your school is good, your teachers, parents and carers and the governing body would like it to be even better. To help it to become outstanding, therefore, we have asked your teachers to raise the quality of your learning a little further. First, by always making sure that you are fully challenged in lessons and expecting more work from you, especially in writing. Second, by letting you check during lessons to make sure you are meeting lesson objectives (you may need to speed up). Finally, by marking all of your work equally well so you know how to improve in all subjects, and by making sure that you take notice of what that marking tells you to do.

You can help by continuing to work hard in lessons and to go on enjoying school as much as you do already.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Johnson  
Lead Inspector

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