

St John Fisher RC Primary School, Denton

Manor Road, Haughton Green, Denton, Manchester, M34 7SW

Inspection dates 9–10 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils from the specially resourced base also achieve well. Pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs receive effective support and make good progress.
- Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics has risen to above average.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress in the very stimulating and attractive classrooms and outdoor areas.
- The quality of teaching is good and a significant amount is outstanding. Pupils enjoy the challenge and excitement of grasping new knowledge and skills.
- The spiritual character of the school makes a positive contribution to pupils' moral, social, cultural and spiritual development.
- Behaviour is good and pupils are unfailingly polite around school. Pupils are keen conversationalists and confident young people.
- Staff come together in a shared commitment to improve the achievement of pupils because of clear expectations set by senior leaders.
- Changes in leadership of the governing body over the past year have been managed effectively to ensure that the school is continuously held to account by governors.
- The headteacher and governors have worked well in successfully tackling some weaknesses in teaching.
- This is an effective and improving school providing a good all-round education for its pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough of the teaching is outstanding. Some opportunities are missed to check pupils' understanding in lessons.
- Marking does not consistently ensure that pupils understand precisely what it is they need to do in order to improve their work.
- Some lessons lack sufficient challenge, especially for the more-able pupils, and work targeted at the highest levels of attainment in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed parts of 14 lessons.
- They listened to pupils reading individually and during lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, including the leader of the specially resourced base, the special educational needs coordinator, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, two members of the governing body, pupils and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 29 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View). The questionnaires completed by 23 staff were also taken into account.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and reviewed various documents including the school's view of its effectiveness, the tracking of pupils' progress, pupils' books, records of governing body meetings and the performance management of staff. Documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour and safety were also considered.

Inspection team

Marie Cordey, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Doreen Davenport

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average primary school.
- The school provides specially resourced provision for up to 14 pupils, most of whom are supported for autistic spectrum disorders.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- Most pupils are White British. A small number are from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides morning sessions for nursery-age children.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding in order to raise attainment further, especially for the most-able pupils and in mathematics, by:
 - providing consistently challenging lessons to match the abilities of all pupils, particularly the most-able
 - consistently providing work targeted at the highest levels of attainment in mathematics
 - checking pupils' understanding throughout the lesson so that pupils know exactly what is required from them and can move forward in their work
 - improving the quality of marking so that pupils know precisely how to improve their work and then checking that pupils act on this advice.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress from their individual starting points because the quality of teaching is good. Some make exceptional progress over time in the Reception class, in Year 6 and in the specially resourced base for pupils with complex educational needs.
- Children start school with skills that vary from year to year but are generally below those seen for their age. They make good and sometimes outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because teaching is consistently good and better, especially the teaching of early writing and reading skills. In a lesson observed, children were keen to link letters and sounds into words and were gleeful about their sophistication when talking about 'grotty graphemes' as seen in the word 'square', for example.
- Progress from Year 1 to 6 is good. Pupils' attainment by the time they leave school has been inconsistent over time. This year, attainment in English is well above average and in mathematics it is above average. This is confirmed by unvalidated test results and pupils' work in their books. Pupils' progress dipped last year. The school identified the reasons for this and acted promptly to address weaknesses in teaching while acknowledging that latecomers to Key Stage 2 affected the school's profile on progress.
- Actions taken by the school to raise attainment have been firmly embedded across the school. This is reflected in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where attainment rose to average in 2012 and 2013 and in Key Stage 1, where attainment rose to above average in 2012, and that has been maintained this year.
- Over time, progress is good in mathematics and for more-able pupils. However, in some lessons this group do not reach the high standards they are capable of because they are not challenged enough and work in mathematics is not consistently set at the highest levels of attainment.
- Writing is a strength of the school and pupils' skills in reading are catching up quickly. Pupils relish writing extended stories and the presentation of their work is typically careful, easy to read and well planned. Skills in spelling and punctuation are taught at an early age and built on effectively so that pupils have very good literacy skills. Pupils enjoy reading and are fluent and expressive when reading aloud. Occasionally, lower-ability pupils are not fully confident at sounding out letters to achieve the correct pronunciation of a word.
- The achievement of pupils provided for in the specially resourced base is good and sometimes outstanding. Pupils learn from a variety of experiences, particularly in mathematical and scientific enquiry, that are well matched to their abilities and interests. Photographic evidence, for example, shows a wealth of first-hand experiences in life processes and living things.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good. Their individual requirements are rapidly identified and acted upon through skilful support and good quality teaching.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium make good progress, similar to other pupils'. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals reach standards that are above those of similar groups nationally and in line with all other pupils in the school in English and mathematics. This is because of good teaching and the school's emphasis on treating each pupil as an individual.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching over time is good and sometimes outstanding. As a result, pupils make good progress. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and enthuse pupils with a desire to learn.
- In the best quality lessons, pupils persevere until they grasp the work set for them. They are taught to develop their independence, using the knowledge and skills they have acquired. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils worked industriously to identify patterns and sequences by testing and re-testing their hypotheses with only minimal guidance from their teacher when

required. They learnt to meet the challenge, have confidence in their abilities and become self-reliant.

- This is not evident in all lessons and consequently the needs of more-able pupils, particularly in mathematics, are not fully met.
- Teachers and learning assistants know their pupils well so pupils feel valued and are able to learn effectively because their needs and abilities are recognised.
- Pupils enjoy learning and have positive attitudes to their lessons. Occasionally opportunities are missed during the lesson to check whether any pupils do not fully understand what is required from them. This slows progress and causes some restlessness.
- Reading, writing and number skills are taught well and are reflected in pupils' attainment. This is not always as apparent in some of their work in other subjects, when those skills are not as carefully demonstrated.
- Careful planning to provide the most memorable experiences are reflected in the activities, both indoors and out, in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children relish opportunities to write, read and count, whether it is in the 'Forest School' or in the classrooms. They also learn, for instance, while role playing, playing with water and sand and recording observations with cameras.
- The quality of marking is good overall but there is some variability. Generally, marking helps pupils to improve their work and teachers check to ensure that this happens. At times, however, misunderstandings and gaps in learning are not checked quickly enough to secure consistently good learning.
- Pupils in the specially resourced base, those who are disabled and those with special educational needs are taught well and sensitively. They are effectively supported by skilled staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils say they feel safe and older pupils are proud to help look after younger pupils. Pupils say that 'bullying just doesn't happen here' and they know whom to turn to if they have any concerns. School 'buddies' are pleased and proud of their responsibilities in organising sports, activities at playtimes and in recommending school improvements.
- Pupils appreciate their numerous sporting successes and proudly point out the trophies and awards in the sports cabinet. They enjoy drama, singing and the many contributions they make to improve their community. As a part of actions to improve the environment in Denton and make it a landmark town, they have worked alongside a local business to develop designs to enhance an untidy concrete underpass.
- Pupils are very conscious of what are right and wrong actions and have a highly developed sense of justice and equality. This is enhanced by the school's religious character and the many opportunities available for them to pause, reflect and pray.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning help them to make progress. Some pupils said that there was some inattention in lessons when others did not understand what to do next, and help was too slow coming so they could not get on with their work; inspectors agreed with this view.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage play and learn happily because they are made to feel welcome and activities stimulate their curiosity for learning. For the most part, they are willing to share and take turns.
- Pupils in the specially resourced base learn to manage their own behaviour as well as cooperate with others because of skilful management of behaviour by staff.
- Attendance has improved to above average because of rigorous school actions, the cooperation of parents and pupils' enjoyment of school life.

The leadership and management are good

- The effective leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher leaves no one in any doubt about how important it is to prepare pupils well for their future lives. As a result, all staff share in a strong ambition for school improvement.
- The governing body has been subject to many role changes in recent months but has managed these effectively. Leaders and governors have a good understanding of how well their school is doing and precisely identify what needs to be done to improve it to the next level.
- Tackling weaknesses in teaching, improving pupils' standards and their attendance all reflect the school's commitment to equality of opportunity and its capacity to improve further. Teaching is rigorously monitored, challenged and supported. Performance management arrangements are sharply focused on pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. They are clearly linked to teachers' pay and to professional training.
- The rich curriculum is at the heart of the school. A comprehensive re-modelling of the science curriculum is already beginning to capture pupils' enthusiasm and raise their standards. A strong focus on spelling, punctuation and grammar, as well as a promotion of lengthier writing, results in above-average standards that are continuing to rise. Other subjects are studied and pupils particularly enjoy humanities, sport, drama and music.
- Pupils' personal development and their academic skills are closely linked by leaders and help to support pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The local authority provides effective support and challenge.
- Parents' views are largely very positive. The vast majority are happy with their child's education and would recommend it to others. A very small number of parents have some concerns, for example, about behaviour, progress and the school's response to concerns. Leaders are working with governors to improve some parents' perceptions about the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide good support. They manage finances well and spend funds carefully and astutely on improving pupils' academic and personal development. The pupil premium funding is allocated sensibly and effectively to improve pupils' outcomes. The acting Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body have quickly got themselves up to speed in their roles and are diligent in challenging school leaders. The governing body ensures that arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	106255
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	412387

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rhodelle Burke-Percival
Headteacher	Helen Hayes
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2008
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