

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Alvechurch Road, West Heath, Birmingham, B31 3PN

Inspection dates 26–27 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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 achieve well and make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently achievement is good.
- Teaching has improved so that it is now good with examples of outstanding practice.
- Teachers use good subject knowledge to enthuse and engage pupils.
- Pupils have positive relationships with teachers and each other. They behave well in lessons and on the playground and feel safe.
- Pupils continue to attend very well, as reported at the previous inspection.
- The effective provision and progress in the Reception Year has been maintained.
- The school checks on the progress of pupils and quickly puts in effective additional support to enable pupils to catch up if necessary.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body have ensured improved teaching and achievement for pupils. Leaders' drive for improvement is shared by all staff

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of outstanding teaching and level of challenge is not high enough to secure rapid progress for all pupils, particularly the most able.
- Teachers do not check regularly enough in every lesson that pupils are making good and outstanding progress.
- Targets for the progress of pupils are not consistently set high enough to enable them to make outstanding progress.
- Information collected about pupils' performance is overly complicated and does not provide a clear enough picture of their progress and attainment.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the governing body do not focus well enough on the main areas for school development

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons of which 11 were shared observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They also observed an assembly and support for learning in small groups of pupils.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their work in lessons, looked at books, listened to pupils read and met with two groups of pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, the local authority and school leaders.
- During the inspection, inspectors took account of 29 responses to the Ofsted survey, Parent View, two letters and an e-mail message from parents and held informal discussions with parents. They took account of 17 questionnaires returned by staff members.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents including: school improvement plans, records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records of the school leaders' monitoring of lessons and information on the management of staff performance.
- Inspectors took account of the school's data on pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection team

Shannon Moore, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Shears

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Around 20% of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups.
- A breakfast club is available at the school but as it is not managed by the governing body it did not form part of this inspection.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium, which is extra government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and other groups, is broadly average and increasing.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well-below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has good working relationships with local primary schools and two secondary schools and is an active member of the Birmingham Catholic Partnership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the quality of teaching further so that it is outstanding by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations of what different groups of pupils can achieve in lessons and always make these clear to pupils, including the most able
 - rigorously check the progress of all pupils in lessons so that timely support and challenge can be given to deliver greater gains in learning
 - give pupils the opportunity to respond fully to comments about how they can improve on written work before they move on.
- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management through:
 - setting consistently high targets for every year group that will enable pupils to make outstanding progress
 - refining the information that is collected about pupils so that it gives a clearer picture of their individual progress and attainment and of the progress and attainment across year groups
 - ensuring that the monitoring of the governing body is focused more clearly on evaluating the school's main areas of development.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When children enter the Reception class their levels of skill are those expected for their age and they make good progress across the range of well-planned activities. For example, in a lesson children learned through a story how to use positional language such as 'over', 'under' and 'around' and explored this through a wide variety of practical activities both in the classroom and outdoors. Children enter Year 1 well prepared for their next stage of learning.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics so that by the end of Year 2 their attainment is above the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching higher levels has increased.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) has been a priority and results of the phonics screening check in 2013 were well ahead of the national average. Learning to read through the use of phonics is now a strength of the school.
- Throughout Years 3 to 6, pupils maintain their good progress and leave with attainment that is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. More pupils attained higher levels in 2013, particularly in mathematics. The pupils show real keenness to learn in class, which is captured by teachers when planning their learning.
- Pupils have access to a wide range of books and are encouraged to read widely and often. They read fluently and confidently, including at home with the support of their parents. There are incentive schemes to encourage young readers to read more often at home. The school has used the expertise of authors and poets to inspire pupils.
- The school has an inclusive and caring set of values and the impact of these is seen in how groups within the school achieve so well. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress as a result of well-planned and frequently reviewed extra help and support. Pupils with differing personal and academic needs receive targeted support and all make good progress.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for extra support through the pupil premium make similar progress to that of others in the school, which is good progress overall. This means that by the end of Key stages 1 and 2 they have good attainment. However, in 2013, these pupils in Year 6 were attaining four terms behind their peers in reading, one term behind in writing and one half-term ahead in mathematics. Information about the progress of pupils currently in the school shows that any gaps in attainment are closing because of the effective support they are receiving.
- More-able pupils make good progress in lessons. However, they are not always challenged enough to ensure rapid progress.
- Pupils from minority ethnic communities and the few for whom English is an additional language, get expert support and are taught well with the result that they make equal progress to that of other pupils in the school in reading, writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in the school is good and, as a result, pupils learn well and make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They leave school well prepared for secondary school with attainment that is above average.
- In the Reception class, staff work well together to provide a stimulating range of activities that help the children to explore, think, and understand and to write and speak well. They are encouraged to make decisions and to choose activities.
- Teachers plan lessons to engage pupils in learning. Staff have good subject knowledge and use technology, such as interactive whiteboards and visualisers to enhance teaching. In one lesson observed, a teacher used a visualiser effectively to display pupils' work to encourage others to discuss how a word, 'stick', could be used as a noun or a verb, to illustrate a teaching point.
- Teachers ask questions that deepen pupils' understanding and help them to think hard. The pupils and teachers have good relationships and pupils respond well to the challenges provided to improve their work and to explain their thinking.
- Teaching assistants are used well to give focused and effective support to groups of pupils, particularly disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and others who might underachieve. For example, in a language support session for a small group of pupils, some of whom speak English as an additional language, the teaching assistant used well-directed questioning to probe their understanding of sounds, letters and colour.
- The quality of marking has improved since the previous inspection in both literacy and mathematics. Teachers give positive comments and tell pupils what they need to do to improve. However, pupils are not always given enough time to respond and improve their work.
- Expectations of what groups of pupils are able to achieve are not always high enough or made clear enough in lessons. Consequently, pupils, including the most able, do not always make as much progress as they could.
- Teachers do not always check regularly during lessons whether all pupils are making rapid progress. Consequently, sometimes opportunities are missed to address misconceptions or provide further challenge.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy school. They are enthusiastic in lessons, enjoy learning and make good progress. Pupils work well together but can work equally well independently when required. Their behaviour in the playground and around school is good.
- Pupils say that bullying and instances of poor behaviour were rare and were followed up by teachers. Appropriate records are kept. Pupils could not recall examples of name-calling and consequently felt safe. They knew how to keep safe and feel well cared for.
- Pupils have a sense of right and wrong and are proud of the support they give to charities. They have good opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through a wide range of activities specially organised, such as the 'Faith and Culture Week'. This is an example of steps taken to promote a close-knit community and tackle discrimination. There

are many opportunities for reflection and worship to support pupils' spiritual development.

- Pupils develop leadership and team-building skills well through the school's involvement in a range of sports activities, ecological work and healthy schools activities. Spending the primary school sports funding in collaboration with partner schools has been agreed. This initiative is to be implemented from January 2014, so the impact cannot yet be evaluated.
- The school's systems to encourage attendance are effective and, as a result, above-average attendance has been maintained since the previous inspection. Very few pupils are persistently absent because of the school's vigilance.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and staff, has worked successfully to improve the quality of teaching and, as a result, the progress of pupils has accelerated.
- The school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness is both thorough and accurate and informs the planning of further improvements.
- Checks on the quality of teaching are used to inform leaders of how effective teaching is in enabling pupils to make progress. Teachers' pay is linked to their success in helping pupils to learn and achieve well.
- The leadership of Reception is good. Planning ensures that the children have an exciting time exploring across a range of activities. Good monitoring means that each child's good progress is secured. The staff keep fully up to date by taking opportunities to train and collaborate with staff from other schools.
- Subject leaders have a good understanding of how their subjects are taught in the school. They monitor subject work by looking at teachers' planning of learning and pupils' books and talking with pupils. They are currently rightly focusing on adapting planning of learning to meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum.
- Leaders below senior level are able to access a range of effective training opportunities to improve their skills. Examples included formal taught specialist courses, working alongside experts, for example a sports coach, and through support from senior managers and colleagues from partner schools.
- The imaginative uses of resources and good partnership working with other schools have enabled the school to increase the pace of improvement. For example, the new system to manage staff performance was jointly developed with other local headteachers.
- Pupils who are identified at risk of underachieving are given good support to enable them to catch up. This illustrates the school's commitment to promote equal opportunities.
- The school has been proactive in developing support for and from parents. For example, this has included the development of a more informative website and their engagement in supporting daily reading at home and holiday activity in literacy.
- The local authority gives helpful support and the school benefits from collaborative moderation

of pupils' work, training and joint development of policies. The school's positive working relationships with other local schools provide valuable opportunities for sharing expertise.

- The well-planned curriculum includes an effective focus on English and mathematics and pupils achieve well in these subjects. Special 'focus days' provide helpful opportunities to explore different cultures. On Fridays, pupils follow a special drive to improve writing at length. They have 'theme' lessons where an interesting topic is explored in depth and includes other subjects, such as science, geography and history. In these lessons, pupils apply their communication and numerical skills in varied situations. There are many additional clubs and societies where pupils can learn new skills and they can take part in competitive games and sports with other local schools.
- The school's information about the progress and attainment of pupils is overly complicated, making it difficult to have a clear and accurate picture of how well different groups of pupils are performing.
- Targets for the progress of pupils across some year groups are set higher than in others. To ensure that pupils, including the more able, are challenged to make outstanding progress, targets for the progress of pupils will have to be consistently high across all year groups.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is ambitious for the school and has a clear understanding of the main development priorities. Governors are regularly briefed by the headteacher and staff and know from this information and their own analysis and findings how well pupils achieve. The governing body has undertaken training to develop its expertise, for example in gaining a better understanding of the information about the performance of pupils. There is evidence in records of governing body meetings and correspondence that governors hold leaders to account and challenge the leadership team to explain school performance. Members consider carefully the evidence from performance management of staff when approving pay progression, and ensure that pupils' progress is always taken into account in these decisions. Governors monitor the use of the pupil premium funds and the impact on eligible pupils' personal and academic development. Although school improvement planning identifies the right priorities, the checks that the governing body makes on the effectiveness of the school are not always focused clearly enough on these main priorities.

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	103452
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	426934

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	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Ingram
Headteacher	Anna Murphy
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2011
Telephone number	0121 4753489
Fax number	0121 4765782
Email address	enquiry@stjonfsh.bham.sch.uk

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