

St John Fisher, a Catholic Voluntary Academy

Alvaston Street, Alvaston, Derby, DE24 0PA

Inspection dates 13–14 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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.

- After an unsettled period, with many staff changes, the headteacher has established a well-knit team of staff. Their higher expectations of pupils' progress have been key to raising standards. The academy is moving forward rapidly.
- Children settle very quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are given things to do that interest and excite them, and make a good start to their life in the academy.
- Current pupils are making good progress and achieving well because the quality of teaching is consistently good or better.
- Behaviour is good; pupils are polite and well mannered. They participate enthusiastically in lessons.
- Parents are confident that the academy keeps their children safe.
- The new staff have received very effective training and guidance. This has enabled them to take an active part in contributing to the academy's improvement.
- The academy's directors check thoroughly how well it is doing to ensure that all pupils make good progress and that teaching is always at least good and more becomes outstanding.
- The relationship with parents is strengthening because leaders keep them well informed. Parents appreciate the stability the headteacher and the directors are bringing to the academy.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils in some year groups do not make such strong and sustained progress as in others.
- Not all teachers have the same high expectations of how pupils present their work.
- Teachers do not use the academy's marking and target-setting system consistently well across all subjects to help pupils to improve their work.
- Some leaders responsible for subjects are not observing lessons and therefore not yet fully effective in improving teaching.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, three of which were seen jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with staff, a group of pupils and four directors of the academy. A meeting was held with the academy's improvement partner.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and talked to them informally at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors took account of the 48 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the academy's most recent parental survey. They had conversations with parents and carers as they dropped off their children at the start of the school day. Inspectors also considered the 15 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Academy documentation was examined, including data on pupils' current progress and records of directors' meetings, teachers' performance, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Documentation relating to the care of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs was also carefully reviewed.

Inspection team

Andrew Stafford, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Lethbridge

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St John Fisher Voluntary Academy is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school opened as an academy in September 2012, sponsored by the Diocese of Nottingham Educational Partnership.
- Three fifths of pupils are of White British heritage, and nearly one tenth of African heritage. Over a quarter of the pupils speak English as an additional language, and a few are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care) is higher than average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the academy opened the directors have appointed a new leader for special educational needs and a new business manager, and all the teaching staff have changed.
- The headteacher and senior leaders contribute to school improvement in the cluster of local Catholic schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement by ensuring that:
 - teachers use the marking and target-setting system consistently well so that pupils know how to improve their work in all subjects
 - the newly appointed subject leaders contribute fully to improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility
 - all teachers show high expectations of how pupils present their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Current pupils' learning in lessons, the work in their books and the academy's own checks on achievement show pupils are making rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In Year 6, there is much evidence of more-able pupils producing work at the higher levels, as a result of good teaching.
- The progress pupils make in mathematics is accelerating. The academy has introduced a new approach to teaching that promotes pupils' basic calculation skills well, and teachers ensure that pupils apply these skills effectively to everyday situations.
- Staffing difficulties in leadership and teaching led to pupils underachieving in reading, writing and mathematics in 2013. In the Key Stage 2 tests, attainment at the end of Year 6 was below average. Pupils were two terms behind national averages in reading and writing, and a year behind in mathematics. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals did not attain as well as their classmates.
- The academy has responded promptly and effectively. Its accurate data and inspection evidence show that the vast majority of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, are now making good progress and are on track to attain the standards expected for pupils of their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils in some classes do not make progress as rapidly as in others. However, the academy's system for tracking individual pupils' progress quickly identifies any dips, which are then rectified.
- Children start at the academy with skills and abilities that are well below those expected for their age. As a result of good teaching and activities closely matched to their needs and interests, all children make good progress in the Reception class.
- In Key Stage 1 standards are rising and are average in reading, writing and mathematics. A focus on improving the reading and writing of the younger pupils has been extremely effective. This begins in the Reception class, where reading and writing are promoted at every opportunity and children are keen to show off their early writing skills. They regularly choose to write about their drawings, which they enjoy sharing with visiting adults.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and those at an early stage of learning English, have their needs identified early. They receive well-targeted support quickly and are making faster progress than has been the case in the past. Their progress is now as good as that of other pupils.
- Current checks of pupils' work show that pupils who benefit from the pupil premium have quickened their progress because of extra adult support. As a result, previous gaps in attainment between these pupils and others at the end of Year 6 in 2013, of three terms in writing and two terms in reading, have been closed. There was already no gap in mathematics.
- Pupils' above-average scores in the Year 1 2013 screening check on phonics (letters and sounds) show that teaching of phonics is now more effective. This is also reflected in the accelerated progress being made in reading and writing by pupils in Key Stage 1.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching, including in English and mathematics, is now consistently good. Discussions with pupils, the lessons seen and the work in their books show that teaching has been typically good or better since staffing stabilised.
- Children quickly become enthusiastic about learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Each day, the teachers share stories with the children and listen carefully to which aspects have excited them most. The children were so involved in the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and the images on the whiteboard, that they frequently gasped with excitement. The result of this is that children persevere with tasks very well and use their imagination and creativity constantly. For example, some children thoroughly enjoyed measuring the giant's footsteps while another group used role play to recreate the story. The children, led skilfully by the class teacher and teaching assistant, used a very good range of language and vocabulary.
- Pupils engage well with their lessons. Learning is planned carefully to ensure high levels of interest and engagement. Pupils respond very well to the challenges set for them by adults. For example, some of the most able pupils chose to challenge themselves in a successful Year 6 mathematics lesson. By tackling the tasks set at the highest level, they quickly began to make good progress.
- Teachers enthuse the pupils with interesting ideas which stimulate their imagination. Pupils say that teachers make learning fun. For example, pupils acted out how they may feel if they met the Holy Spirit, and reflected on their own beliefs about God and Christianity in their lives. They wrote prayers and teaching provided them with a memorable experience and stimulated good creative writing.
- Year 1 pupils have been extremely well motivated by their work in mathematics. Counting money leads pupils to buy favourite items from shopping lists, and to enjoy being able to calculate the cost of buying more than one item.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as those who are eligible for the pupil premium. They do this by working closely and effectively with them, whether in class, on individual work or in small groups.
- Teachers generally show high expectations of pupils' work. Pupils regularly produce longer pieces of writing which are particularly good when they have arisen from subjects such as history. For example, in Year 6, well-presented accounts of the evacuation of children during the Second World War showed how their interest had led to written work at its very best. However, teachers in some classes accept work which is less well presented.
- Marking by some teachers is exemplary. They tell pupils precisely how they can improve their work, set targets, and then ensure that pupils act on the advice and succeed with their target. However, this practice is not consistently good in all classes and in all subjects. Not all teachers consistently expect pupils to respond to their comments with careful consideration. Targets for improvement are sometimes set for the whole class and are not sufficiently challenging for all pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well, both in and around the academy, and are keen to learn. This has a positive effect on their good achievement. Pupils are polite, courteous

and get on well with each other and adults. They enjoy school. Pupils from different backgrounds relate well to one another.

- Pupils arrive punctually to their classes and quickly settle to the interesting activities set for them. They use the time at the start of the school day well, for example to improve their work from the previous day according to the advice written in their books.
- Teachers and teaching assistants establish very good relationships with their classes and manage pupils' behaviour very effectively. As a result, pupils are happy to contribute to lessons and they listen well to each other.
- All members of the academy community describe behaviour as good and much improved. These views match inspectors' observations of the pupils at work and play.
- The new behaviour policy is providing a more consistent approach to managing behaviour throughout the academy, with a positive reward system which is appreciated by the pupils.
- The children joining the Early Years Foundation Stage learn the rules of good behaviour quickly. The youngest children watch and learn from the older ones in the school, who show maturity as they concentrate on tasks, persevere with activities and collaborate well with each other.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe and know that help is at hand should they need it. The academy educates pupils well in assessing risk, and ensures that pupils have a clear understanding of road safety and cycling proficiency.
- Pupils know and understand about the different kinds of bullying. They are particularly knowledgeable about internet safety and the possible dangers associated with social networking sites.
- A few parents expressed a concern about bullying. However, the large majority of parents, staff and children agree that, although this has been an issue in the recent past, any concerns are now dealt with quickly and effectively.
- The academy has already upgraded its environment, as part of a programme of refurbishment, to improve safety for its pupils further.
- Attendance has improved and is now above the national average, an illustration of the school's strengthening relationship with parents.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and directors, having established a stable teaching staff, have high expectations for the academy and its future development. These are shared by the staff, who are benefiting from the close collaboration with other schools in the partnership, for example from joint training.
- Senior leaders set high expectations for the performance of staff and keep a watchful eye on pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Consequently, the quality of teaching is consistently good, with some that is outstanding, and pupils achieve well.

- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have identified the right priorities to improve teaching even further and accelerate the progress of all groups of pupils.
- The headteacher has introduced a clear system for helping teachers to track the progress of individual pupils. This is used rigorously, so individual progress in reading, writing and mathematics is regularly checked and reported on to directors. Support is provided quickly when it is necessary.
- The new leaders of English and mathematics clearly understand their roles and responsibilities and have undergone training. These members of staff are good role models for teachers, but as yet do not observe teaching and therefore are not fully involved in checking the work of other teachers.
- An effective performance management scheme provides support, challenge and appropriate training for staff. Actions to bring about improvement are always followed through to see if they are successful. Teachers are held to account for the progress of pupils in their classes and know that there is a clear link between pay rises and pupils' good progress.
- Leaders and managers fulfil their statutory duties effectively, including thorough vetting of all those who work in the school. Finances are managed efficiently, for example to ensure that funds such as the pupil premium are used effectively to include pupils in the full range of academy activities and to boost achievement.
- The topics studied bring together different subjects in a way that pupils describe as 'fun and interesting'. Pupils appreciate the visits and visitors which enrich the themes considered. The wider curriculum contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The academy is diligent and effective in promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating any potential discrimination.
- The academy has regular reviews of its work by specialist consultants from the local authority and they have supported the academy as the new leadership structure was established. They now have a less prominent role as they have monitored the effective improvements.
- Leaders make good use of primary school sports funding. Their plans include the employment of coaches in a wider range of sports to encourage pupils to adopt healthier lifestyles. Leaders have also allocated money to train the school's own teachers so that they can deliver these sports in the future.
- The academy's directors support the academy very effectively and have every confidence in its leadership to drive further improvement. As part of the partnership, the diocese supports the academy effectively, and the headteacher and senior leaders work collaboratively with other schools. These links are particularly beneficial for the sharing of best practice and when teachers agree on the standards of pupils' work through marking together.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The academy's governing body is made up of directors. They have worked extremely well with the headteacher to bring it through a very difficult period. Now, together with other senior leaders, they form a formidable team striving to make this good school even better. Led by a very effective Chair, directors ensure that they are fully informed about all aspects of school improvement. They do this through frequent visits to the academy, careful checking of the

headteacher's reports on the quality of teaching and rigorous scrutiny of data on pupils' performance. Directors challenge leaders to ensure that teachers' performance management, pay rises and promotion lead to pupils' improved achievement. Directors check diligently the progress of pupils eligible for the pupil premium to ensure that the money is used effectively. They also check that the new sports funding develops skills and enhances pupils' health and well-being. Directors regularly take part in training to ensure that they are fully up to date with all their areas of responsibility. They ensure that their statutory obligations are fully met, including those relating to pupils' safeguarding.

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	138514
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	440091

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Claire Groom
Headteacher	Eilis Field
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01332 572154
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