

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Burney Drive, Loughton, IG10 2DY

Inspection dates 10–11 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Pupils' achievement has improved this year but is not yet good because the progress of pupils from their individual starting points is not rapid enough.
- Too few pupils make better than the expected progress in mathematics. Pupils' attainment in mathematics is consistently lower than in reading and writing.
- The work pupils are set does not always make sure they have to think and work hard enough to ensure good progress, particularly in mathematics.
- Pupils' work is marked and they are told how they can improve but not all teachers make sure that pupils follow the advice they are given.
- Approximately two thirds of the teaching staff were new this school year. School leaders, including governors, have dealt with this change well but have not been able to ensure consistently good teaching and achievement.
- A minority of parents consider that pupils' behaviour and bullying is not dealt with well and that the school is not well led and managed, mainly related to the high turnover of staff.
- Pupils consider that some unkind or thoughtless behaviour is not dealt with by teachers consistently and to their satisfaction.
- Younger pupils who do not read at home have too few opportunities to practise reading in school.

The school has the following strengths

- In a period of significant change, the headteacher and governors have checked rigorously on the quality of teaching and challenged poor practice.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and attain above average standards in this key skill.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are good. Pupils like school and are keen to learn.
- Pupils enjoy sport and are successful in a range of sports in local competitions.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 16 lessons. In addition, they observed pupils working in small groups with teaching assistants. Some of the visits were with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, governors and staff. Inspectors spoke with separate groups of pupils from each year group from Year 2 to Year 6.
- A discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documentation, including: the school's own evaluation of its performance and its improvement plan; information about pupils' progress and the support given to pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. Inspectors also looked at evidence of leaders' monitoring of teaching, and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in all year groups and heard some pupils from Reception and Year 2 read.
- Inspectors took account the 159 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the school's own recent questionnaire completed by parents. Inspectors spoke with some parents at the start of the school day and also considered letters and emails from parents.
- The 32 responses to the questionnaire for school staff were also taken into consideration.
On the first day of the inspection, seven classes and their teachers were not in school due to national industrial action.

Inspection team

Cheryl Thompson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Najoud Ensaff

Additional Inspector

David Belsey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It has 14 classes, two in each year group.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is well below average. This extra funding is for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- In September 2013, nine new teaching staff, including newly qualified teachers and a deputy headteacher, started at the school. During the school year, a small number of these teachers left the school and were replaced by temporary teachers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is at least good, and enables pupils to make faster progress and attain higher standards, by:
 - all teachers raising their expectations for pupils' achievement
 - pitching work at the right level for the pupils so that their progress is more rapid
 - checking that pupils who find learning difficult, particularly in mathematics, have time for practising and consolidating their learning before moving on to new work
 - making sure that pupils who do not practise reading at home have opportunities to read to an adult regularly in school
 - all teachers making sure that pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve their work and making sure that pupils act on the advice they are given.
- Strengthen the impact of leaders, managers and the governing body on improving pupils' progress and raising standards by allocating subject and other leaders time to check on lessons and small-group work to provide teachers and teaching assistants with detailed advice to help them improve their practice.
- Ensure clear lines of communication for parents and pupils to voice any concerns so that they are confident that these are dealt with to their satisfaction by:
 - making sure that there is a clearly understood process, known by all, for raising any concerns and having them quickly and effectively addressed
 - the senior leadership team and governors discussing with older pupils how they feel they can be involved in solving what they perceive as minor behavioural issues.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Across the school, pupils' rates of progress are too variable, mainly as a result of the variable quality of teaching over their time in school.
- Children in the Reception classes are articulate and very keen to learn. Many start in the classes with well-developed speech and communication skills. However, the activities provided do not always provide enough challenge to help children extend their learning and promote rapid progress. By the time they leave the Reception classes, their attainment is above the levels typical for their age.
- Children who practise reading with their parents make good progress. The small minority who do not read much at home do not have enough opportunities to read to an adult at school. Consequently, they make slower progress than they should. However, across the school, standards in reading are higher than in writing and mathematics.
- Teachers have had recent professional development opportunities to help them to teach phonics (letter sounds and how to use these to read and spell) more effectively. Children in Reception and Years 1 and 2 now make reasonable progress in developing their understanding of phonics.
- This year's results of the national phonic screening check for Year 1 indicate considerable improvement on the low results of the previous two years. However, pupils still have a weakness in their understanding of how to blend sounds together to read words. For example, pupils can say the sounds the individual letters make in 'bus' but cannot easily blend the sounds together to say the word.
- In a few classes, pupils make good progress. Year 6 pupils have made good progress this year in catching up on slower learning in previous years. There is a small increase in the number of the pupils who have made better than expected progress. Standards in mathematics are higher this year and broadly average, as they are in writing. However, this does not represent good progress from pupils' starting points when they joined the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive additional support in lessons but, in mathematics, in particular, this support is not always carefully tailored to what pupils know, understand and need to learn next. These pupils make similar progress to their classmates in reading and writing but, in mathematics, their progress is not as good.
- A relatively small number of pupils in each year group qualify for support through the pupil premium funding. In the main, from their often low starting points, pupils make similar progress to their classmates, except in mathematics where it is less strong. The number of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding in Year 6 in 2013 was too small to report on without risk of identifying individual pupils.
- In the main, the most-able pupils make expected progress. They are keen to learn and work hard at the tasks set them. Across the school, in general, teachers' expectations and planning of work does not ensure consistent challenge to help pupils make the better than expected progress of which they are capable.
- In Year 6, in mathematics this year, teachers have set much higher expectations for the most-able pupils and, as a result, more pupils who attained a high level at Year 2 have made good progress to attain Level 6, the standard ordinarily expected of students about two years older.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- There is not enough good or outstanding teaching and too much that requires improvement. As a result, rates of progress vary across the year groups and not enough pupils are making expected or better than expected progress from starting points in Year 1 that are generally above those typically found.
- When teaching is less effective, it is often because the work that is set does not provide enough challenge for pupils of all abilities.
- Work set for less-able pupils in mathematics is not always underpinned by frequent opportunities to use practical apparatus to help them understand basic concepts. Pupils' work shows that, on occasions, it takes them so long to copy down what they are expected to learn that it leaves them insufficient time for the task.
- In some mathematics lessons observed, the most-able pupils had to complete too much work at what was an easy level for them before they could start on the harder tasks. As a result, they did not have enough time to work at a level to extend their learning further.
- Where teaching is less effective in the Reception classes, the tasks for children to undertake are too easy. Also, not enough attention is paid to ensuring that very basic skills, such as letter formation, are practised correctly.
- The teaching of phonics for the younger pupils is improving as a result of the headteacher's decision to introduce a different way of teaching and provide staff with training to do this. Pupils are beginning to make good use of their knowledge of phonics in their writing to spell the words they want to use.
- Teachers mark pupils' work and provide them with comments to help them improve their work. However, there is not yet consistent practice in making sure that pupils respond to these comments and improve their work.
- Where teaching is consistently good, teachers make sure that the work set closely matches what their pupils need to learn next and there is always an 'extra tricky' task to do to stretch them further. Pupils are very positive about these tasks and like the challenge.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. The main reason is that pupils, mainly those from Year 4 upwards, feel that there is a very small minority of their classmates who say unkind things to others.
- In lessons, pupils behave well and are positive about learning. The vast majority are keen to do well. They are polite and courteous. Older pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities around the school, especially as 'buddy' to a Reception child.
- In the Reception classes, children's behaviour is outstanding. They work happily together and use their well-developed vocabularies to have very good discussions about their tasks. Even when tasks are undemanding, they do not fritter their time away; they find another activity and occupy themselves.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. This is because pupils

feel that improvement is needed in the way that teachers deal with the small number of pupils who say unkind things. Pupils say that if they report this to their teachers, it is not always dealt with and it may happen again. However, they have every confidence that their headteacher 'sorts things out properly'.

- Pupils say they otherwise feel safe in school and most parents agree that this is the case.
- A minority of parents express concern about bullying. Older pupils are able to talk about different types of bullying and risks they might encounter when using the internet. They consider that there is very little 'serious bullying' in the school, and, if this happens, they are very confident that it will be dealt with well.
- Attendance is above average and there are few persistent absentees.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- During what has been a period of significant change, senior leaders, in spite of determined efforts, have not secured enough effective teaching to enable all pupils to make good progress.
- Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across the school are rigorous and undertaken regularly. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a very good understanding of the requirements for judging teaching to be good. School leaders use the information from their lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work to identify areas for further improvement.
- Subject and other leaders have provided good help for new staff to help them follow the school's policies. However, they are not given enough time for checking on teaching and pupils' learning in order to make a strong contribution to improvements.
- Newly qualified teachers are well supported and those who have stayed at the school have made good progress in developing their skills.
- The local authority has recently provided good support for the school. Recent professional development has had a good impact on the range of indoor and outdoor activities for the Reception classes.
- Where weaknesses are identified, the school also buys in support from consultants. For example, professional development sessions on the teaching of phonics has guided staff well. The result is a much higher proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in Year 1 and pupils' increased understanding of how to use phonics to read and spell.
- Good arrangements are in place to check the performance of teachers. The headteacher and senior team use data about pupils' progress and whole-school priorities to set teachers demanding targets to achieve. These targets make it very clear that, unless pupils make acceptable levels of progress, there will be no rise in pay. Poor performance is not tolerated.
- When staff have left mid-year, in order to appoint a member of staff with the skills needed in the school and have a good field of applicants to consider, senior leaders and governors have made temporary staff appointments. This is one of the reasons for the high turnover of staff.
- Although the large majority of parents are supportive of the school, responses on Parent View, discussions with parents, letters and emails during the inspection show that some are less happy. A minority expressed a view that the school did not deal well with bullying. Inspectors

followed up parents' views and found that pupils consider that bullying is rare and is dealt with appropriately.

- A minority of parents felt the school was not well led and managed. They expressed particular dissatisfaction over the high staff turnover. Parents are correct that there has been an unusually high turnover of staff, and this has meant that some classes have had more than one teacher in one year and, on occasions, have had long-term supply teachers teaching their class. The changes of staff have meant that behaviour management procedures have not been applied with sufficient consistency, resulting in some concerns not having been dealt with as they should and not being reported to senior leaders to deal with.
- Pupils enjoy learning because subjects are linked into 'themes'. For example, younger pupils are studying 'mini-beasts'. They complete tally charts of the different insects they find and have visited Epping Forest to gain first-hand understanding of the range of habitats. Older pupils are very enthusiastic about the residential visits, where they try out a variety of adventurous activities. They comment how they have learned to 'get on with different people' in these situations.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors have a precise picture of what needs to improve in the school and appropriate plans in place to build on recent improvements.
- The school makes good use of the primary sports funding. It has been used well to enhance physical education at the school through the local school's sports partnership. The school now offers a wider choice of sports clubs, and pupils take part in a wide range of competitive sports.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have developed their roles considerably since the previous inspection. They have all attended training and increased their understanding about pupils' achievement and the strengths and weaknesses in the school's work.
 - Governors are ambitious for the school. They want it to be outstanding and know what they must do to achieve this.
 - They have given the headteacher their full support through the recent staff turbulence.
 - Governors have developed their understanding of the information they receive about the school's performance, including performance data, so that they can make secure judgements about the school's performance.
 - Governors question the headteacher as to why performance is not better.
 - Finances are managed well, including spending of pupil premium and sports funding in order to increase pupils' achievement.
 - The governing body makes sure that the school meets the current national requirements for safeguarding and child protection.

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	115295
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	443931

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	411
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carlos Camacho
Headteacher	Jacqui Richards
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2010
Telephone number	020 85086315
Fax number	020 85084095
Email address	admin@st-johnfisher.essex.sch.uk

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