

St John Fisher Roman Catholic Primary School

Stanycliffe Lane, Middleton, Manchester, M24 2PB

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- The achievement of all groups of pupils in all key stages across the school is good. They make good progress from their below-average starting points, and by the end of Year 6, reach standards that are similar to those of other pupils nationally in both English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good with some that is outstanding. Activities engage and captivate pupils' interests.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. Teaching provides a strong focus on children's early number skills and language development.
- Reading is taught well across the school. Pupils quickly become fluent readers and develop a real love of books.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of how to stay safe. Attendance has improved and is now broadly average.
- An interesting curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to enjoy learning; they take part in a wide range of clubs, sporting and musical events.
- The very dedicated headteacher, supported by an effective leadership team and governing body, has been successful in maintaining the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The school continues to improve at a good rate.
- Parents are positive about the school and say their children learn well. They are given regular opportunities to find out about the school's work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Information about pupils' progress is not always used well to ensure that work for the most able pupils is challenging enough.
- Not all pupils benefit from helpful comments about their work. They do not always have the opportunity to respond to teachers' comments nor are they expected to do so.
- Checks on the impact of teaching and learning by subject leaders do not focus sharply enough on how well different groups of pupils learn.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups. They visited 16 teaching sessions.
- Inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors listened to groups of pupils reading. They looked at work in pupils' books and the school's information showing pupils' progress.
- They looked at a range of documents provided by the school, including assessment information, minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school action plans, the self-evaluation report, records of the monitoring of lessons and information relating to teachers' performance management and professional development. The school website and records relating to safeguarding were also checked.
- Inspectors took account of 23 responses to the Ofsted online survey (Parent View), the school's analysis of a recent survey of parent views and spoke to parents informally. Inspectors also considered 12 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Andrew Morley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Catherine Beeks

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St John Fisher is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding allocated to the school for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, or children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs 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 below average.
- A lower-than-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- Pupils are mainly classified as White British.
- In 2013, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding by making sure that:
 - the best use is made of information about pupils' progress to provide sufficiently challenging work throughout each lesson for the most able
 - pupils in all classes benefit from helpful comments about how to improve their work and have the opportunity and expectation to respond to these comments.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by making sure all subject leaders consistently check up on the teaching and learning of different groups of pupils in their subject, and take action if there is a dip in the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The skills of children when they join the school in the Reception Year vary from year to year. In 2013, the majority entered with skills below those typical for their age, especially in their understanding of the world. Children make good progress because of the well-organised and stimulating learning activities, with most beginning Year 1 as confident learners.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics and, by the end of Year 2, standards are close to the national average; this represents good progress from their individual starting points. In national test results in Year 6 in 2013, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were broadly average. This represents good progress from pupils' previously lower starting points, particularly in reading and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who made the expected rate of progress was above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' attainment in writing is improving. They now have more opportunities to practise and apply their writing skills in a range of subjects. Pupils have worked hard to improve their spelling and grammar and are keen to present their work well.
- Achievement in mathematics is also improving. More pupils are now achieving the higher Levels 5 and 6 by the time they complete Year 6.
- Reading is a strength. Pupils in Year 1 performance was well above average in the 2013 national reading screening check. This reflects the greater emphasis put on the teaching of the sounds that letters make, so that pupils are developing their skills to become fluent readers. Pupils enjoy reading and teachers plan a range of engaging activities to develop their reading skills. Teachers also work with small groups to provide direct support to pupils. Older pupils speak enthusiastically about different authors and read widely across a range of literature, demonstrating a clear understanding of what they have read.
- The pupil premium funding is used well and eligible pupils make good progress. The funding is directed towards supporting pupils so that the gap between their attainment and that of all other pupils is narrowing year-on-year. In Year 6 in 2013, the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals overall in reading, writing and mathematics was about one term behind that of other pupils. This gap is narrower than the gap seen between similar groups nationally. The funding is also used effectively to improve pupils' self-esteem and confidence.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress in all subjects and are reaching their potential due to the effective support and well-planned help they receive.
- The small minority of pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress.
- More pupils are reaching the higher levels of attainment and are making faster progress, because expectations of what they can achieve are higher. Even so, sometimes the work provided is not challenging enough and some pupils could achieve even better.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils make good progress because of good teaching throughout the school. Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils very well, which helps pupils to remain on task and learn well. Teachers have good subject knowledge, generally high expectations and consistently ask good searching questions that enable pupils to think for themselves and want to do their best.
- The relationship between teachers and pupils is good and so pupils want to do what the teachers ask them to do. For example, in English, Year 4 pupils developed and acted out a dialogue between two characters. Strong collaboration between pupils, skilfully facilitated by their teacher through very precise questioning, helped to move the learning forward and ensure all pupils made good progress.
- Children in the Reception classes benefit from outstanding teaching. Children enjoy inspiring and well-planned activities, with a strong emphasis on developing children's number and language

skills and extending their vocabulary. For example, children were inspired by the story 'Black Hat Bob' and worked together to learn their letters and sounds. Children's progress was carefully checked and teachers skilfully clarified correct pronunciation to maximise the progress being made.

- Additional adults in the classroom are used well. They are well briefed and support pupils effectively, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils who benefit from the pupil premium funding are also well supported in different ways to promote good progress. On occasions, they benefit from individual teaching or teaching in small groups to boost achievement.
- Physical education is taught well. When the specialist coaches lead classes, the teachers join in so that they can learn techniques to use in their own lessons. For example, in Year 2, pupils and teachers alike were learning basic ball-handling skills and pupils enjoyed making progress alongside their teachers.
- While in some classes, pupils are given clear guidance and helpful comments as to how they can improve their work, this is not consistent across all classes. Pupils are not given the time they need nor are they consistently challenged to follow and act upon their teachers' advice.
- The most able pupils are enthusiastic to learn. When set tasks to do on their own, they complete them sensibly and sustain their interest. However, information about their current progress is not always used well to plan sufficiently challenging work throughout each lesson. These pupils sometimes complete similar tasks to the others before they are given the opportunity to move on to more challenging work, and so the pace of their learning is held back.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Typically, pupils are polite, friendly and very considerate of each other. They are well motivated, settle to work quickly and enjoy all the school has to offer.
- Relationships throughout the school are secure and effective. Pupils are kind and courteous to adults and each other. The playground is a safe, harmonious place because pupils have plenty to do, with a wide range of activities and play equipment.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. They play an active role in the school and relish the opportunities to take on new roles and responsibilities, such as working as 'playground pals' to support the younger children in their play. The school councillors act with maturity in their role.
- In the large majority of lessons, pupils concentrate well; attitudes to learning are very positive and pupils show a desire to learn. They participate well in classroom activities. Pupils are well equipped for their lessons and settle very quickly to their work. Pupils are proud of their books, which are neat and well kept. However, in a small minority of lessons, pupils do not produce the standard of work of which they are capable.
- The school's records show that the school deals effectively with a small number of pupils with behavioural or emotional difficulties, and the incidents of poor behaviour are few. Pupils are very appreciative and are keen to attend the 'Pyramid Club', which supports the development of their confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupils are clear that bullying is rare, although they are knowledgeable about the forms this can take, such as cyber-bullying or racist name-calling. They have clear strategies for combating any minor problems and have confidence in the adults to help them where necessary.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and the parents who completed the online questionnaire or who spoke to inspectors agree.
- Pupils are developing good strategies for keeping themselves safe from any harm, such as from cyber-bullying. This is achieved through learning activities in school, such as those during Internet Safety Week, when pupils and parents benefited from learning how to stay safe when using the internet.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school, as reflected in the improvement in attendance, which is now at the national average. School leaders work hard to encourage regular attendance and reduce any unnecessary absences.

- The majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View, the Ofsted online survey, and who spoke to inspectors, said that behaviour in the school is managed well. Parents appreciate the opportunity to 'stay and play' with their children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is very dedicated and ensures a strong sense of ambition in the school, as well as a determination to continue to improve. She is very clear about how the school judges its effectiveness, and uses this information astutely to prioritise areas for improvement.
- Teachers have clear and challenging targets for improving their performance, which focus on pupils' achievement and teachers' wider responsibilities across the school. They know what constitutes good teaching practice and how their pay progresses only when their targets are met.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team work well together to drive forward the necessary improvements. They check the quality of teaching, pupils' attainment and progress regularly and carefully throughout the year. They use this information to set challenging targets to promote faster rates of progress for different groups of pupils. However, leaders are yet to ensure that work set for the most able is always challenging enough.
- Subject leaders are becoming more confident in their roles and are ambitious for the school. They have taken steps to improve the quality of teaching in their subject by providing a range of training activities. However, their checks on teaching are not yet focused sharply enough on the impact on the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils in lessons and in their books.
- Pupils' learning experiences across a range of subjects are varied and memorable, particularly in music and sport. The school provides a wide array of enrichment activities, including performing at the Rochdale Music Festival and being part of the Young Voices Choir.
- The Catholic ethos is at the heart of the school and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The school provides pupils with a clear moral and social framework and promotes their understanding of cultural diversity well through assemblies, charity work and visits to a range of places of worship.
- The school has good plans in place and is using the primary school sport funding effectively. Staff are able to develop their skills alongside sports specialists to help sustain new activities.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted at all times and any discrimination is tackled well. The school tailors carefully and effectively the support for those pupils who benefit from additional funding in order to raise their achievement.
- The school benefits from involvement in local networks of schools to develop leadership and has a very positive relationship with Cardinal Langley Catholic High School. The local authority provides light-touch support to this good school.
- All statutory requirements for safeguarding are met and systems are managed efficiently. Staff training in areas such as child protection is up to date.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors use their skills, knowledge and experience to hold senior leaders to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and have an accurate understanding of these aspects. Governors undertake training to enhance the skills relevant to their responsibilities. They accurately analyse a wealth of data about the school's performance to inform themselves of pupils' standards and progress achieved. They are thorough in ensuring that promotion up the salary scale is justified by staff performance and results. Members of the governing body consider carefully how best to use the pupil premium funding. They check regularly that use of this extra spending is justified by the results arising from the work of the additional staff employed with this money, and that eligible pupils are making the progress intended.

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	105849
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	444207

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	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Wall
Headteacher	A M Kenny
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2010
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