

St John Fisher and Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Woodhouse Lane, Benchill, Manchester M22 9NW

Inspection dates	19–20 April 2016
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders have not addressed underachievement in the school. Pupils do not do as well as they should.
- Disadvantaged pupils significantly underachieve, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Leaders' monitoring and evaluation of the impact of actions to support pupils' learning are not sharp enough. Consequently, leaders' self-evaluation is overgenerous.
- Senior leaders do not hold middle leaders sufficiently to account. The quality of middle leadership is too variable. Some subject leaders do not have enough knowledge of standards in their subject to secure improvements.
- Governors are not adequately informed, particularly regarding the impact of actions on pupils' learning. Consequently, they are not able to hold leaders sufficiently to account. Governors have low expectations of disadvantaged pupils.
- The quality of teaching is too variable. Teaching does not consistently reflect school policies. It often does not present sufficient challenge to pupils, particularly the most able, to allow them to reach the highest standards.
- Some teachers' assessments of progress are overgenerous and do not reflect the work in pupils' books, particularly in writing.
- Teachers' subject knowledge of special educational needs and the new national curriculum requires further development.
- Persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils, although reducing slowly, remains high.
- The early years requires improvement. The proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development to ensure they are ready for the next stage of their education, although improving slowly, is below the national figure.

The school has the following strengths

- There have been improvements in the teaching of phonics (the sounds linked to letters) that have led to better achievement.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning is positive and reflects the school's caring ethos.
- Pupils' welfare and personal development is strong. Pupils feel safe and demonstrate commendable conduct and attitudes to learning.
- Parents are strongly supportive of the school.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - systematically and rigorously evaluating the impact of actions to improve pupils' learning, particularly those relating to improving outcomes for disadvantaged and most-able pupils
 - sharply focusing the evaluation of teaching on the impact it has on pupils' learning and systematically checking that areas for improvement have been acted upon effectively
 - improving the quality and breadth of information received by the governing body and multi-academy trust so that they are better equipped to hold leaders to account
 - improving the quality of middle leadership and more rigorously holding them to account to ensure they have best impact on securing improvement in their areas of responsibility
 - developing the rigour and accuracy of the school's self-evaluation
 - raising governors' expectations of the outcomes for pupils especially those who are disadvantaged.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged and those most able
 - ensuring teachers use accurate assessment to plan appropriately challenging work for the most able, including those who are disadvantaged
 - ensuring teachers adhere to the school's policies on teaching including those relating to feedback and marking
 - developing teachers' subject knowledge of special educational needs and the new national curriculum.
- Improve the outcomes for pupils by:
 - ensuring the most able receive sufficient challenge and guidance to reach their full potential
 - ensuring appropriate and sharply focused support for disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most able, so they close the gaps with other pupils nationally and their peers in school
 - reducing the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils further
 - continuing to enhance the quality of teaching in early years, particularly of core mathematical and English skills, so greater proportions of children reach a good level of development.

External reviews of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

It is recommended that this school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leaders and managers have not demonstrated the capacity to bring about the sustained and rapid improvement required in the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, the standards reached by this large group of pupils have declined. The gaps between them and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally and others in the school have widened.
- The school's self-evaluation is overgenerous and sometimes based upon anticipation not evidence. The school's own self-evaluation documentation presented to inspectors was last updated in September 2015. In it, leaders judged the academy to be good in all areas even though the outcomes for significant groups of pupils were poor and leaders were aware of significant issues in the quality of teaching. Leaders' judgement was based on the anticipation that their actions would lead to improvement.
- Leaders are aware of the priorities for development in the school, particularly the need to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. A number of new initiatives have been implemented since September 2015, but they have not been focused sharply enough. Leaders have made no provision for the specific support of pupils who are both disadvantaged and most able, to help them accelerate their learning and reach their full potential.
- Leaders have not evaluated the impact of their spending of pupil premium funding fully. Some programmes provided through the pupil premium grant, including training courses for parents, are not evaluated to check their impact on pupils' attainment. Others, including the provision of fruit for key stage 2 pupils, are not evaluated at all. Senior leaders have not ensured sufficient improvement in the quality of teaching across the school. Their monitoring does not follow up systematically areas previously identified for improvement or check that the school's policies are being implemented consistently.
- Middle leadership is not strong enough across the school; these leaders' action planning is variable in quality. They do not all have a secure understanding of the quality of teaching in their subjects or of how well pupils achieve compared to the standards expected for their age. This is because they do not check often enough or with sufficient rigour.
- Leadership is more effective in the early years and in the management of safeguarding and pupils' welfare, where leaders demonstrate confident and secure understanding of their responsibilities. They keep detailed records and regularly check and evaluate the impact of their actions.
- Leaders recognise the importance of attendance at school in helping pupils to learn. Using pupil premium funding, they have employed an attendance officer to improve attendance. As a result of the robust challenge to any absence, the rate of persistent absence of boys has reduced this year. However, persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils, who form the majority of pupils in school, remains high.
- Leaders are aware of the priorities for improvement and these are reflected in the school's development plan. The plan is well structured and regularly reviewed by staff. Targets for improvement are ambitious and appropriate actions are identified that demonstrate the commitment of leaders to improving the school. However, leaders' checks on how effectively teachers are implementing their policies and the impact on pupils' learning are not tenacious or rigorous enough.
- Leaders have established better procedures for the induction of new staff who have joined the school since September 2015 so that they are clear about the expectations of the school and its policies. Leaders provide a broad and balanced curriculum. It is supplemented by a range of clubs and activities, including the use of a local technology centre to provide exciting and stimulating activities for older pupils around computing. They have chosen to follow the new national curriculum and are developing teachers' skills and confidence in specific aspects such as computing and the deeper understanding of mathematical problem-solving through staff training and external support from a wide range of providers.
- Leaders use the additional sports funding effectively to provide opportunities for pupils to take part in sporting activities and adopt healthy lifestyles. Funding has been used to give pupils greater access to sports training and competitions in a variety of sports including lacrosse and cross-country. Additionally, funding is used to support staff to develop their teaching skills by working alongside external specialist coaches.
- **The governance of the academy**
 - Governors do not receive sufficiently detailed information from senior leaders and external quality assurance professionals to allow them to hold leaders to account effectively. Governors primarily rely upon the information presented to them by the headteacher and the quality assurance reports

commissioned by the trust. The information they receive from external quality assurance professionals lacks focus on the important issues in school such as the performance of groups.

- Governors do not have sufficiently high expectations of disadvantaged pupils in school.
- The multi-academy trust is aware of the school's difficulties and accepts it has not prioritised any additional challenge and support.
- Governors and the trust have not ensured all the statutorily required information is placed on the school's website regarding governance.
- Governors are very committed to the school and its caring ethos. Some governors, for example the governor responsible for safeguarding, regularly visit the school and work alongside senior and middle leaders to see the life of the school.
- Governors have a secure understanding of how performance management links to teachers' pay.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The safeguarding policy is up to date and meets current requirements, including those relating to protecting pupils from radicalisation and extremism. The policy reflects the effective practice seen in the school. The robust safeguarding procedures are followed rigorously by well-trained staff. Records are appropriately detailed, stored securely and are quickly accessible. This ensures concerns are rapidly and effectively communicated so appropriate actions can be implemented. Senior leaders and staff work well with parents to develop a culture of safety, for example through the provision of online safety advice via the school website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- Too much teaching over time and across the school does not meet the pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, do not make the progress they should and underachieve compared with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally and others in school.
- Questioning is not used effectively by teachers in all classes to check and develop pupils' understanding. Some teachers' insecurity in subject knowledge means that pupils' misconceptions are not corrected and pupils do not develop the vocabulary they need to help them deepen their understanding.
- Teachers' low expectations of pupils result in a lack of challenge in the work that is set for them. This is particularly the case for the most-able pupils. For example, higher-ability pupils in upper key stage 2 mathematics classes complete easy tasks before being given the opportunity to extend their learning through harder challenges on the same topic.
- The inconsistent implementation of the school's marking and feedback policy means that some pupils are not given appropriate feedback and guidance on how to improve their work. Where it is followed rigorously, for example in one Year 4 class, the quality of the feedback helps pupils to improve their learning and move forward. However, in some books the quality of marking falls short of the requirements of the school's policy. Consequently, pupils are given inaccurate or vague guidance on how to improve and little opportunity to act upon it.
- The accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' work is inconsistent across the school. Where assessment is inaccurate, the quality of work seen in pupils' books shows that pupils make less progress than is suggested in the school's tracking. Consequently, the rates of progress shown in the school's own data are overgenerous in some year groups. Over-reliance on test results to check progress in subjects such as mathematics has been recognised by teachers as being too narrow to provide an accurate reflection of pupils' understanding. Some actions have been implemented recently to begin to address this.
- The scrutiny of pupils' work in books by subject leaders does not sufficiently help teachers to improve their practice. Their work scrutiny does not focus on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and leaders do not check that the areas for improvement that are identified are then acted on.
- Most pupils read accurately and say they enjoy books. However, older pupils say that they do not get enough time to read because of the school's current focus on revision for end of key stage tests. Pupils are less confident to discuss their reading in more depth.
- There are pockets of better teaching across the school, particularly in key stage 1 and Year 4. Here, teaching builds systematically upon pupils' prior knowledge and supports them to apply their skills successfully. For example, pupils were able to use their prior knowledge of addition and subtraction to undertake calculation linked to climbing Mount Everest and identify the position of base camps. In a key stage 1 poetry lesson, the teacher's adept use of questions and technical language allowed pupils to develop their understanding of adjectives and adverbs.

- Better teaching of phonics has resulted in improved outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check over the last three years. More pupils are reaching the expected standard and the gap with the national average has been reduced.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability has recently improved under the leadership of the special educational needs coordinator who took up this responsibility in the spring term 2015. However, leaders recognise that much more work needs to be done to improve teachers' knowledge of special educational needs so as to have best impact on pupils' learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils develop their confidence in learning and show this through their good attitudes during lessons in which they are focused on their given tasks. However, they rarely demonstrate sufficient self-assurance and confidence to take the lead in their learning.
- Pupils are encouraged to develop their understanding of responsibility through their roles as school councillors, house and deputy house captains. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Pupils develop empathy for other people; for example, pupils have recently been exploring what it must feel like to be a refugee fleeing from a war in Syria. Pupils learn to actively support charitable causes and develop their understanding of fundamental British values, including tolerance and respect.
- Pupils feel safe in school because they are well cared for and feel confident that members of staff will help them if they have any issues. Pupils know how to keep safe, including while online, because of the guidance they receive. For example, the school participates in safer internet week and involves local police community support officers in the delivery of online safety guidance.
- Pupils' physical and emotional well-being is promoted well through the excellent relationships with staff. Pupils are well cared for through the highly effective nurture groups and links with external agencies such as the multi-academy trust's own social worker.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying and say that instances are rare. They say that sometimes pupils call each other names, but staff deal with this effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The school's actions to reduce persistent absenteeism for disadvantaged pupils have not had the desired impact and this remains high. Overall attendance is close to the national average.
- Pupils are attentive in class and quickly follow instructions. They show respect to their teachers and there is little minor disruption to learning.
- Conduct of pupils around the school is commendable; pupils are polite and courteous. They play well together at social times.
- Parents who spoke with inspectors or who responded to the online questionnaire feel that their children are safe, happy and well cared for in school.

Outcomes for pupils are inadequate

- Pupils do not do as well as they should across year groups and in most subjects. In the 2015 standardised assessments, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected standards for their age were significantly below national averages in mathematics and English punctuation, spelling and grammar. The proportions of pupils reaching the higher levels of attainment in mathematics, reading and English grammar, punctuation and spelling were also significantly below national averages. The proportions of pupils achieving the expected standards for their age in writing based upon teacher assessments was higher than the national figure.
- In 2015, pupils left the school on average two terms behind others nationally in mathematics and reading and four terms behind in English grammar, spelling and punctuation. Consequently, they were not well prepared for the next stage of their education.

- Pupils who are currently in the school are not making enough progress from their starting points in each year group. Many pupils are not working at the expected standards for their age, particularly in upper key stage 2 because of the weak quality of teaching they have received over time.
- Disadvantaged pupils, who make up the majority of pupils at the school, underachieve significantly compared with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally and others in school. In all subjects, this gap has widened every year for the last three years; disadvantaged pupils were almost a year behind others at the end of 2015.
- The standards of attainment in key stage 1 have remained considerably below those seen nationally for some time due to weaknesses in the quality of teaching pupils have received. Teachers in key stage 1, particularly those new to the key stage, are beginning to bring about some improvement to pupils' learning, but it is too soon to say this improvement is significant or sustained.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in phonics in Year 1 improved but remained below national average. By the time pupils left key stage 1, the proportion of pupils at the expected standard in phonics was in line with national averages.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability currently in school make expected progress from their starting points relative to their needs because of the support they receive and the school's effective nurture group.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- The leader responsible for early years recognises that she is only part of the way along the journey to improve the outcomes for children in the early years foundation stage. She has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in provision. Her actions, including the better sharing of information between Nursery and Reception, have resulted in slow but sustained improvement to children's outcomes.
- Children enter the early years with knowledge and skills that are mostly below those expected for their age. They make expected progress from their starting points because of the quality of teaching they receive. However, by the time they leave, too few children reach the good level of development that will equip them well for their next stage of education. Leaders recognise the need to enhance the quality of teaching further to present more challenge to children.
- Assessment of children's learning in the early years has improved and is now accurate and backed by a wide range of evidence. However, these records are not easily accessible; this hinders parents' use of them to learn about and contribute to their children's learning.
- Children enjoy coming to school in early years because of the fun and stimulating activities provided for them and the caring nature of staff. They play and work together well and collaborate on activities because staff clearly show them what to do. In Nursery, children eagerly joined in clapping and singing games that helped them understand the syllables in their names because the teaching assistant ensured they felt safe and comfortable to participate in this activity. Activities link back to the theme or topic that children are studying. However, some children lose concentration when not directed by an adult.
- Parents are happy with the provision for the children in early years. They appreciate the positive relationships with staff and they attend workshops that help them to understand the techniques the school uses to teach their children.
- Leaders ensure that the standards relating to the welfare and safety of children are met, so children feel and are safe.

School details

Unique reference number	139467
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10011038

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	343
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maureen Sweeney
Headteacher	Dominic Hemington
Telephone number	0161 998 3422
Website	http://clc2.uniservity.com/GroupHomepage.asp
Email address	admin@st-johnfisher-st-thomasmore.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 September 2012

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- Over half of the pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. This is well above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support the achievement of pupils eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- Slightly more than half the pupils attending the school are from minority ethnic groups, and for nearly half of the pupils in school English is not their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is lower than that seen nationally.
- The school meets the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not meet requirements for the publication of information about governance, special educational needs information and the delegation of authority of governance on its website.
- A daily breakfast club is held on the premises, open to pupils and their parents.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of teaching and learning and looked at pupils' work. They listened to pupils reading and talked with pupils about their lessons and school life.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and representatives of the local governing body, the multi-academy trust and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documentation relating to pupils' progress and to school management, including the arrangements to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- The inspectors spoke with parents and staff and took account of the responses to the online staff questionnaire.
- There were no responses to the online pupils' questionnaire. Inspectors considered the 15 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

John Nixon, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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