

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Burney Drive, Loughton, Essex IG10 2DY

Inspection dates

14–15 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Changes to the leadership team and staff turnover have slowed the rate at which the school has been able to secure good teaching and better pupil outcomes. Much has been done to ensure that the vast majority of teaching vacancies are now securely filled with permanent staff.
- Where new leaders have had regular, dedicated time to work with colleagues to improve their practice, the impact is evident and pupils' progress has improved. However, the support is not always targeted to areas that are most needed, based on accurate monitoring and review by senior leaders.
- The quality of teaching is improving but is variable across the school and within subjects. It is not yet consistently good and some teaching is weak.
- Not enough pupils make the progress they need to catch up with their peers. Not enough pupils reach the highest standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave key stages 1 or 2.
- Teachers do not consistently use assessments of what pupils can do to inform their planning and to set work at the appropriate level for different pupils. This includes those who are most able and sometimes those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Teachers do not always give pupils clear guidance about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Leaders' communication and engagement with parents have not been sufficiently successful to win over the hearts and minds of some of them.
- Nearly all leaders are new to post and do not have sufficient clarity about the role they play in whole-school improvement. They do not yet have clear priorities based on accurate use of reliable information. It is too early to see the impact of their improvement work.
- The school's website is not wholly compliant with statutory regulations.

The school has the following strengths

- Good-quality teaching in the early years ensures that children get a successful start to their education. They make good progress from their starting points and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils are courteous and polite. Attendance is above average and punctuality is good.
- The systematic and effective teaching of phonics ensures that pupils achieve well in the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- Teachers have high expectations of presentation of pupils' work in English and mathematics and, as a result, the standard of presentation is high.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact all leaders have on pupils' progress by making sure that:
 - senior leaders regularly review the impact of their actions so that the whole school is focused on the key priorities
 - leaders' communication and engagement with parents improves so that parents are supported in helping their children's learning at home
 - roles and responsibilities are clear, and the part that each leader plays in improving pupils' outcomes is understood through robust performance management processes
 - new leaders develop action plans that contain key priorities based on accurate self-evaluation, and have clear outcomes and are regularly reviewed
 - leaders have dedicated, regular time to continue to work with teachers where practice has been identified as weaker through accurate review of pupils' outcomes.
- Increase pupils' progress and raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to write at length and apply their writing skills in a wider range of subjects
 - identifying and developing pupils' reading skills when they are working with adults, particularly in key stage 2
 - ensuring that pupils' mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding are consolidated and applied in problem-solving activities.
- Further develop the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - planning offers opportunities for the most able pupils to be challenged and achieve higher standards across the curriculum
 - teachers use assessments of what all pupils can do, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, so that their needs are consistently planned for and met
 - pupils are given clear guidance about how they can improve their work
 - teachers regularly check on pupils' learning during lessons and confidently adapt their teaching in direct response to pupils' understanding.
- An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Continued changes in leadership and teaching staff have made it challenging for the school to have an accurate view of what the school has achieved and which aspects of its work still need to improve. The pace of improvement since the previous inspection has been slow and some areas for improvement that were identified remain a priority. Consequently, not all teaching is good and there remains inconsistency in pupils' progress.
- As a team, senior leaders are beginning to have an informed view of the school's strengths and areas for development and are keen to improve the school even further. However, they have not yet developed action plans that detail clear outcomes, timescales and review. Sometimes, this has resulted in a lack of focus on existing and emerging key priorities.
- The executive headteacher is currently training teachers to take on more responsibilities for leading subject areas. Staff are keen to make the most of these opportunities and have worked with some leaders from other schools to further develop their practice.
- Leaders of English and mathematics are new to post and are beginning to have a clear picture of what needs to improve and how they must go about it. However, they too have no clear plan of monitoring and review that would enable them not only to tightly focus on key priorities but also to celebrate the good work that exists in some areas of the school.
- Leaders have ensured that staff training is regular and useful. They are now beginning to match training to the areas identified for improvement. Staff report that they feel well supported and are eager to continue to improve their practice.
- The curriculum has been developed so that it addresses the new and more demanding national curriculum. The curriculum overview provides useful information about the areas of learning that pupils will explore. However, the skills, knowledge and understanding that will be acquired in different subject areas and how English and mathematics will be consolidated are not yet adequately monitored or evaluated. Pupils say that they enjoy the numerous after-school clubs and trips, for example to the Isle of Wight. Pupils learn French and benefit from the teaching of a specialist. During one lesson, two pupils were engrossed in role play in French and were ably translating.
- Leaders have high expectations of presentation in pupils' work and, as a result, it is of good quality throughout the school and in a variety of subjects. The school's policy for feedback to pupils on how they can improve their work is developing. Where this is applied consistently, teachers have high expectations also of what pupils can do and pupils' progress is improving faster than in other classes.
- The school effectively promotes British values. Pupils learn about respect and tolerance and have a good understanding of the monarchy and the part it continues to play in British history.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. It is reflected in the general good conduct of pupils and their relationships

with each other and adults. Pupils learn about equality and diversity in lessons about, for example, Martin Luther King.

- Pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils is not yet used as effectively as it should be. The result is that this group of pupils is not doing as well as others nationally from similar starting points. Leaders are keen to ensure the best possible use of this funding and will be arranging for an independent review to be carried out.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the sports premium funding is used effectively to engage pupils in a variety of sports and activities. They are rightly proud of the school's performance in competitions. The direct impact this has on the most vulnerable pupils is yet to be fully evaluated so that future funding can be more focused and targeted to this group.
- Leaders' relationship with parents is better than at the previous inspection. However, the further development of positive relationships is still a key priority for the school so that confidence in leaders is better established. Many parents speak positively about the school and the recent improvements, in particular the appointment of an almost complete team of permanent teachers. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View reported that their children are happy, safe and well cared for.
- The local authority continues to provide support to the school and has done so for the last two years, bringing about some improvements since the previous inspection, for example in early years, where practice and the learning environment have improved considerably. The school has benefited from links with other schools.

Governance of the school

- Changes to governance have occurred several times since the previous inspection. In August 2016, an interim executive board was put in place to address continuing concerns about pupil outcomes in the school. The board has yet to meet formally. However, two members of the previous governing body, including the chair of governors, are part of the board and know the context and history of the school. The chair of this board is working closely with the local authority and the school's community to secure the school's future.
 - Minutes of previous governing body minutes show some level of detail and challenge about pupils' achievement. However, information received by the governing body has not always been as accurate or comprehensive as it should have been. Consequently, some aspects of the school's work are not well known by the board. For example, the full impact of the school's additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has not been regularly and thoroughly reviewed.
 - Governors have an understanding about how performance management systems should ensure underperformance is challenged. With more accurate evaluation of the school, this will undoubtedly support governors, who have the potential to take the school forward, in undertaking this important function with more rigour, ensuring that pupil outcomes are at its forefront.
 - The school's website is currently non-compliant. However, leaders are aware of what needs to be done to ensure that it meets requirements and are beginning to undertake the work. For example, policies that are out of date are awaiting review by the new interim executive board at its first meeting.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The single central record and personnel files are well maintained and meet requirements, although do not always reflect the very best practice. However, any concerns relating to pupils' safety and welfare are reported promptly and the necessary actions are taken by designated staff. Child protection training is up to date and staff have attended professional development to help them understand the duty they have in preventing pupils from radicalisation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- As a result of recent appointments, the overall profile of teaching is now better than at the last monitoring inspection. However, there remains some variation in the quality of teaching between classes, year groups and subjects.
- Where teaching is not good enough, pupils do not always know what is expected of them or how to improve their work. In one lesson, when an inspector asked pupils what they had to do, a pupil replied, 'Nobody on this table knows what they are doing so we are just playing'. The most able pupils are asked to complete activities that are too easy for them or to repeat activities that they have already achieved. As a result, levels of progress are not as high as they could be for key groups of pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is improving. Work seen in last year's books shows that pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 made better progress than other classes. However, in the majority of other year groups in key stage 2, this is still too variable in English, mathematics and across other areas of the curriculum. The variation in teachers' expectations hinders pupils' progress. Teachers are also not providing enough opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematical and literacy skills in a wider range of subjects.
- Leaders have developed new assessment systems in order to gain a clearer picture of pupils' starting points. However, thorough and detailed analysis of pupils' outcomes is still not routine and is not adequately shared with all adults and leaders. Consequently, pupils' progress, in particular, is not tracked as carefully as it could be and some pupils are not catching up as quickly as they need to from their individual starting points.
- Leaders report that teachers' use of standardised tests is developing so that planning is more accurate than it had previously been. Although these termly results are used to plan lessons, too many pupils' needs are not being sufficiently and regularly well met. In the best practice, teachers challenge pupils so that they can check on the pupils' understanding and move them on in their learning. However, this is not routine and therefore pupils' misconceptions are not always addressed.
- Learning support assistants are used well in some classes to support pupils' learning. However, a minority of learning support assistants do not make good use of their time when pupils are being taught by the teacher. The special educational needs coordinator has a good understanding of pupils who need additional support and is beginning to work with learning support assistants and teachers to ensure that pupils' progress is maximised.

- Phonics is well taught and early reading is taught well so that pupils in key stage 1 reach the expected standard for their age. Pupils throughout the school are enthusiastic about reading. However, the teaching of reading skills is not consistently good and the school has prioritised this for the coming year. As a consequence, the good start pupils get in their reading is not consistently built upon in key stage 2 and pupils do not make enough progress by the time they reach the end of Year 6.
- Parents whose children are in Reception are very pleased with the school. One parent said, 'I really liked how the school did a home visit so that I could really talk about my child and I could tell them what he is like'. However, a number of parents who spoke with inspectors or who made their views known in emails or through Ofsted's Parent View survey are concerned that their children are not making enough progress. They are also concerned about the continual changes in staffing and leadership that have occurred during the last two years right up to the beginning of this academic year. They feel that leaders do not communicate well with them. It is clear that parents want to help their children with their learning at home and are keen to work with the school more in this aspect.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy attending lessons because they say that teachers and learning support assistants usually help them to understand their learning in lessons. Pupils are confident and inquisitive at St John Fisher.
- Pupils know how to stay safe and look after themselves. They speak confidently about staying safe while online and in the local community.
- Pupils are well supported to become good citizens. They have a good understanding of democracy and the role of the monarchy because teachers promote British values effectively.
- The school has effective relationships with outside professionals and is active in referring any concerns that may place children at risk, and in following up actions to ensure that pupils remain safe.
- Pupils' pride in their work is consistent. The standard of presentation of pupils' work is of a high quality, particularly in English and mathematics, and is developing well in other subjects.
- A number of parents say that the school does not respond well to concerns they raise. However, the number of complaints to the school has reduced. Leaders recognise that still more can be done to further improve communication with parents and capitalise on parents' desire to support their children's learning at home. Almost all parents report that their children are happy to come to school and that they are well cared for and safe. One said that her daughter was 'extremely happy, learning well and loving her education journey'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are very polite and courteous to adults and each other, showing respect and consideration. They welcome visitors and are keen to engage in conversations about their school and work. They are confident and articulate.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and many take advantage of the school's 'soft-start' at the beginning of the day. As a consequence, attendance and punctuality are generally very good for all groups of pupils. The small number of children whose attendance is not as good as it should be are supported well. Leaders work closely with parents and the education welfare officer to remove barriers to pupils' regular attendance at school.
- Reporting of any poor behaviour is developing but is not as effective as it could be. Class teachers keep a log of any incidents and the new special educational needs coordinator follows up on concerns. However, comprehensive records to engage external support for pupils, or to regularly report to the interim executive board, are not rigorously kept.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of all types of bullying and say it is rare. They are confident that if any bullying or poor behaviour does occur, adults rapidly take action to deal with it. A small minority of pupils share the concerns of their parents about the changes of staff and leadership in the school.
- Some pupils' attitudes to learning are not yet consistently good. This is because of the varying quality of teaching and the less effective relationships that a minority of teachers have with their class.
- The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, report that behaviour is good in the school. However, some parents raised concerns about behaviour. The school recognises that it must continue the good work that it is doing and ensure that improvements are built upon further.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes in the early years and Year 1 have shown marked improvements in the last two years, and the school's own assessment systems suggest that this trend is set to continue. Attainment and progress across Year 2 and key stage 2 are less secure and there is some variability between subjects and year groups.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2014 and 2015 was significantly below the national average. Unconfirmed results of attainment for Year 6 pupils appear to show that the school is above the national average for 2016, which suggests that these pupils are better prepared for their next stage of education. However, school assessment information and evidence seen during the inspection show that this is not the same in some other year groups currently in key stage 2.
- The most able pupils and those who are also disadvantaged do not attain as well as they could. Too few pupils attain at a higher level in reading, writing or mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2. In one lesson seen during this inspection, pupils were clearly finding the work too easy when partitioning numbers and were trying to extend

their thinking. The teacher replied, 'We are going too far – this is secondary work'. This type of comment restricts the progress of pupils who are so keen to learn more.

- Work in books from the last academic year shows some positive levels of progress in mathematics and writing. Feedback from teachers is beginning to help pupils understand how well they are doing in writing. Nevertheless, this is not consistent across year groups or in mathematics. In the best, developing practice, teachers identify what is effective and what needs to improve. In a minority of work seen, pupils respond appropriately to their teacher's advice in their next piece of work.
- The stronger progress demonstrated in some English and mathematics work is not routinely replicated in other subject areas. Although the presentation of pupils' work remains of high quality, opportunities for pupils to write at length and to apply the skills they learn in writing are rare.
- Outcomes in the early years have improved year on year. Children make good progress from their starting points and have attained above the national average for the last two years. Priority is given to developing early reading, writing and mathematical skills. Therefore, writing attainment at the end of the Reception Year in 2016 was good and children made good use of their phonics skills to attempt accurate spelling.
- Pupils' attainment in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has improved for the last two years and was above the national average. Inspectors read with pupils who are at the early stages of reading and some who are very able readers. All pupils were confident readers and can blend and segment a wide range of complex words, as well as talk enthusiastically about what they are reading. Even at this early point in the new academic year, teachers and parents are recording regular and frequent opportunities for pupils to read to them.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is beginning to be more closely tracked by the new special educational needs coordinator. However, not all pupils in this group are making as much progress as they should be. Although additional support is put in place for the growing numbers of pupils who have additional needs, the impact of this work is not always reviewed regularly enough to check on pupils' progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not always make as much progress as they should. In 2015, this group of pupils achieved less well when compared with pupils from similar starting points nationally. Some teachers are more aware than others of the progress that these pupils make in their classes. However, in the last academic year, leaders had not monitored the impact of the use of additional funding well enough to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils made at least expected progress. As a result, some pupils had not done so by the end of July 2016.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the Reception class with skills that are at least expected for their age. Children from all groups, including the small numbers of disadvantaged children or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points. This is because of the quality of care and teaching they receive. As a result, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has

remained about the national average for the last two years and continues to improve. Children are very well prepared for Year 1.

- The teacher responsible for early years provides strong leadership. She has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and plans relevant improvements. This includes better use of the school's electronic assessment system to enhance the involvement of parents in children's learning. Improvements have been made to the outdoor provision of which the whole school is proud, and rightly so. It is a well-resourced, well-used area that benefits from an extensive canopy for inclement or warm weather.
- The quality of teaching in the early years is good. This is because teachers and learning support assistants know the children well and have good knowledge of how young children learn best. They ensure that assessments are accurate and that their planning reflects the needs of the children from their different starting points.
- Adults working in the early years have established good partnerships with parents. Consequently, parents are well informed about their children's progress and are confident that staff will act quickly to deal with any concerns.
- Children had only been in school for a matter of days when the school was inspected. However, they were very settled and clearly secure in the class routines. They were using equipment with a good degree of confidence, eager to chat with inspectors about what they were doing. Children were able to work independently and with other children.
- Teachers are quick to identify children who need additional support, and seek support from other professionals to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable children are met.
- Teachers make effective use of both indoor and outdoor space to provide stimulating and focused activities that are closely linked. Activities capture children's interests and provide both excitement and valuable learning. Adults' good use of questioning and links between different subjects ensure that children do not miss out on opportunities to learn.
- Adults consistently demonstrate respect and courtesy to children, who copy this with enthusiasm. Children play well together and effectively develop their inquisitiveness and social skills to become eager learners because of adults' encouragement.
- Children are kept safe because staff are well trained and vigilant. Leaders ensure that all welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	115295
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10011827

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	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	395
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr F Maguire
Headteacher	Mrs B Laraway
Telephone number	0208 508 6315
Website	www.st-johnfisher.essex.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@st-johnfisher.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 July 2014

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It has 14 classes, two in each year group. The pupil roll has decreased since the previous inspection.
- A third of the school's pupils are from a minority of ethnic groups, but very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support as they have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. However, the proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is well below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.

- The school did not meet the government's floor standards in 2015, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- In September 2016, two new teaching staff, a new head of school and a new head of teaching and learning joined the school. During the last year, several teaching positions were temporary and all but one of these has been replaced by permanent members of teaching staff.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes and phases of the school. Many of the observations were conducted jointly with the executive headteacher or the head of school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, senior and subject leaders, the chair and vice-chair of the interim executive board and two representatives from the local authority. A group of teachers volunteered to speak with inspectors, which was undertaken on the second day of the inspection.
- Pupils were formally interviewed and inspectors spoke to many pupils informally during lessons and at play or lunchtime. An inspector also heard a group of pupils read, and the lead inspector listened to some pupils read during their lessons.
- Inspectors undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work in English, mathematics and some other subjects. Work from the majority of classes was seen from the academic year 2015/16 as well as that seen in books from September 2016.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings, reports from external advisers to the school, school policies and assessment information about pupils' achievement. Records of safeguarding, child protection, attendance and behaviour were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors took into account 63 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and parents' emails received during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with parents at the beginning and end of the school day. The views of 12 staff and 28 pupils were also considered.

Inspection team

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