

# St John Fisher RC Primary School, Denton

Manor Road, Haughton Green, Denton, Manchester M34 7SW

## Inspection dates

24–25 January 2018

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	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, pupils' progress and attainment have declined in English and mathematics. Despite recent improvements, pupils' achievement in writing remains low and boys continue to underperform compared to girls. Too few pupils reach the higher standard across reading, writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching across key stages 1 and 2 is inconsistent. The legacy of weak teaching, especially in writing and elements of reading comprehension at key stage 1, has not been fully eradicated.
- The impact of the school's work to support those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is variable. Spending for this group of pupils is not evaluated well enough.
- The curriculum to support subjects other than English, mathematics and science (foundation subjects) is developing. Assessments to support these subjects are not fully implemented.
- The school has undergone several periods of instability in staffing since the last inspection. Current gaps in leadership posts and teaching positions have affected the confidence that some parents, carers and pupils have in the school.
- Leaders have not challenged underperformance rigorously enough since the last inspection. Strategies to improve the way governors monitor and evaluate the school's progress, and therefore hold leaders to account, are relatively recent.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are polite and courteous and their attitudes are consistently positive.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities to enhance their interests and hobbies. Their sporting achievements are exemplary.
- The science curriculum is well planned and effective.
- Children's progress in the early years is consistently strong.
- The provision for pupils in the school's resource base is excellent. Teachers are extremely skilled in supporting pupils' complex needs.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to accelerate pupils' progress in English by:
  - ensuring that pupils are clearer about how to improve their work, particularly their standards in writing
  - encouraging more pupils to work at greater depth and to tackle complex tasks
  - embedding the school's new reading comprehension strategy consistently across all year groups
  - identifying the additional needs of boys and supporting them effectively, especially those who are underperforming.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that key areas of the school are well led and managed and that new and inexperienced leaders are supported well in carrying out rapid improvement
  - further developing the school's strategy to engage with parents
  - ensuring that the impact of the school's spending of the SEN and/or disabilities funding is rigorously evaluated
  - embedding the monitoring and evaluation strategy for governors, so that they can hold leaders to account more effectively
  - implementing an effective whole-school assessment policy for foundation subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The headteacher has been in post in the school since the last inspection during several periods of staffing instability. While she has ensured that some weak areas of the school have improved quickly, such as phonics, mathematics and early years, other aspects of the pupils' education require improvement. These include pupils' outcomes in writing and boys' performance compared to that of girls.
- The leadership of teaching has improved practice across the school. A full programme of training and development is in place and is making a difference. There remain, however, weaknesses in some classes and previous weak teaching has not been fully eradicated in some year groups. This has affected the rate of pupils' progress, especially in English.
- Currently, there are some vacant leadership posts. These include the early years leader and the leader for foundation subjects. The leaders of mathematics and SEN and/or disabilities are new and inexperienced. The deputy headteacher only started in September 2017 and the headteacher is due to take up a new headship shortly. These changes have shaken the confidence of some parents and pupils.
- The quality of leadership in SEN and/or disabilities has been inconsistent. The new coordinator, while developing her skills and knowledge, is also implementing changes to the way pupils' needs are identified. She has introduced new support strategies to help pupils who have fallen behind. It is too early to know the impact of this work. The impact of the school's spending on SEN and/or disabilities is not evaluated sufficiently for leaders to know if strategies are providing the best value for money.
- Leaders have devised a wide range of strategies to support pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding. For example, the introduction of 'magic Mondays', where identified pupils receive bespoke social and emotional support, is showing early signs of success. Leaders have not, however, until recently, systematically evaluated the impact of their spending. Consequently, leaders are not always sure which additional teaching sessions are successful and which are not.
- While the majority of parents are highly supportive of the school, a small but significant minority report concerns with the lack of communication about their children's progress.
- The leadership of English has been successful in improving pupils' outcomes in phonics and reading in many classes. However, leaders' work to improve pupils' writing skills has not brought about the necessary improvements quickly enough. Leaders' improved strategies to develop pupils' reading skills further have also only been implemented recently.
- The leadership of mathematics is strong and effective. The new leader, although inexperienced, has developed his skills and knowledge well under his predecessor's leadership. Senior leaders acknowledge the importance of supporting him well to ensure that standards do not slip.
- Pupils benefit from a good range of activities which enhance their learning and experiences. Lunchtime sporting activities are highly valued and after-school drama

and dance clubs are well attended by pupils.

- The leadership and management of the school's resourced provision for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder are excellent. Pupils are sensitively cared for. These pupils thrive and make good progress where, for many, provision elsewhere has previously failed to meet their needs.
- The physical education and sport premium funding is spent extremely well. The sports leader is experienced and creative in developing pupils' sporting interests. The school is recognised locally for its sporting achievements. It has received a number of accolades for its commitment to sport, such as the 'Gold School Games Award'.
- Leaders keep a vigilant eye on whether the school is providing equal and fair opportunities for all groups of pupils. The progress of different groups is analysed well. The school's ethos of tolerance and respect for all permeates the school. Pupils are very accepting of difference.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good. The school's work to develop pupils' social responsibility is wide ranging. Its charity work is popular and successful, as is the student council body, which campaigns for local needs. The religious education curriculum is planned well. The new deputy headteacher is developing the programme of study further to ensure that pupils are more aware of the faiths and cultures that make up modern Britain. Pupils' good behaviour and respect for one another and the school are testament to the way that moral values have been successfully taught.

## **Governance of the school**

- The governing body has developed its effectiveness in recent years. The chair and vice-chair of governors understand the school well. They have developed their skills and knowledge by undertaking a range of training. They recognised that there were gaps in the way that they held leaders to account and have devised a new monitoring and evaluation strategy. This has yet to be implemented.
- Governors' minutes show that they keep a close eye on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Governors realise that the spending of allocated money for eligible pupils has not been rigorously evaluated. They now insist that the impact of money spent is reported at full governing body meetings.
- Governors have put in place sound plans to ensure the smooth running of the school in the absence of key leaders. However, they recognise that close oversight of new and inexperienced leaders is a priority for the school.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders take their duty to ensure the safety of all pupils and staff very seriously. The training and development programme for staff is comprehensive.
- Leaders understand the local risks to pupils' safety. The school's safeguarding curriculum for pupils is effective. Pupils are aware of how to keep safe, especially online, and are confident that their concerns will be taken seriously by the adults in the

school.

- Leaders keep accurate records of the pupils' range of needs. They follow up all concerns in a timely manner and liaise with external agencies appropriately.
- Pupils feel safe, secure and happy in the school.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school. As a result, some pupils have not achieved the standards of which they are capable.
- The teaching of writing has not been as successful as the teaching of other subjects. However, signs of improvement are now evident, especially in Year 6.
- Teachers' success in planning for the least able pupils, especially boys, has been variable. Some pupils' needs, especially those in Year 2 and Year 3, have not been addressed fully and these pupils continue to underachieve.
- Teachers are not consistently clear about how pupils can improve their work. They are not specific enough about how pupils can reach greater depth, especially in English. As a result, pupils in both key stages lack confidence in using the kind of language, writing structures and punctuation which would make their writing more complex.
- Pupils' reading skills are improving. Teachers' use of the new reading scheme to develop pupils' comprehension skills is showing early signs of success but this strategy is not embedded fully.
- Teachers are becoming more confident in the teaching of foundation subjects, such as history and geography. The teaching of religious education and science, while developing pupils' subject knowledge, also contributes to developing their writing skills. The assessment framework in foundation subjects is not fully implemented.
- The teaching of phonics is consistently strong and effective.
- Teachers' use of a range of resources and techniques to help pupils improve their reasoning skills in mathematics is effective. Pupils display a new-found confidence in tackling problems. Teachers' effective use of the school's 'chilli challenges' has helped more of the most able pupils to reach the higher standards routinely in lessons.
- Teaching assistants play a critical part in pupils' learning. They are trained well. They intervene sensitively and ask good questions to help pupils make progress.
- Teachers in the school's resource base are skilled and knowledgeable about the range of complex needs of pupils in the class. Their warm and attentive approach helps pupils to get the most out of their school experience.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have developed sound attitudes. They know and understand their social responsibilities, especially towards those less fortunate than themselves. They work tirelessly to raise money for deserving causes.
- Pupils are exceptionally accepting of difference, especially in those who do not share their faith or background. Pupils with a range of complex needs are made to feel part of the school community. Newcomers to the school are welcomed. There are no incidents of racist or homophobic behaviour. While some pupils' knowledge of other religions and cultures that make up modern Britain is limited, they are interested in learning about other communities.
- Pupils are taught well how to keep safe and respect their environment. The school's outdoor learning programme of study is effective in developing pupils' knowledge of wildlife, plants and the nature around them. They are also very aware of the importance of recycling.
- Pupils are highly engaged in extra-curricular activities, especially sport. They represent their school with pride and enjoy learning new skills. They particularly value the opportunities to learn how to relax and get in touch with their feelings in mindfulness sessions.
- Parents and pupils speak highly of the opportunities for pupils to expand their horizons. For example, the school council is well respected.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils display good attitudes towards their learning. They listen to teachers' instructions respectfully and cooperate with one another well during group work. They personify the school's ethos of tolerance and respect for others.
- Pupils' attendance is now close to the national average. Current figures mark a significant improvement compared with previous years. Pupils arrive on time and are smartly dressed.
- Incidents of bullying or other poor behaviour are rare.

## Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics has declined. Recent improvements in reading and mathematics mean they are closer to national averages. However, attainment in writing continues to lag behind other subjects.
- Too few pupils achieve the highest standards in both key stages 1 and 2 in all subjects.
- Boys' achievement is below that of girls in both key stage 1 and key stage 2. A legacy

of underachievement has not been fully eradicated in all classes.

- Disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics improved in 2017. Current performance information, however, shows that nearly half are not making the progress they should. Variations in performance across year groups are often due to low numbers and the range of individual needs in each cohort. However, in some cases it is due to weaker teaching.
- Pupils who have an education, health and care plan often make strong progress from their different starting points. Previously, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities were not identified well enough and as a result many did not receive the correct support. These pupils have therefore not made sufficient progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017 at the end of Year 6 was in line with the national average. Pupils' progress in 2016 was well below the national average.
- Across key stage 2, currently, pupils are making rapid progress, especially in mathematics. Current performance information shows that many pupils are quickly overcoming weaknesses in skills in English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6. However, pupils in lower key stage 2 make slower progress.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2017, pupils' attainment in reading was low. These pupils had not sufficiently overcome the weak literacy skills identified in the early years foundation stage. Currently, many of these pupils continue to struggle to reach the standards they should. Teachers are currently addressing undiagnosed additional needs for a few pupils.
- Pupils learn phonics skills well. They consistently achieve above-average standards by the end of Year 1 and Year 2. Pupils increase their reading ages quickly due to the successful reading strategy across the school.
- Pupils' mathematical skills are improving quickly. Recent work to develop their reasoning skills is making a difference. They articulate how they work through problems well and make good use of mathematical visual tools. Consequently, many more pupils than previously are on track to meet the expected standards or to exceed them.
- Pupils enjoy reading for pleasure. They read fluently and the most able read with good intonation and comprehension. However, other groups continue to struggle with certain aspects of their comprehension skills. The least able can read unfamiliar words well using their phonics skills.
- Pupils enjoy science and they learn and achieve well. The well-planned curriculum means that pupils engage in a range of practical experiments and use their scientific skills well.
- Pupils are generally prepared well for their secondary education. Most pupils are excited about the next stage of their education and feel confident.

## Early years provision

Good

- A higher than national average proportion of children achieved a good level of development in 2017.
- Leaders have ensured that children's learning needs are tracked and monitored well and any weaknesses are addressed quickly. Disadvantaged children make as much progress as others.
- Leaders have worked hard to make the learning environment stimulating and enjoyable. Both the indoor provision and outdoor provision are vibrant. Children sustain their concentration well because they are interested in the play activities. Teachers are trained well to understand how to develop children's learning. They listen to children during play and prompt their curiosity well.
- Adults work sensitively with younger children to help them settle in the mornings. Parents value the care and attention that adults provide to make children feel safe and happy. All children's welfare needs are well understood and met by staff.
- Children develop their phonics skills well because the regular sessions are taught well and engage their attention. Previous weaknesses in literacy skills have been largely eradicated.
- Leaders assess children's starting points carefully. Leaders are improving the way they work with parents prior to and during their time in the foundation class. Some parents, however, feel that they would benefit from receiving more information about their child's progress.
- Children cooperate well with one another and learn to behave well. They take turns patiently.
- Effective work with the Year 1 class helps children to make the transition into key stage 1 seamlessly. The good progress and behaviour of current Year 1 pupils are a testament to the excellent learning that took place when pupils were in the early years.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders' approach mirrors the high priority safety and welfare are given in the main school. Adults are aware of their responsibilities and undertake regular training to keep their skills and knowledge up to date.
- While there has been no early years leader since January, children's learning and progress have not been affected. This is because the adults leading learning are experienced and knowledgeable, especially in the Nursery class.



## School details

Unique reference number	106255
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10043216

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Donal Townson
Headteacher	Helen Hayes
Telephone number	0161 336 5308
Website	<a href="http://www.st-johnfisher.tameside.sch.uk">www.st-johnfisher.tameside.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@st-johnfisher.tameside.sch.uk">admin@st-johnfisher.tameside.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	9–10 July 2013

## Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average primary school.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Salford.
- The school provides specially resourced provision for up to 14 pupils, most of whom are supported for autistic spectrum disorder.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion who have an education, health and care plan is average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well below average.
- Most pupils are White British. A small number are from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum

expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

- The school provides morning sessions for nursery-age children.
- The headteacher has tendered her resignation. An interim headteacher is due to take up post in February. The school has no early years foundation stage leader.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors evaluated the quality of teaching and learning in all year groups, which included observing lessons and examining pupils' workbooks in most subjects. Observations were carried out jointly with the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors met with all leaders, including the headteacher, the leaders of English and mathematics, the deputy headteacher and the SEN coordinator. The leader and teachers in the resource-based provision were also interviewed. The lead inspector met with five members of the governing body including the chair and vice-chair.
- Inspectors took account of 44 responses to, Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including the free-text facility, 30 responses to the pupil survey and 26 responses to the staff survey. Inspectors spoke with some parents before school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, behaviour logs, safeguarding records, performance information and school policies.

## Inspection team

Zarina Connolly, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Stephen Rigby

Ofsted Inspector

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