

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Burney Drive, Loughton, Essex IG10 2DY

Inspection dates

25–26 September 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils, staff, parents and carers are pleased with the improvements they have seen in the school's work. One parent's comment was typical: 'My children are thriving at this school.'
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, pupils achieve well.
- The headteacher has created a strong team of leaders around her. She has established a culture of high expectations across the whole school community.
- For the last two years, governance has been provided by an interim executive board (IEB). Members have supported the headteacher and senior leaders effectively to improve all aspects of the school's work.
- Leaders at all levels make regular checks on how effective their actions are to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They use their findings to provide training for staff to develop their skills further.
- Safeguarding arrangements are secure. Pupils say, and their parents agree, that they feel safe and well cared for in school.
- The school's fundamental values of care and respect help pupils to behave well. They show positive attitudes to learning in lessons.
- Teachers plan learning experiences for pupils across a variety of subjects that interest and enthuse them.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress because teachers plan activities for them to help fill specific gaps in their knowledge and skills.
- Children get off to a good start in their Reception Year as a result of effective leadership in the early years. Children make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Teachers do not always provide sufficient challenge for the most able pupils. This means that these pupils do not make as much progress as they should, particularly in writing.
- Progress for disadvantaged pupils is improving. However, by the end of Year 6, too few of the most able disadvantaged pupils attain the higher standard in reading and mathematics or greater depth in writing.
- Pupils' attendance has fallen in the past three years. Leaders have introduced new systems to address this.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring greater challenge for the most able pupils, including those who are also disadvantaged, particularly in writing.
- Ensure that senior leaders, including governors, make regular checks on the effectiveness of new strategies for raising attendance and for monitoring the use of the pupil premium and its impact.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders, despite significant instability in staffing, have maintained and improved the outcomes for pupils since the previous inspection. Pupils' attainment is consistently above average at all key stages and pupils make strong progress from their different starting points.
- The headteacher, supported by the assistant headteacher, has set a culture of high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. She has established an effective leadership team focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning to raise pupils' achievement. Staff morale is high. Their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive.
- Leaders ensure that the school's positive ethos actively promotes effective relationships and fundamental British values. Respect and care are at the heart of the school's work. Pupils talk confidently about tolerance, respect, the rule of law and democracy.
- Leaders tackle weak teaching confidently. Staff are provided with additional help, support and training to develop their teaching skills and expertise.
- Systems for checking how well pupils are learning are effective. Leaders meet with teachers to check that pupils are making enough progress. Support in lessons and in small-group work is provided for those who are not making sufficient progress to help them catch up.
- Staff with leadership roles are well aware of what needs to be done to improve their areas of responsibility. They analyse pupils' performance information regularly. Where appropriate, they organise training for staff to ensure that they have the right skills to improve pupils' learning.
- Newly qualified staff are supported well. Leaders ensure that they receive the necessary training to safeguard pupils and to develop as effective teachers.
- The leadership of special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has a good grasp of how additional funding is used to support pupils and makes sure it is targeted where there is the most need. The SENCo works with staff to make sure pupils' individual needs are addressed so that they make strong progress.
- The vast majority of parents are supportive and complimentary about the school. They highlight the improvements they have seen in communication, pupils' behaviour and learning since the headteacher took up her post. Several parents commented on the sense of school community, for example: 'It is like a family, with school, home and church all coming together.' Parents and other volunteers come into school regularly to hear children reading and to give them extra help.
- The curriculum has been reviewed recently to ensure that links across subjects enable pupils to make learning more meaningful. Staff provide opportunities to develop socially in school activities and in the wide range of after-school clubs on offer. Pupils who attend the breakfast club feel safe and well cared for. They appreciate breakfast and the help they receive from staff to do their homework.

- Effective use is made of the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium funding. It has led to more pupils participating in school sport over the past two years. Teachers are trained by specialist coaches to develop their own skills in teaching sport. It has supported the cost of transport to sporting fixtures and provided equipment for lunchtime activities.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have introduced new strategies to ensure that attendance improves. Leaders work hard to ensure that the pupil premium is used effectively to provide support for disadvantaged pupils that has contributed to securing improvement in their achievement. Even so, too few of the most able pupils attain a higher standard by the end of key stage 2, particularly in writing. The proportion of most-able pupils who are not disadvantaged attaining higher levels in writing has fallen in 2018 to below the national average.

Governance of the school

- The IEB has provided stability and brokered good support for school leaders during a recent period of turbulence. Partnership working with the Brentwood Diocese and the local authority has provided support for school leaders to address improvement priorities. Consequently, the quality of teaching has improved and outcomes for pupils have risen.
- A new governing body replaced the IEB this year. Governors are accessing training to support them in their new role.
- Governors are managing significant financial challenges. They have worked closely with school leaders to restructure staff roles and responsibilities and established a financial recovery plan.
- Governors are aware of how the pupil premium has been used to support disadvantaged pupils. They recognise that the pupil premium has not been directed precisely enough to remove specific barriers to learning for individual disadvantaged pupils, especially those who are most able.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that staff are fully aware of their responsibilities to safeguard pupils. Staff undergo regular training so that they are up to date with recent safeguarding practice. They understand the school's procedures to protect pupils from harm and know what to do if they have a safeguarding concern.
- The large majority of parents who responded to Parent View during the inspection said their children were happy, felt safe and were looked after well. One parent said: 'The staff are very caring and the whole school has a strong family ethos where all children look after each other.'
- The school's single central record of pre-employment checks meets requirements. All the necessary checks have been carried out regarding staff suitability to work with children. Employee records are well maintained and include all of the required statutory information.

- Leaders analyse pupils' attendance, which is broadly similar to the national average. Clear plans are in place to tackle the absence of pupils who are missing school for long periods.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge. They provide pupils with precise explanations so that they are clear about what they are learning and what they are expected to do. Staff act as good role models for pupils to follow. In Year 1, for example, teachers showed pupils how to build up a sentence using describing words and to use the correct punctuation. Consequently, pupils were increasingly able to write their own sentences confidently and accurately.
- Teachers use computer technology effectively to engage pupils in learning. For example, in the Reception class, children learned to recognise and name shapes by playing a matching game on the electronic whiteboard.
- The effective use of 'talk partners' is a consistent feature in all classes. Pupils share ideas and practise explanations well. For example, in discussions in Year 4, two boys improved their choice of word from 'big' to 'gigantic'. In Year 6, pupils searched for evidence in a text to justify their opinions. In mathematics, they worked together to devise new ways of placing decimal numbers in the right order. This helped to strengthen their thinking and developed a deeper understanding of the value of each numeral.
- Reading and phonics are taught well throughout the school. Teachers find lots of stimulating and lively opportunities for pupils to practise seeing, saying and writing words using their knowledge and understanding of letters and the sounds they make. Year 2 pupils used phonics effectively to practise building up and saying words. In Year 3, adults demonstrated reading with expression and pupils were able to follow suit. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 told inspectors that teachers have regular conversations with them to make sure they read different types of books from a wide variety of authors.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities or who have an education, health and care plan receive good support in lessons. Adults provide additional explanations and reminders to support their learning. Tasks are broken down into small, achievable steps. Similarly, pupils who are new to English or who speak English as an additional language are supported well. Teachers and support staff work with small groups of pupils to address gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The individual needs of these pupils are catered for well and they make good progress.
- Work in pupils' books shows that pupils make good progress over time. Teachers expect work to be neat and tidy. It is clear that pupils take great pride in the presentation of their work.
- Pupils talked confidently about learning in topics. Recent changes to curriculum planning have increased opportunities for pupils to use their English and mathematical skills when learning about other subjects. Leaders' intent in designing the curriculum is to bring learning to life wherever possible. One such example involves linking history and geography to the study of a local environment. As a response to shops on the local high street closing, a journalist helped pupils to ask questions to find out why and to

record their findings in a newspaper report.

- Staff ask pupils questions to check their understanding and, occasionally, to encourage them to think more deeply. Teachers do not always ensure that the work set for most-able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, challenges them sufficiently well. Consequently, some of these pupils do not make as much progress as they could. They told inspectors that tasks are sometimes too easy and that they often already know what they are being asked to do.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They told inspectors that 'the school deals effectively with bullies', and that bullying happens very rarely. Pupils say that staff support both the victims and the perpetrators. One explained that he had been bullied last year and, because of the way it was dealt with, 'now he's my best friend'. Pupils have confidence that staff will listen to any concerns they may have and will act to resolve issues.
- For pupils who find learning difficult, or who have specific behaviour difficulties, learning mentors and counsellors from Brentwood Catholic Children's Society foster pupils' emotional well-being and ensure that they are ready to learn.
- Pupils have a well-developed knowledge and understanding of the dangers regarding the internet. They know what they should and should not do to keep themselves safe, for example not sharing personal details or communicating with someone unknown.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in class. They are keen to work together and learn from each other.
- Pupils conduct themselves well as they move in and around the school. They are polite and courteous. Pupils told inspectors that the 'rocket' teachers use to chart their behaviour is effective in ensuring that they behave well. They know that 'it's good to be gold', and 'it's not good to be red'. Pupils fully understand the procedures for managing their behaviour. They show a good awareness and knowledge of the sanctions and rewards used by staff.
- Parents say they are 'confident our children are in good hands' and are complimentary about pupils' improving behaviour. A few expressed concerns that bullying is not always dealt with effectively. Inspectors found that school leaders have updated their anti-bullying and behaviour policy in the light of parental surveys and staff consultations. This has contributed to a reduction in the number of incidents recorded of bullying and poor behaviour.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning in lessons are positive. They respectfully and confidently respond to adults' questions and to their requests. Similarly, they show respect for each other in working together on shared tasks. In these circumstances, pupils learn

well. Occasionally, when tasks are not challenging enough, pupils lose concentration and they do not learn as well as they could.

- Attendance is broadly average. However, the percentage of pupils away from school for long periods is not falling quickly enough, despite recent actions to improve it.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is consistently above the national average. Teachers focus on the teaching of reading from when children start school in their Reception Year. Teaching in Year 1 builds on their knowledge of letters and sounds. Adults find interesting games and activities for pupils to practise reading and writing. Pupils learn quickly and can use sounds to read and write new words and phrases.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 is consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently above average.
- Currently, most pupils are working at or above the standards set for each age group in the national curriculum. Leaders and class teachers regularly look at how well pupils are learning. Where pupils are at risk of falling behind, teachers plan activities and provide additional support through individual coaching or small-group work to help them to catch up. Pupils value this extra support. They say that they understand more and can do more in lessons afterwards.
- Good progress is evident from work in pupils' books. They are proud of their achievements. Pupils can explain how adults support them to build on what they already know and can do, as well as how to approach something new.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who have an education, health and care plan are supported effectively. Strong, trusting relationships between adults and pupils are promoted well, so pupils share their feelings and concerns openly. Support is closely matched to pupils' individual needs and helps them to overcome their difficulties. They make strong progress.
- Most disadvantaged pupils make good progress because of good teaching, particularly those pupils who need extra help. However, too few disadvantaged pupils reach the higher standard in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 or greater depth in their writing. Leaders do not target the pupil premium specifically enough to provide greater challenge for the most able disadvantaged pupils so that their attainment is high and differences are diminished between these and other pupils nationally.
- Provisional results in 2018 show that good outcomes have been sustained. In both key stages, pupils' attainment remains above average, other than in writing in key stage 2 at greater depth.

Early years provision

Good

- When children join the school, their development is broadly typical for their age. Good teaching ensures that most children make strong progress in all areas of their learning and attain a good level of development by the end of Reception. Children are well

prepared for further learning in key stage 1.

- Children get off to a good start in learning phonics to begin reading. Adults provide good language role models in teaching letters and the sounds they make. They organise a variety of opportunities for children to 'say it, see it, write it'. This helps to reinforce their understanding.
- The early years provision is well led and managed. Leaders have an accurate view of its strengths and areas for improvement. Children are kept safe, and are happy and well supported in their Reception Year.
- Staff regularly review and adapt the curriculum to suit the needs and interests of the children. They closely monitor how well children are making progress and record their achievements. For example, a teaching assistant asked children questions to find out what they already knew about shapes and their characteristics. Staff use the information gained from their observations to plan what children need to know next.
- Relationships with parents are strong. Leaders provide them with induction sessions, for example 'A day in the life of early years', so parents are aware of how they can support their children's learning. Parents contribute to children's learning journeys, and celebrate their achievements. For example, a 'prayer bear', awarded for good behaviour, is sent home with children for weekends. Parents share family activities, such as trips on the London Underground with the 'prayer bear', in the learning journey. As a result, children's progress is well documented at home and at school.
- At the time of the inspection, children had just started attending school for a full day. Even at this early stage, children confidently and articulately talked to adults and to each other. They enthusiastically shared information about themselves and their families and what they like to do. Most are already able to write recognisable letters and some their names.
- Children choose from a variety of activities set out for them to explore and develop skills across different areas of learning. For example, four boys were building wooden block houses, which collapsed. 'Oh dear', said one child, 'I'll help you; we'll have to build it again!' Such activities support children's personal and social development well.
- Adults manage children's behaviour well. Children are attentive and focused on activities they choose for themselves. They respond positively to adult guidance and quickly pick up new routines. Adults encourage children to get themselves organised for learning and to make their own decisions.
- Children eligible for pupil premium funding are supported well through targeted, good-quality teaching. They make good progress from their individual starting points.

School details

Unique reference number	115295
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10046487

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	336
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hugh Arthur
Headteacher	Patricia Bryson
Telephone number	0208 508 6315
Website	www.st-johnfisher.essex.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@st-johnfisher.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 September 2016

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It consists of 13 classes. There are two classes in Reception and Years 3, 4, 5 and 6. In key stage 1, there is a Year 1 class and two Year 1 and 2 mixed classes.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is similar to the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- A below-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. Very few pupils are new to English.
- Following a period of interim leadership arrangements, the headteacher took up her substantive role in September 2017.

- School leaders have received support from Brentwood Diocese and the local authority. This includes support from headteachers and staff of other local Catholic schools.
- Since the previous inspection, governance of the school has been provided by an IEB. The IEB has recently been replaced by a governing body.
- The school is designated as a Catholic primary school. It was previously inspected under Section 48 in October 2016.
- A breakfast club, managed by the governing body, operates on the school site.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all key stages. Some observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- During visits to lessons, inspectors talked to pupils and looked at their work to see how well they are learning.
- The lead inspector met with six governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, the SENCo and the pupil premium champion. They talked to middle leaders, new and trainee teachers, the sport premium leader and to those with responsibility for managing safeguarding.
- The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority.
- Six pupils from Years 2, 5 and 6 read to inspectors and talked about how well they are learning to read.
- Inspectors observed pupils at playtimes and around the school.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised. This included the school's website, policies, leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and the plans for school improvement work. Inspectors looked at the school's records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the 104 responses to Ofsted's online parental survey, Parent View, and the 16 responses to Ofsted's staff online survey. They considered the school's own parent and pupil survey results. Inspectors talked to parents at the start of the school day as they brought their children to school.

Inspection team

Sarah Warboys, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Cloke	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Templeton	Ofsted Inspector

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