

St John Fisher Roman Catholic Primary School, Rochdale

Stanycliffe Lane, Middleton, Manchester M24 2PB

Inspection dates

31 October–1 November 2018

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| 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 | Good |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, well supported by other senior leaders, works tirelessly and determinedly to give all pupils the best possible opportunities to succeed. She has brought about significant improvement since she joined the school.
- Staff and governors support her commitment and ambition for the school.
- Leaders are systematic, reflective and meticulous in their monitoring of the school's performance. As a result, they have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together. They use assessment information effectively to plan activities that match pupils' needs, which allows most pupils to make good progress in their learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are proud of their school and of their achievements and are committed to doing their best.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a key strength. This helps children prepare for life in modern Britain.
- Senior leaders have managed changes to the staff team well in order to bring about a happy and welcoming school ethos.
- Pupils' achievements in both reading and writing at the end of key stage 2 showed considerable improvement in 2018.
- Although pupils' outcomes in mathematics improved by the end of key stage 2 in 2018, too few of the most able pupils achieved the higher standards.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are safe and that the school is secure. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in and out of school and online.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about this school. They speak particularly positively about the care and well-being provided for the children.
- Although disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving, the difference from that of others nationally is still too wide.
- Children get off to a good start in early years. They are taught well and make good progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Fully embed the improvement in mathematics so that pupils' outcomes continue to strengthen, particularly for the most able.
- Ensure that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils continue to improve so that these pupils achieve as well as other pupils nationally.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the current headteacher's appointment in 2015, there have been significant changes in staffing. The headteacher, supported well by senior leaders and governors, has developed a stable, effective and unified team. They have created a warm and welcoming school community.
- The headteacher, supported by other leaders, has inspired the whole staff team to work together to develop the school. As a result, the staff team is motivated to continually improve. Leaders have developed thorough systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders at all levels are determined to do their best for pupils' personal and academic development. All staff share this determination and work well together to realise this ambition.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is thorough, detailed and accurate. Leaders use their knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses to inform clear and well-identified targets to improve the school.
- Staff value the in-school and external training that they receive, which helps them to improve their practice. For example, teachers have benefited from whole-school training to use the school's new calculations policy.
- Leaders' systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and well-being are meticulous. Senior leaders, and increasingly middle leaders, use the detailed information that they gain to organise and focus support and training for staff. This ensures that the skills and expertise of staff, including teaching assistants, are constantly improving.
- Although a minority of middle leaders rely on the support of senior leaders, subject leaders increasingly provide comprehensive and detailed reports to governors and are held accountable for standards in their subjects. This has a positive impact on the progress of all groups of pupils across the curriculum.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a broad and well-balanced range of learning opportunities. They also benefit from a range of well-chosen visits and visitors which enhance their learning. For example, Year 6 pupils visit Quarry Bank Mill as part of their study of the Victorians and all key stage 2 children learn how to play a musical instrument.
- Pupils develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally and they have a strong awareness of fundamental British values. This is because leaders ensure that the curriculum includes opportunities to understand how democracy works and to promote the importance of tolerance, respect and equality. Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures.
- Pupil premium funding is now being used well. However, over time, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has been weak. For current pupils, this is improving because leaders have planned the provision better and have measured the impact of additional

support more precisely. The improvements are having a positive impact. However, although attainment for these pupils at the end of key stage 2 is rising, it remains below that of other pupils nationally.

- The physical education and sport premium has been used well to increase participation in sporting activities outside of school hours. As a result, in the last school year, over three-quarters of pupils participated in an after-school activity.
- Teaching assistants and additional adults are a key strength across the school. They are well managed and deployed. They are highly committed and contribute a great deal to the academic and community life of the school.

Governance of the school

- Governors are proud of their school and have overseen improvements since the previous inspection. They are also ambitious to secure continuing improvement.
- Governors are well informed. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They increasingly challenge school leaders and recognise what needs to be done to improve further. They appreciate that pupils' progress was previously not good enough and have successfully challenged leaders to raise standards.
- Governors are fully committed to the school's drive for excellence and support the headteacher's aspirations to improve outcomes for pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are vigilant about the safety and welfare of pupils, and this is a key priority in the school. Staff work closely with parents and other agencies to ensure that there is high-quality care for all pupils, including those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Parents are highly positive about the approach of staff to safeguarding pupils. Pupils agree that the school is safe and caring, and this results in pupils saying that they are happy and enjoy attending regularly.
- Leaders, including governors, ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. All staff understand the role that they play in keeping children safe. They undertake regular training to ensure that their knowledge is relevant and up to date.
- Staff know the pupils exceptionally well. They manage and look after all pupils and their specific needs, including those identified as vulnerable.
- Leaders ensure that suitable checks are made on all staff employed to work with children, and that records are detailed and follow statutory guidance.
- Pupils feel very safe and cared for and are unanimous in their views that they enjoy school. They are well informed about various aspects of keeping themselves safe, including when using the internet.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders and staff have created a happy, purposeful environment which helps pupils to become increasingly independent and confident learners. Staff have built positive relationships that enable pupils to develop their self-esteem. As a result, pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and enjoy their lessons.
- Teaching is continually being developed and sharpened to ensure that lessons provide interesting activities, topics and themes that engage pupils well in their learning. Teachers benefit greatly from training and the support of leaders. This contributes positively to pupils' good progress in subjects across the curriculum.
- Leaders and teachers have high expectations of almost all groups of pupils. However, expectations of the most able are inconsistent across the school. In some classes and subjects, for example in mathematics, the most able are not consistently required to undertake work that really challenges them.
- Pupils are expected to behave well in lessons, and they do. The vast majority of pupils are engaged in their learning and display positive attitudes. A large majority of them make good progress over time.
- Teachers' skilled questioning encourages pupils to think hard about their answers and deepens their understanding. This is a strength in most subjects across the school.
- There is good teamwork among teachers, teaching assistants and other adults. Staff work skilfully and diligently to support children and each other, and they model high expectations for children.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled and well trained and, as a result, they make an effective contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers deploy them well. Teaching assistants provide support in class and they run support groups. They understand the needs of pupils and the way in which the teacher intends tasks to be delivered. Teaching assistants encourage pupils to talk through their work so that they clarify their thinking and learn well. For example, in Year 6, two assistants supported two groups of pupils very skilfully with their mathematics work, enabling these pupils to quickly grasp new learning.
- Assessment information is used effectively to plan activities that match pupils' needs, allowing most pupils to make good progress in their learning. However, at times, tasks do not stretch the most able pupils sufficiently to raise their achievement in mathematics.
- When planning support for children who are eligible for pupil premium funding, leaders and teachers use discussions about pupils' progress to determine which pupils need this additional support. Leaders carefully analyse the impact of any extra support given to these pupils to determine whether the support is effective or not. Plans are changed when they are not making any difference. As leaders' plans are now more streamlined and trusted, progress for disadvantaged pupils is moving closer to that of other pupils nationally. Leaders recognise that these improvements need to be further embedded.
- Inconsistencies in teaching caused by many changes in staffing since the last inspection have been successfully addressed. The quality of teaching is now typically

good and has a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. Teachers and leaders speak of the positive learning culture that is now evident across the school. Teachers are encouraged to undertake a wide variety of training, and there are increasing opportunities to share good practice.

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 well aware of the different types of bullying. They say that incidents of bullying rarely occur but, if issues do arise, staff sort them out quickly.
- The school works effectively with a range of agencies to ensure that pupils are taught to stay safe and each class has an action plan to promote safety and equality. For example, pupils work with NSPCC and the local emergency services. In addition, Year 6 pupils receive teaching on the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse. Such strategies help prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.
- The school's highly inclusive ethos means that pupils have high levels of self-esteem and self-belief. All staff care for pupils very well. Pupils and parents value this. A typical comment from parents praised adults' 'humility and professionalism' when managing concerns.
- The physical well-being of pupils is promoted extremely well through a wide range of sporting activities. For example, all children have the chance to learn to swim in Year 4. Clubs for gymnastics, netball, multi-sport, table-tennis and football are combined with targeted lunchtime and after-school sessions to assist pupils to lead a healthy lifestyle.
- Leaders' work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has a very positive impact on the ethos of the school. Children are clearly aware of how their actions affect others.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils model the Christian values of the school exceptionally well. They move around the building in an orderly, quiet manner, readily holding doors open for each other and for adults. They help each other in lessons and are polite to everyone they meet. This reflects the excellent modelling that adults provide and the use of rewards. Pupils are routinely kind to each other, and this is recognised in assemblies, for example through the presentation of special awards to reward pupils' kindness.
- Pupils are impressively keen to learn. They display highly positive attitudes to learning and a strong work ethic. This is as a result of the high teacher expectations and well-established routines. On the very rare occasions where pupils lose focus, this does not affect the learning of others, and teachers quickly re-engage their interest.
- Staff teams combine well to establish wonderful relationships with their pupils. They

encourage social interaction in and out of the classroom. Pupils have learned how to care for each other and those in the wider community. For example, pupils have raised funds for a number of charities, including Water Aid, Christie hospital, the Middleton foodbank and a local hospice. Pupils are emotionally secure and trust the adults who care for them. This helps to ensure the good quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

- Attendance is consistently above the national average and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is consistently low. This reflects the staff's close work with families and excellent strategies to promote attendance.
- Parents are very complimentary about the pupils' excellent behaviour. Parents said that adults are 'warm and welcoming' and that their children are very well cared for.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In recent years, at the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress has been less good than the national average in reading, writing and, particularly, in mathematics. Improvements in teaching have ensured that pupils' progress in this key stage has improved year on year. Provisional results in 2018 show continued improvements in pupils' progress in reading and writing, but less so in mathematics.
- Work in pupils' books, alongside current school assessment information, shows that current pupils are making strong progress. Leaders' effective actions to improve the quality of teaching have resulted in most pupils making consistently good progress, in both key stages 1 and 2, in reading and writing. Teachers and pupils are rising to the challenge of leaders' higher expectations.
- Pupils' knowledge and skills are improving in mathematics and pupils are developing a deepening understanding of calculation processes. They are increasingly given opportunities to develop their investigative and reasoning skills. Work in pupils' mathematics books and current school assessment show that most pupils make good progress in this subject. However, progress for the most able pupils in mathematics remains inconsistent in both key stages.
- The quality of pupils' writing continues to improve. Pupils' books show that they take pride and care in the presentation of their work. This is because teachers' expectations of pupils' application and presentation of writing are high. Pupils develop their writing skills well in a wide range of subjects across the curriculum.
- Outcomes in phonics are consistently strong. The proportion of pupils who pass the Year 1 phonics screening check is above the national average.
- Historically, the progress of pupils eligible for pupil premium has been weak compared to that of other pupils nationally at the end of key stage 2. Although these pupils do not achieve as well as other pupils nationally, progress for this group is now stronger than in previous years due to more effectively targeted intervention programmes.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress. The leader responsible for this area efficiently manages the school's provision and identifies pupils' needs effectively. Pupils benefit from carefully planned support

activities that help them to achieve well.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership of the early years is good. The early years leader is highly skilled and knowledgeable. She has an accurate overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the children in her care. She plans their learning effectively to enable them to make good progress.
- Children begin the early years with starting points that are varied. Those starting in 2018/19 have skills which are broadly typical of those expected for their age in most areas of learning. However, last year's cohort began school with skills which were typically less strong.
- Children make a good start to their education in the early years. By the time they leave the Reception class, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is in line with the national average. From their starting points, children make good progress and develop well. They are well prepared for the transition to Year 1.
- Adults teach phonics effectively in the early years. They model letters and sounds consistently and accurately and encourage children to use their phonics skills in their reading and writing.
- Adults plan activities based on the children's needs and carefully track their achievements across all the areas of learning. Baseline assessments, when children start in Reception class, are thorough and are moderated with local schools and the local authority.
- The internal and external environments are well organised to provide a good range of interesting activities. Displays enhance children's learning and provide appropriate learning opportunities.
- The quality of teaching is good. Staff work seamlessly together to plan, organise and resource a stimulating environment that is inclusive for all children. Well-planned activities provide good-quality opportunities for children to learn. The use of questioning from adults is a key strength.
- Children are keen to participate in learning activities because teachers are inventive with their approaches. They make learning fun and highly stimulating and, as a result, engage the children. Children show confidence in exploring learning with their friends in a rich and imaginative environment. Children make good use of the outdoor and indoor learning environments to develop curiosity and imagination.
- Children are well cared for, and every effort is made to ensure their safety. Staff are quick to make connections with wider support services to best assist those children who are more vulnerable.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school's work in the early years. They are involved regularly in their children's learning. For example, leaders provide workshops for parents on reading and phonics to support them to help their children at home, as well as holding 'stay and play' sessions.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 105849 |
| Local authority | Rochdale |
| Inspection number | 10045900 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| 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 | 205 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Ms Jayne Sullivan |
| Headteacher | Mrs Nicole Hadfield |
| Telephone number | 0161 643 3271 |
| Website | www.st-johnfisher.rochdale.sch.uk |
| Email address | head@st-johnfisher.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 10–11 June 2014 |

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic background is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is broadly average.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes, including one observation held jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors held a range of meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other staff, governors and representatives of the local authority. They also considered the 16 responses to the staff survey.
- A wide range of school documentation was scrutinised by inspectors, including safeguarding records, monitoring records, governors' minutes, self-evaluation documents and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of pupils' work, including during lessons and in meetings with leaders.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors gained the views of pupils by speaking to them informally during lessons and at playtime. The lead inspector also met formally with a group of pupils. The inspectors listened to some pupils read.
- Inspectors took account of 10 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also considered the school's parental questionnaires and spoke to several parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Gary Bevin, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Stephen Rigby | Ofsted Inspector |

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