

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST JOHN FISHER ROMAN CATHOLIC
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Loughton

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115295

Headteacher: Mr E Keddy

Reporting inspector: Mrs M S Summers
25455

Dates of inspection: 19th – 20th September 2000

Inspection number: 224846

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Burney Drive Loughton Essex
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body, St John Fisher Roman Catholic School
Name of chair of governors:	Mr F Tisi
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St John Fisher is a large Roman Catholic primary school catering for pupils between four and 11 years of age, most of whom live in the parishes of Loughton, Epping and Waltham Abbey. There are currently 373 full-time pupils on roll, 179 boys and 194 girls, including 16 children in the Reception class who are under five years of age. No pupils speak English as an additional language although six per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Ten per cent of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is below average. Eight per cent are on the school's special educational needs register and less than one per cent of pupils have statements of special educational need. These figures are below average. Children enter the school at average standards for their age, although they show a broad range of ability.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. The high quality of leadership and management and the good nature of the teaching which the pupils receive result in a strong commitment to high standards, particularly in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- High quality teaching enables pupils to make good progress and reach very high standards in English, mathematics and science in the national tests for seven and eleven year olds.
- The strong leadership of the headteacher, the excellent teamwork of the staff and the good support of governors ensure that high standards are valued and that the school continues to improve.
- A strong Catholic ethos contributes greatly to the school's caring atmosphere and encourages pupils' positive attitudes to their work, good behaviour and warm relationships.
- The school enjoys excellent facilities and provides an attractive environment, which stimulates pupils' interest and motivates them to learn.

What could be improved

- The school's arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching, which are not rigorous enough to identify areas where teachers can refine their performance.
- The opportunities for more able pupils to develop fully some aspects of their work in mathematics.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since its last inspection in January 1997 and shows a similar capacity to continue to improve. Eleven year olds now reach well above average standards in the national tests, whereas at the last inspection, standards were only average. The quality of teaching continues to be good, with more judged to be excellent or very good during this inspection and with fewer unsatisfactory lessons. The key issues for action identified by the last inspection have, overall, been well addressed, for example, the weak provision for information and communication technology is now good and standards in this subject are now above average. Provision in design and technology and for those children aged under five are now satisfactory, although with some areas for further development. Higher achieving pupils are usually provided for well, except in a few instances in mathematics. Planning for school improvement is better and involves all members of staff and governors.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	A	A	A	B
mathematics	B	A	A	B
science	B	A	A	B

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The findings of this inspection agree with the school's test results and judge standards in English, including literacy, mathematics, including numeracy, and science to be well above average compared with all schools. The rate of improvement over the last four years is above the national trend. The school sets demanding targets to maintain or improve standards and these have been met in the tests this year. In English, standards are particularly high in speaking and listening and in reading. In mathematics, pupils show very good abilities when carrying out mental calculations. In science, all pupils reached the nationally expected level in the tests, and over half reached higher levels. The findings of the inspection confirm the high standards reached by seven year olds in the national tests in reading, writing and mathematics compared with all schools. Pupils throughout the school reach high standards in information and communication technology because of the school's improved provision and the good teaching they receive in this subject. Children aged under five reach good standards in most aspects of their learning, although limited opportunities for them to make their own choices in art and design work result in average standards in their creative development. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make good progress and reach high standards for their capabilities. Higher achieving and gifted and talented pupils also make good progress overall, although some reach insufficiently high standards for their ability in using and applying mathematics.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are enthusiastic about school and take a pride in their work which helps them to make good progress.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well in class and the vast majority behave well in the playground and around the school. Their behaviour in assembly is excellent.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils work very well together, share books and equipment willingly and accept responsibility with enthusiasm.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

All these factors assist the pupils to make good progress.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	good	good	good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Thirty-one per cent of the teaching observed during the inspection was very good or excellent, thirty-four per cent was good and thirty-one per cent was satisfactory. Only four per cent was judged to be unsatisfactory. Although very good and excellent teaching was observed in many classes, most of this was in Key Stage 2 and in Year 6 in particular. High quality teaching of English and mathematics, including literacy and numeracy, and information and communication technology enables pupils to make good progress. Teachers have very sound understanding in these subjects and plan their lessons well, providing a good balance of instruction, question and answer sessions and activities, which interest the pupils and motivate them to do their best. They have high expectations of the standards that the pupils can achieve and, in almost all cases, manage them very well. This means that pupils spend the maximum amount of time on their work, with little disruption to their concentration. Lessons are made interesting and relevant to the pupils by linking them with other subjects, with visits or with experiences or performances that the pupils have enjoyed in school. In a very small number of cases, teachers' planning lacks enough detail to ensure that all groups of pupils make satisfactory progress during the lesson. There is also a wide variation in teachers' knowledge of design and technology, which results in some pupils of similar ages receiving very different experiences.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is well organised and the wide range of visits and visitors to the school encourages pupils' learning. The range and number of activities on offer to pupils outside the school day are extremely limited. The creative development of children aged under five is hindered by the lack of opportunities for them to choose their own methods and materials in art and when they are planning and making models.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Procedures for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs are fully in place and they have very good access to the school's curriculum. They make good progress towards their targets.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's strong Catholic ethos promotes pupils' spiritual development well and encourages good moral and social values. Provision for pupils' understanding of the multi-cultural nature of British society is satisfactory but is not as strong as other aspects of this provision.
How well the school cares for its pupils	A strength of the school. Each pupil is known personally to the headteacher, and adults have excellent relationships with children which enable them to provide very high quality care and support. Assessment procedures are good and are used well to provide suitable work for pupils in the vast majority of cases. Procedures for monitoring behaviour and dealing with bullying are firmly in place.

Good links with parents help to raise standards. Parents support the school's work well, with over 50 parents helping in classes on a regular basis each week. The Parent Teacher Association sends out a very useful newsletter to parents which provides good information about school activities.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher gives the school very clear and purposeful leadership. This results in very effective teamwork by the staff and a real commitment to high standards. Staff with subject responsibilities perform their roles well and play an active part in deciding priorities for future improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well. Governors take an active role in monitoring the school's finances and the curriculum. This gives them a good knowledge of the school and enables them to plan effectively for the future.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school analyses the results of annual tests carefully to ensure that high standards are maintained. Although there has been some monitoring of teaching, this is not rigorous enough to identify all areas where teachers might refine their practice.
The strategic use of resources	The school's resources are used very well to promote pupils' learning. Improvements to the premises, for example, the new school hall, and the curriculum are carefully costed and governors receive regular reports to enable them to judge the effectiveness of their spending.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • The progress that their children make. • The quality of their children's behaviour. • The quality of the teaching. • The approachability of the staff. • The expectations which the school has of their children. • The leadership and management of the school. • The way the school helps their children to be mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of communications with them, particularly about the curriculum, homework and the progress which their children make. • The range of extracurricular activities. • The provision for more able children. • Arrangements whereby a class is taught by more than one teacher. • Identification procedures and support for children with special educational needs. • How the school deals with bad behaviour.

The findings of the inspection support the positive views of parents. They also show that annual reports provide satisfactory information about children's progress and that pupils with special educational needs receive good care and attention. Information about the curriculum and expectations concerning homework is limited. Provision for more able children is good, except in a very few instances where they receive insufficiently challenging work, particularly in mathematics. The school has clear policies for dealing with bullying and bad behaviour. Where a class is taught by more than one teacher, this has no adverse effect on pupils' progress; the current arrangements and the excellent quality of communication between the teachers involved ensure very good provision. There are very few activities on offer to pupils outside the school day.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

High quality teaching enables pupils to make good progress and reach very high standards in English, mathematics and science in the national tests for seven and eleven year olds

1. Throughout the school, teachers have a very firm understanding of these subjects, which enables them to present their lessons in an interesting manner. They provide good explanations and answer pupils' questions clearly. For example, in an excellent literacy lesson in Year 6, the teacher used her own very good knowledge of Shakespeare's play, "Macbeth" to ask very searching questions, and further challenged pupils to suggest relevant adjectives to describe Lady Macbeth's character and provide evidence from the text. Her exciting presentation and obvious love of the subject enthused and delighted her pupils and they responded keenly to her questions, using excellent vocabulary and showing good understanding of the play.
2. A very good balance of strategies is used to maintain pupils' interest and concentration and involve them in their learning. In an excellent mathematics lesson in Year 2, the teacher first of all engaged her pupils in a quick mental arithmetic exercise, ensuring that each pupil answered a question at his or her own level. Pupils' responses to this part of the lesson were timed and the class tried to beat the previous day's performance. This very well organised introduction meant that all pupils were involved and were motivated to do their best for the class. In the main part of the lesson, skilled questioning and explanation ensured that pupils recognised patterns of twos, threes, tens and 20s and began to learn their multiplication tables. The activities which the teacher had planned for the pupils were well thought out and challenged each group to extend their learning successfully.
3. Teachers have high expectations of the standards which their pupils can achieve and motivate them well to produce their best work. In a very good mathematics lesson in a Year 6 class, the teacher had planned a range of work which challenged pupils to develop their own ways of finding the product of two numbers. Pupils identified with special educational needs were ably supported by a learning support assistant who had been well briefed on the teacher's expectations. All pupils in the class made rapid gains in their learning and reached standards which were very high for their capabilities.
4. Most teachers manage their pupils very well, which ensures that little time is wasted on maintaining discipline and that pupils spend the maximum amount of time on their learning. They encourage good behaviour by establishing clear classroom rules which mean that pupils know exactly what is expected of them. In a very good design and technology lesson in Year 2, the teacher's careful management ensured that her pupils worked sensibly in their groups, exploring how fabrics were joined together to make puppets and working co-operatively to design their own. Good behaviour and work were rewarded by praise and, because of the warm relationships which existed, pupils were keen to gain their teacher's approval.
5. A strong feature of the teaching in the school is the relevance and interest provided by linking lessons to other subjects and to visits the pupils make out of school or experiences provided by visitors to the school. For instance, pupils are encouraged to develop good skills in information and communication technology by using computers in their work on other subjects. In mathematics, for example, pupils in a Year 3 class transferred information they had collected about the weather on to a database and learned how to produce it as a graph. Much of the high quality literacy work in Year 6 seen during the inspection was related to a recent performance by a visiting theatre company who introduced the pupils to "Macbeth."

6. All these factors have a positive effect upon the quality of pupils' learning and enable them to make good progress as they move through the school.

The strong leadership of the headteacher, the excellent teamwork of the staff and the good support of governors ensure that high standards are valued and the school continues to improve.

7. The headteacher has clear values and ideals which he shares very effectively with his staff. These, coupled with the excellent relationships between staff and the respect in which they hold one another, results in a strong commitment towards enabling every child to reach high standards in all aspects of his or her development. The school's mission statement focuses on the importance of the individual child and, together, the headteacher and staff meet these ideals well. The positive role model provided by the headteacher in his relationships with his pupils encourages them to react well to one another and to value each other's views and opinions. Teachers of similarly aged classes work together to plan their lessons, and this, in the main, works very well in ensuring that pupils receive the same good quality learning experiences. Teachers with subject responsibilities fulfil their roles well by planning for and monitoring development and their work feeds into the school's three year improvement plan. This means that the provision for pupils continues to improve, as in the case of information and communication technology, where, although provision is currently good, further improvements are planned to increase the learning opportunities for the pupils.

8. The headteacher and staff work very well with governors to ensure that they receive relevant information about the curriculum which enables them to monitor it effectively and focus their spending on improving the quality of education for the pupils. Each governor takes a special interest in one subject and regular visits and good liaison with subject co-ordinators ensure that they have extensive knowledge of the school's work. Co-ordinators are invited to make presentations to the governing body about developments in their subjects and their plans for the future and this enables governors to make informed decisions about the allocation of funds. Some governors have excellent experience of financial procedures and they use this knowledge very effectively to monitor the school's spending and budget prudently for the future. They have spent funds wisely in improving provision for information and communication technology and this has resulted in high standards being reached by the pupils. Careful management has enabled governors to finance a new school hall, plans for which have recently been approved.

A strong Catholic ethos contributes greatly to the school's caring atmosphere and encourages pupils' positive attitudes to their work, good behaviour and warm relationships.

9. Warm, caring relationships and commitment to the individual child are fostered effectively by the strong Catholic ethos which permeates school life. The headteacher and staff know their pupils very well and show great concern for their personal as well as their academic development. Pupils are encouraged to share their concerns as well as their successes and this is possible because of the very positive relationships which exist throughout the school. Pupils are encouraged to bring in trophies and certificates which they have gained outside school and receive congratulations during the weekly celebration assembly. All these factors help to make pupils feel valued, comfortable and ready to learn.

10. Daily assemblies play an important part in enabling pupils to reflect on their spiritual beliefs and values. These are well organised around a particular theme and Bible teachings are related carefully

to pupils' own experiences to show the relevance to their everyday lives. For example, in a junior assembly on "New Beginnings", pupils were reminded of how the apostles changed their existing lifestyles to follow Jesus and make a new beginning to their lives. Some older pupils made sensitive contributions to the assembly by sharing some of their thoughts about their own "new beginnings" and these were treated very respectfully and thoughtfully by the other pupils and adults present.

11. Pupils respond very positively to the excellent role models provided by adults in the school. They are anxious to please their teachers and put a great deal of effort into their work. Only on very rare occasions do teachers have to remind them about their behaviour in the classroom and this means that the maximum time is spent on teaching and learning and that pupils make good progress.

The school enjoys excellent facilities and provides an attractive environment, which stimulate pupils' interest and motivates them to learn.

12. The school is bright and airy and classrooms are large enough to enable pupils to undertake a variety of practical work. The large school hall enables all pupils and adults to gather together for daily assemblies and provides good facilities for dining and for physical education. The computer suite, although small, is well organised and pupils clearly look forward to their lessons there. An attractive central garden area provides useful opportunities for younger children to engage in role play activities. Large playing fields enable pupils to receive the full range of outdoor physical education activities during the summer months.

13. Learning resources are plentiful and are in very good condition, which encourages pupils to treat them with respect. An attractive library area is used by parents who come into school regularly to help children practise their reading. Pupils' work is displayed carefully and encourages them to appreciate one another's efforts as well as instilling a great sense of pride in their work and in the school generally.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The school's arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching, which are not rigorous enough to identify areas where teachers can refine their performance.

14. The headteacher and senior managers have undertaken some monitoring of literacy and numeracy teaching and have given useful feedback to teachers. This has resulted in high quality teaching in these subjects which has raised pupils' attainment and standards in the school. The vast majority of the teaching staff welcome feedback and are committed to improving their practice to provide the highest possible quality for their pupils. The excellent relationships which exist between staff provide a strong framework on which to balance respect for one another whilst offering and accepting constructive advice.

15. Whilst teaching in literacy and numeracy have been monitored as part of the school's action plans for these subjects, the lack of an overall system for monitoring teaching generally means that some areas of weakness have not been identified and addressed. For example, the quality of teachers' lesson planning is variable: some teachers show careful thought about what they want their pupils to learn and how they are going to achieve it and others have little or no clear planning to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Another area which has been missed is the variation in teachers' knowledge in design and technology. During the inspection, two lessons in similarly aged classes revealed excellent subject knowledge in one and weak subject knowledge in the other. This resulted in pupils in these classes receiving very different learning experiences.

The opportunities for more able pupils to develop fully some aspects of their work in mathematics.

16. The quality of teaching in mathematics, especially numeracy, is very good in the majority of classes. The provision of very challenging work enables pupils of different abilities to progress at a fast rate. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and the advice which they receive from secondary school colleagues enable them to provide work at a high level for gifted and talented pupils. In a few classes, however, the work presented to higher achieving pupils is sometimes too easy and they do not progress at a fast enough pace

17. Although pupils receive extensive opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills and knowledge, there is little evidence of the highest achieving oldest pupils identifying and obtaining their own information before carrying out their tasks; often this information is provided for them. This prevents them from reaching high levels in this aspect of their work.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

18. In order to continue to improve, the governors, headteacher and staff should now:

- (1) Implement a clear system to monitor the quality of teaching in all subjects, so that areas for development can be highlighted and teachers can refine their practice;**
- (2) Ensure that higher achieving pupils receive challenging opportunities in all aspects of mathematics, to enable them to reach the highest standards of which they are capable.**

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	8

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
12	19	34	31	4	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		373
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		39

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		32
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	29	23	52

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	23	27	28
	Girls	23	23	23
	Total	46	50	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 [87]	96 [85]	98 [98]
	National	82 [80]	83 [81]	87 [84]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	26	27
	Girls	23	22	23
	Total	49	48	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 [92]	92 [84]	96 [90]
	National	82 [81]	86 [85]	87 [86]

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	27	29	56

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	21	25
	Girls	27	25	28
	Total	48	46	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	86 [87]	82 [77]	95 [89]
	National	70 [65]	69 [59]	78 [69]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	22	25	25
	Girls	28	27	27
	Total	50	52	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	89 [89]	93 [81]	93 [90]
	National	68 [65]	69 [65]	75 [72]

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	346
Any other minority ethnic group	5

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.74
Average class size	24.87

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	122

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
Total income	736,292
Total expenditure	760,095
Expenditure per pupil	1,873
Balance brought forward from previous year	172,779
Balance carried forward to next year	148,976

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	375
Number of questionnaires returned	216

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	31	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	43	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	46	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	42	17	5	2
The teaching is good.	50	45	3	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	45	12	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	34	7	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	38	2	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	40	49	10	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	56	38	3	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	46	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	15	18	38	17	9

Other issues raised by parents

The following comments were made by more than one parent:

- they would like more information about what is being taught and how they can help their children;
- the headteacher and staff are very committed to providing high quality care for their children;
- more able pupils are not catered for well enough;
- the progress of some children is hindered by their being in a class taught by more than one teacher;
- pupils with special educational needs are not identified quickly enough and given support;
- concern about how bullying and the poor behaviour of a small number of pupils are dealt with.