



St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103452
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276926
Inspection dates 17 October 2005 to 18 October 2005
Reporting inspector Lois Furness RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Alvechurch Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		West Heath
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Birmingham, West Midlands B31 3PN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4753489
Number on roll	186	Fax number	0121 4765782
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	27 September 1999	Headteacher	Mr John McElwee

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St John Fisher is slightly smaller than most primary schools. It is situated in West Heath in Birmingham. Nine different ethnic groups are represented in the school, of which the majority is White British. There are no pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. An average percentage of pupils have learning difficulties. Children start school in Reception with average levels of attainment. Over the last two years the school has experienced an unsettled time owing to staff absences, including a long-term absence of the Year 1 teacher and of the headteacher. The headteacher is now back in the school and two new teachers were appointed at the beginning of this term.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it might reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement, the role of the governing body, and monitoring and evaluation.

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School is not as good as it should be. The school evaluates itself as good but this is far too positive a view. Although the pupils' standards by the end of Year 6 are above average and their achievement is satisfactory, there is a much less favourable picture by the end of Year 2. Standards for seven year-olds are below average and both their progress and achievement are unsatisfactory. However, teaching is now at least satisfactory, with many good features. Pupils' personal development is good and the care, guidance and support pupils receive are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the work in Reception has improved well and standards in Year 6 have been maintained.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The school is aware of the level of the pupils' underachievement. It has recently put into place decisive action to turn the situation around and already there are signs that things are getting better. Systems are in place to monitor the school's performance carefully but these are not yet working effectively and evaluation is weak. The governors are insufficiently involved in the work of the school. They do not provide either enough support, or the challenge necessary to hold the school to account and relationships are strained. The good action plans of key leaders together with the staff's determination to work together show that the school has the capacity to improve. Given the children's attainment on entry and the standards attained by the end of Year 6, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- Establish a more rigorous approach to the monitoring and evaluation of its performance.
- The local authority should consider using its statutory powers to strengthen the governance of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

When children start in Reception, their skills and knowledge match those expected for their age. As a result of good teaching and well-targeted support, they get off to a positive start and make good progress to reach above average standards in all areas of learning, apart from writing, by the end of the year. Standards dip in Years 1 and

2 and are not high enough. By the end of Year 2, standards are below average in reading, writing and mathematics. The pupils' achievement and the progress they make are unsatisfactory. Since 2003, there has been a decline in the reading and writing standards of seven year-olds. In mathematics, standards declined in 2004, but improved in 2005. In Years 3 to 6 pupils make better progress and they achieve satisfactorily. By Year 6, pupils reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science. The more able pupils are challenged well and a high number of them attain above the levels expected in reading and mathematics. In 2005, the Year 6 pupils exceeded their challenging target in mathematics but narrowly missed the one for English. The pupils with learning difficulties are catered for well and make similar progress to their classmates. Grade: 4

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes towards their work. This view is confirmed by parents. Pupils like working together and they co-operate well when working in either groups or pairs. In an English lesson, for example, Year 5 pupils carefully respected each others' opinions when identifying significant phrases. Children in the Reception class work together happily, sharing ideas and resources. The pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Pupils obey school rules and are well mannered. They are keen to talk about their activities and are proud to be elected by their peers as school council members. They take their responsibilities seriously. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their awareness of the range of cultures living in Britain today is an area the school is developing, but has some way to go. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils know the importance of eating healthily and of regular exercise. They know that they should use equipment, such as scissors, carefully and, that they should not speak to strangers. Regular fundraising activities are a part of school life and pupils have recently raised money for the Tsunami appeal and for Macmillan nurses. By Year 6, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Grade: 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good features. This does not disguise the fact that by Year 2 the pupils have much catching up to do in order to achieve as well as they should. Teaching is good in Reception. The teacher has a good understanding of how young children learn and assesses the children's work carefully to plan the next steps of learning. In the most effective lessons in Years 5 and 6, teachers develop positive relationships with the pupils and this gives the pupils the confidence to express their ideas. At the start of lessons the teachers share with the pupils what they are to learn, and their success is evaluated at the end. As a result,

pupils know how well they have done and what they need to do next. The work is planned at the right level for the pupils. Well briefed teaching assistants help pupils with their learning, including those with learning difficulties. The good use of resources, such as interactive whiteboards, helps to make learning clearer and enables the pupils to develop their basic skills effectively. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but do not always clearly identify the good aspects of the work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that meets statutory requirements. A good range of extra curricular clubs is provided. These clubs are popular with pupils, who give them as one of the main reasons why they enjoy school. The provision for personal, social and health education, including drugs awareness, is satisfactory and successfully promotes the pupils' understanding of staying healthy, keeping safe and citizenship. Pupils' learning about cultures and faiths other than their own is an area that the school is developing. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties. Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The level of care is satisfactory. Pupils feel safe and welcomed by the school. They know they always have someone to talk to about any concerns. Child protection procedures are carried out to the letter by school staff, but governors are not sufficiently supportive of the school's actions. Risk assessments are carried out satisfactorily. Children joining the Reception class settle in quickly because the staff devote so much time to ensuring that their transition to school runs smoothly. Older pupils are very well prepared for their future education, with visits from secondary school staff starting as early as Year 4. Pupils have targets for most aspects of their work and this is working effectively, particularly for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Pupils are clear about what to do to improve and how to recognise when they have reached a target. Links with a range of outside agencies and parents are good and pupils who are vulnerable and those who have difficulty controlling their behaviour receive good support. Grade: 3

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory, although the governing body is not effective. Governors do not have a good enough idea of how well the school is doing, so they are unable to either support it in its work, or challenge it when standards are not high enough. Relationships between the governing body and the school are strained.

The management of the Foundation Stage and of Years 3 to 6 is significantly better than that of Years 1 and 2. This was shown in the good improvement in the 2005 Year

6 test results, brought about by clear action that followed the analysis of the previous year's performance. Despite the unavoidable staffing issues in Years 1 and 2, the school has taken too long to respond to the falling trend in results and is only now taking action to rectify the level of underachievement. Improvement is now occurring following the appointment of a new staff team and the good support of the subject leaders for English and mathematics.

The school's monitoring and evaluation of its work are not rigorous enough. There is a wealth of data available about how well the pupils are performing, but the information is not used as fully as it should be to help the school target provision to where it is most needed. The school has developed satisfactory systems to find out parents' and pupils' views about how things could be improved but has yet to analyse and use this information well. The improvement made since the last inspection and the actions taken so far to raise achievement indicate that the school is getting better and has the capacity to continue to do so. Grade: 3

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School Alvechurch Road West Heath Birmingham B31 3PN

17 October 2005

Dear Children

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work.

The things we liked most about your school are:

by the time you leave school, many of you are good at reading and mathematics

you behave well and are polite and courteous

you enjoy school and speak enthusiastically about the many after school clubs that you attend

you work well together and listen carefully to your friends when they share their ideas.

These are the things we have asked your school to work on now:

to help pupils in Years 1 and 2 to do much better in reading, writing and mathematics

to see that the governors of your school come into school more often and check more carefully how well you are doing in your work

to use the information that has been collected about what is happening in the school to improve the ways in which you learn.

We hope you will achieve much more once the school makes these improvements. Thank you again for your help

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lois Furness (Lead inspector)