



St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 115295
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 279568
Inspection dates 13–14 December 2006
Reporting inspector Martin Beale

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Burney Drive
School category	Voluntary aided		Loughton
Age range of pupils	4–11		Essex IG10 2DY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8508 6315
Number on roll (school)	388	Fax number	020 8508 4095
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Paul Harold
		Headteacher	Mrs Jacqueline Richards
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2000		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St John Fisher is a large primary school. Many pupils live a considerable distance from the school and travel each day by bus. Free school meal entitlement is low. The proportion of the pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is similar to the national average, and the number learning English as an additional language is low. A below average proportion of the pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a small number of pupils have statements of special educational needs. Attainment on entry is slightly below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection supports the school's evaluation that it is a good school. It is also improving in many aspects of its work. There is a happy and harmonious atmosphere, underpinned by the strong Catholic ethos that shapes the pupils' values and outlook. Pupils feel safe and secure. Care, support and guidance are good, although pupils are not always clear about the steps they need to take to improve the quality of their work. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They work hard and learn to respect others. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Their personal development is good.

The youngest children settle quickly into school and are given a good start in Reception through the rich curriculum that makes good links between all areas of learning. Achievement is good. Test results were broadly average in 2006 but indications are that standards are steadily rising across the school. Pupils are making good progress in relation to their starting points due to the good teaching. There are many well-taught and interesting lessons, but expectations are not always clear or high enough for the more able. Literacy and numeracy development is contributing well to the pupils' preparation for the next stages of their education. However, pupils do not learn to apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills to the same extent.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are catered for well. Their needs are thoroughly assessed and carefully targeted programmes are introduced; teaching for these pupils is good. As a result they make good progress towards their targets. The needs of the few pupils learning English as an additional language are also met. They make similar progress as others in their classes and engage in all aspects of school life. Teaching assistants provide very effective support when working with individuals or small groups in class or in withdrawal sessions.

Leadership and management are good, and have laid the foundations for the school's future success. The measures taken have brought about improvements in learning and pupil achievement, but their positive impact is not yet reflected in Year 6 test results. The headteacher gives clear direction for the school's improvement and has introduced secure procedures to monitor and improve the work of staff. The school knows itself well and has used this to identify how priorities for improvement are to be tackled. Test and other data are being used systematically to track the progress of pupils and adopt appropriate strategies if they are falling behind. Governance is good. The governing body is well organised and has increased in effectiveness since the last inspection. The school has a good capacity to tackle the challenges facing it and to bring about improvements in its performance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of teaching, in particular by providing consistent challenge for more able pupils and by making greater use of ICT in the classroom to make lessons more interesting and develop pupils' learning.

- Improve the guidance given to pupils to help them to improve their work and meet their targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are clearly rising as shown by the school's recent assessment data and the work of pupils. Most pupils reach, and many exceed, nationally expected standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. This represents good progress given their starting points and gives pupils a good foundation for their future studies. Test results for Year 2 were broadly average in 2006, continuing the slight improvement in performance since 2003. Test results for Year 6 pupils were also average in 2006. The most recent groups of Year 6 pupils to leave the school made at least satisfactory progress from their earlier Year 2 test results. Pupils who are currently at the school increasingly reach their targets although there is scope to challenge more able pupils even more in all classes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Constructive relationships and the welcoming atmosphere ensure that pupils enjoy school and their learning. As a result attendance has improved and is above average. Pupils get on well with each other and adopt a positive approach to their lessons. They say, 'Teachers are caring and help you a lot.' The majority of pupils are adopting healthy practices. They know about eating healthy foods and the importance of taking regular exercise. Members of the school council offer suitable suggestions for the development of the school, but there is scope for them to take greater responsibility for initiating action. Pupils are keen to raise money for charity and to take part in community activities, especially those organised by the church.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The most effective lessons have many good and some outstanding features, but this is not consistent across the school. Learning is promoted well when pupils are engaged and challenged by their teacher's skilled use of questions and the adoption of interesting activities. Creative use is made of new technology and interactive whiteboards where they are available. Several Year 6 pupils said, 'We enjoy our maths lessons because the teachers make them interesting.' Teachers have a good understanding of the levels pupils have reached, but do not always make clear what they expect from pupils, particularly the more able.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum has benefited from increasing the range of extra-curricular activities in recent years. The curriculum is broad and balanced, including the teaching of French. It supports well the pupils' personal development so that they grow in confidence and adopt a positive attitude towards learning. Programmes are continually being reviewed and adapted to meet the needs of pupils. This is done well for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but there is insufficient challenge for many of the more able pupils. Literacy and numeracy skills are re-enforced through other subjects, but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to consolidate and develop their ICT skills. Pupils' learning is enhanced by a range of trips, visits and improved extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoy taking part in the trips, visits, sports clubs and musical activities that enrich their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The strong commitment of staff and governors to safeguarding the welfare of the pupils is successfully achieved. Procedures for child protection and to ensure health and safety are fully in place, understood by staff and rigorously implemented. Pupils report that there is always someone they can turn to if they have a problem. Procedures to help the children settle into Reception and then move on to secondary school ensure a smooth transition at both stages. The information from thorough assessment procedures is used well to track the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and to set new targets where necessary. Pupils are not always aware of how they can take the steps needed to improve their work and achieve their targets, in part because of some inconsistencies in the helpfulness of marking.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has focused the work of staff well on improving teaching, learning and the achievement of pupils. Effective systems have been introduced to check that teachers teach as well as possible, and support is provided to help them to improve. The commitment to meeting the needs of all pupils is central to the work of the school. Teachers share this goal and are keen to develop further, but staff changes mean that they have not achieved a consistent approach to all aspects of their work. The increasingly effective leadership of other members of staff supports the drive for improvement. Governors understand where improvements are needed and they support the school in achieving its targets. Funding has recently been directed towards extending the accommodation and plans are in place to improve the inadequate level of ICT resources. Overall, the school gives good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 December 2006

Dear Pupils

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School, Burney Drive, Loughton, Essex IG10 2DY

I am writing to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. You were all very kind, helpful and showed how proud you are of your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers and watching you learn. There are many aspects of your school that we liked.

You make sound progress during your time at the school. Most of you achieve and many of you exceed the standards expected by the time you move on to secondary school. You enjoy school, work hard and behave sensibly. The youngest of you have a good start in Reception. The care and support you receive is good, particularly when you find learning difficult. You are learning the importance of diet and exercise for a healthy lifestyle.

Your teachers and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. There are some areas where we judge that improvements could be made. Those of you capable of high standards need to be challenged more consistently. We are asking teachers to provide more opportunities for you to learn through the use of computers and other modern technology. We are also suggesting that they give more guidance to help you to achieve your targets. We are sure you and your teachers will work hard to make this all happen.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead Inspector