



# St John Fisher Roman Catholic Primary School, Rochdale

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 105849  
**Local Authority** Rochdale  
**Inspection number** 287350  
**Inspection dates** 4–5 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Ralph Higgs

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Stanycliffe Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Middleton, Manchester
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Lancashire M24 2PB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 6433271
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	200	<b>Fax number</b>	0161 6430499
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Fr Tadhg Mullins
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs A Kenny
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 November 2001		

<b>Age group</b> 4–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 4–5 October 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 287350
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is smaller than it was at the time of the last inspection. Many of the staff are relatively new. Almost all pupils are White British and a minority are drawn from an area of high social and economic disadvantage. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is higher than average for a school of its size. Several good aspects of the school's work have received recognition. For example, the school has achieved Investor in People status, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and an Eco-School award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education. It has an inaccurate view of several aspects of its provision, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Nonetheless, it has several excellent features. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their attitudes and behaviour are excellent. This is because the school has a very caring ethos and treats all pupils as special individuals.

Children's attainment on entry has declined in recent years and is now below average. However, they make good progress in the Foundation Stage and most reach the standards expected for their age by the time they start Year 1. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory progress and standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average. Despite considerable efforts to improve, writing has been a weakness for a number of years. The progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good as their needs are met well.

Parents are very pleased with the work of the school. One said, 'My son is very happy and loves the thought of going every morning.' This enjoyment is shown by pupils' regular attendance and their eager participation in lessons. They are polite and courteous. Relationships are excellent. Pupils know how to keep healthy and stay fit. They are very alert to any safety risks.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Some good teaching exists, but it has not yet been able to eliminate fully the gaps in pupils' learning resulting from a period of staffing instability. This is partly because several teachers are relatively new. Also, the school is only just beginning to check pupils' progress effectively, so that they can be set learning targets to help them make consistently good progress. Pupils are well served by a good curriculum that captures their interest. However, opportunities for developing writing outside of literacy lessons are limited. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. A well-tailored curriculum and effective teaching are well established, as they have not been disturbed by recent changes.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has led the school with determination through a period of considerable staff turnover. A good partnership has been established with the governing body, which is very supportive of the school. However, self-evaluation is not secure, resulting in an inflated view of aspects of provision. The headteacher has taken on significant additional responsibilities that have detracted from the development of robust monitoring systems. Also, several recently appointed senior and middle leaders are still only developing in their roles. The headteacher is alert to this situation. The recent detailed analysis of performance data and the consequent successful action to boost standards in Year 6 show that the school has a satisfactory capacity to further improve. It provides satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Extend opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in as many subjects as possible to raise standards in all aspects of writing.

- Introduce more robust systems for self-evaluation and extend the role of senior and middle managers in school improvement.
- Ensure that pupils' progress is checked effectively and the necessary action taken in order that they achieve challenging targets.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage because the teaching team closely monitors their learning. They vary activities well to develop children's basic skills. Standards in Key Stage 1 have fallen in recent years, and are now below average, reflecting the decline in pupils' attainment on entry to the school. However, pupils make satisfactory progress, to reach the standards expected from their starting points.

Achievement is satisfactory across Key Stage 2 and standards are average by the end of Year 6. Results have risen strongly after a large fall in 2005. Extra teaching undertaken by the headteacher contributed well to the large gains made in Year 6 that enabled pupils to reach their targets. Attainment in writing is below average. Several aspects, such as the organisation of writing and understanding of different types of writing, are not well developed.

Pupils' progress is uneven throughout the school although greater stability in staffing is improving this situation. Also, the school is now in a better position to identify when pupils are falling behind. This is because more robust assessments are providing a reliable basis on which to set targets and monitor pupils' progress. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress, as their needs are sharply identified, frequently checked, and teaching assistants provide them with good support.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils are happy, safe and confident in school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The very positive individual attention they receive makes a strong contribution to developing their self-esteem. Consequently, pupils are confident to ask questions, knowing their responses are valued by staff. They work very well together, respecting each other's feelings. The school's very caring ethos enables pupils to understand the importance of such respect and recognition of feelings and, as a result, sensitivity towards others grows. Pupils readily exercise responsibility, showing considerable maturity. For example, the 'Playground Pals' offer support to younger pupils to help develop their confidence. Skills such as these prepare pupils very well for the next stage in their education and for their future roles in society.

Members of the school council take their responsibilities seriously. They are proud of their school and have gained a Bronze Eco Award in recognition of their care for the environment. Pupils enjoy using the extra resources for outside play that the school council has helped acquire. Pupils have a good understanding of how to be healthy.

They participate actively in the additional sports opportunities developed through links with a local sports college.

Pupils respond very positively to the strong guiding influence provided by the Catholic ethos of the school as shown by their excellent relationships. They have a very good appreciation of other cultures. For example, they enjoy learning Afro-Caribbean dancing. They contribute positively to the well-being of others, through fundraising and charity work.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching has many good features but its impact on learning is only satisfactory because it has not had time to overcome the uneven progress caused by a period of staff turnover.

A number of good common features are evident in the teaching seen. Lessons have clear objectives, which teachers ensure that pupils understand. Teaching is often enthusiastic. Consequently, pupils really enjoy their work. They listen well and work hard. Teachers encourage pupils to discuss points as they arise with partners or in groups. They collaborate very well together, which contributes to their good understanding of current topics. Teachers have a good partnership with teaching assistants to provide well for pupils with learning difficulties.

Assessment is satisfactory and improving. Teachers mark positively, and are now referring to the specific targets that pupils have been set to achieve. However, until recently, assessment information has not been used effectively to check that pupils are making expected progress in relation to their potential. A good new feature gives pupils the opportunity to assess aspects of their own writing. This is helping them gain a better understanding of their progress.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is well planned and complies with national requirements. It meets pupils' needs well, especially the specific needs of pupils with learning difficulties. There is a good emphasis on learning through speaking and listening. The introduction of a specific programme to teach basic literacy skills is proving effective. Lessons on personal development and a varied physical education and sports programme ensure a good focus on staying safe, being healthy and becoming fit. Computers are used well to extend learning. The addition of French lessons for Year 6 pupils has enhanced provision. Insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their writing skills in different subjects although the school is beginning to tackle this issue through its curriculum planning.

A wide range of visitors and visits enriches learning. Good links with a specialist sports college have recently added to this provision. Clubs, including dancing and choir, and sports teams after school extend opportunities for achievement, which pupils take part in eagerly.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Whilst care is outstanding, the guidance given to pupils on how to improve their work is satisfactory. A very strong ethos of care and support for others permeates all aspects of school life. Pupils are confident to share their concerns with staff, as they receive sensitive support. The school Rainbow Group offers a haven for pupils who have emotional problems. One girl said, 'It is comforting and helps you with your worries'. Parents and carers strongly value the work of the school and the commitment of staff. This positive relationship ensures that any difficulties are dealt with effectively. As a result of the staff's vigilance and commitment to pupils' welfare, pupils are safe and happy in school. All health and safety regulations, including those for child protection, are fully observed. Effective partnerships with local agencies ensure that pupils who need extra support receive it.

Whilst the guidance for pupils' social and emotional development is good, the guidance given for their academic development is satisfactory. Until recently, the systems used to track pupils' attainment have not given the school an accurate picture of how well pupils are doing. Thus, the school has not been in a good position to make timely interventions when slow progress occurs.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher leads the school with a strong sense of purpose. The response made to the concerns that arose about the accuracy of assessments and the progress of older pupils was prompt and effective. Understandably, these tasks have taken a great deal of time during a period when a new management structure was being established. As a result, important areas such as self-evaluation and the use of data for school improvement are underdeveloped.

A positive feature is that the new staff team are developing well and show a strong commitment to the school's success. The induction of new staff is good. The school makes effective use of teaching assistants. The investment it has made in encouraging their professional development has contributed strongly to the quality of provision. For example, they provide skilled support for specific groups of pupils.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspection team during our recent visit. Your views helped us a lot to understand your school. These are the main things we found out during our visit.

- You work very well and most of you reach the targets your teachers set for you.
- Your school is helping you really well to grow up to be mature young people.
- We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour. You are very polite and friendly to one another and to adults. You show great respect for others' feelings.
- You know how to choose healthy foods and that exercise is good for you. You behave safely around school.
- You are right to say that school is very enjoyable and that staff are helpful.
- The school is trying hard to give you a wide range of interesting things to learn.
- All of the staff take really good care of you, as they know you very well.
- The headteacher and governors are working hard to ensure you get a good education.

Your teachers will be trying to help you more by:

- helping you to do better in your writing, but you will also have to concentrate hard on this
- checking carefully how you are doing in your lessons, so that you get the right help when you need it
- looking closely at how the school is working, so that your learning can be even better.

I enjoyed meeting and talking to you and I wish you every success in the future.