

St John Fisher RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102671
Local Authority	Merton
Inspection number	308087
Inspection date	19 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Wilson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	442
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deacon Tom Kavanagh
Headteacher	Mrs Ursula O'Byrne
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2003
School address	Grand Drive London SW20 9NA
Telephone number	020 8540 2637
Fax number	020 8540 2988

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the progress being made by all year groups in the school and other groups such as boys
- the action taken by the school to improve standards in areas such as writing, mathematics and science
- how effectively the school monitors and evaluates its work and the role of subject leaders in this.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report. Evidence was gained from lessons and the school's own evaluations of its work. Discussions were held with governors, staff and pupils and a range of documentation was evaluated. Pupils' work was scrutinised in English, mathematics and science. The views of parents were gathered from questionnaires.

Description of the school

St John Fisher is a large primary school. About a third of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups with the remainder being of white British origin. Pupils' social and economic circumstances are better than those usually found. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. The percentage of pupils having a home language other than English is also below average although the numbers are increasing.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St John Fisher is a good school. Its work is underpinned by its strong Catholic ethos which successfully fosters a spirit of care and respect for others. Within its friendly environment pupils are exceptionally well looked after and are enabled to develop well socially, morally, spiritually and culturally. Pupils are happy, enjoy learning and develop confidence and self-esteem. Parents are overwhelmingly pleased with the school, as one wrote, '...I believe St John Fisher is an excellent school. My children have flourished and are well-mannered, well-educated individuals'. This is typical of the large number of comments by parents.

Pupils achieve well in the school and the standards that they reach are consistently above average at the end of each key stage. They do best in English because the school has placed particular emphasis in recent years in developing reading and writing. Standards in mathematics and science, though also above average, are not as high, because skills in some areas such as mental mathematics and investigation in science are not secure enough. Teachers are now providing more learning activities for pupils in these areas and, compared with last year's national test results, a higher proportion of pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach the expected Level 4 or the higher Level 5 by the end of the year. Staff with subject responsibilities have led these developments and have begun to do some monitoring of their implementation. However, more is needed in order to ensure that the improvements are sustained.

All groups of pupils achieve well, including those who need extra support with reading, writing and mathematics and those whose first language is not English. This is because the quality of teaching is good overall and the curriculum meets their needs well. Lessons have clear objectives, pupils' work is marked thoroughly and they are given helpful guidance on how to improve, including targets to aim for. As a result, pupils are clear about what they have to do to improve. Teachers manage their classes well and prepare interesting lessons, making good use of resources, such as electronic whiteboards. There are, however, some inconsistencies in teaching because work in some classes is not as well matched to pupils' needs and abilities, and the pace of learning is not always as good as it should be, resulting in some pupils making slower progress.

The good curriculum provides pupils with a broad and balanced education. Links between subjects and opportunities for extended work, such as a recent science week, help make learning meaningful for pupils. Swimming, French, school visits and participation in a good range of after school clubs all contribute to pupils' learning. The curriculum also caters well for pupils' personal development. They know about how to eat healthily, keep safe and about the importance of exercise, with many of them walking to school. They have good opportunities for involvement in the work of the school, for example as monitors or members of the school council, which enable them to develop responsibility. Their behaviour is good and attendance is above average. The good programme of additional support, to which teaching assistants make a valuable contribution, provides very well for those pupils who are falling behind or need extra help.

Both pupils and their parents say how much the school has improved over recent years. This is because the headteacher provides good leadership and she is well supported by a capable deputy headteacher and other senior staff. Together they share a very clear vision about how to develop the school and set challenging targets to aim for. Teamwork across the school is good and staff readily take on new ideas. All issues raised in the last inspection have been addressed fully and the improvements in the school since then show that it has a good capacity

for further improvement. Self-evaluation is now accurate so that leaders know where the strengths and weaknesses are, and planning for improvement is clearly focussed on the right priorities to take the school forward. Buildings and accommodation have improved dramatically and these now provide a good learning environment for pupils. Provision for information and communication technology is much better. Governors are committed and provide a good level of challenge and support. There are good links with outside agencies and parents and these make a valuable contribution to the work of the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage shares all the good features of the rest of the school. Children join the Nursery with skills and abilities that are in line with those expected of three-year-olds and they settle in quickly. In both the nursery and reception classes a rich learning environment, including a good outside learning area, and good teaching enables them to progress well. Children are carefully looked after and teachers have a good knowledge of what each child can do because they assess their progress very thoroughly. Teachers use this information to plan interesting activities for the children that meet their needs very well. Parents are kept well informed about how their children are learning and what they are expected to achieve during the coming term. By the end of the reception year, the children's attainment is above that expected of five-year-olds in most areas of learning. Although progress in their personal and social development is good, it is not quite as marked as in other areas and hence this is currently a priority for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the teaching so that, in all lessons, it consistently provides enough level of challenge for pupils of all abilities.
- Develop subject leaders' monitoring role in order to sustain improvement, especially in pupils' achievement in mathematics and science.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

01 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John Fisher RC Primary School, London, SW20 9NA

You may remember that I recently came to visit your school. Thank you for making me feel so welcome. You were all very polite, confident and told me what you thought very clearly. I really enjoyed meeting you, your teachers and other people who work in the school, and am writing to let you know what I found out.

I think that you go to a good school. This means that it provides very well for you and only a few things are needed to make it even better. Your school is led well by your headteacher. Both she and all staff are very committed to looking after you and helping you to do your best. The teaching is good overall, though sometimes the work you are doing could be more challenging, and you have a good range of opportunities for learning. The school frequently checks on your progress and provides good additional help when you need it. As a result, you all make good progress. By the time you leave school, the standards that you reach are above average. You do better in English though compared with mathematics and science, and your teachers are planning their lessons so as to help you better in these subjects too. Both you and your parents said how much you enjoyed school and get along with each other. You feel safe, cared for and work hard. Your school helps you to develop good personal skills, such as self-confidence, being responsible and knowing how to stay safe and healthy.

I have made just two suggestions for improvement, which are:

- to improve teaching even more so that all the lessons are as good as they possibly could be and provide the right level of challenge for all of you
- to check that the various new ideas that are being introduced to help you do better in mathematics and science are working properly.

Thank you again for being so friendly. We enjoyed meeting you. I send you my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Wilson

Lead Inspector