

St John Fisher RC Primary School, Denton

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 106255 |
| Local Authority | Tameside |
| Inspection number | 309072 |
| Inspection dates | 11–12 June 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Frank Carruthers |

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

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|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 189 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Richard Tipping |
| Headteacher | Mr R Ganley |
| Date of previous school inspection | 21 June 2004 |
| School address | Manor Road Haughton Green Denton Manchester M34 7SW |
| Telephone number | 0161 3365308 |
| Fax number | 0161 3367939 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average sized primary school includes a Resource Base for up to 12 pupils from across the borough who have statements of special educational needs for autism. This is a change since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is just below the national average. The proportion learning English as an additional language, although low, has increased in recent years. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average whereas the proportion with statements of special educational needs is well above average. The school has gained the Basic Skills Award, the Sports Activemark (Gold), Eco-Schools Silver Award, the local authority's Inclusion Award and the National Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding education for its pupils. It has not only maintained high standards of pupils' academic and personal development since the last inspection but has improved the way it caters for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for example, in the way it now hosts the Resource Base for pupils with autism. The school is highly regarded in the community and parental views are summed up through comments such as: 'An excellent school where my children are learning and above all are happy.' The school has excellent capacity to improve and gives outstanding value for money.

Pupils achieve exceptionally well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. By the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are significantly above the national average in most years. Inspection evidence and school data show that for the current Year 6, standards are on course to be above average. A significant proportion of this group joined the school late in their primary education. The staff analyse data about how well pupils perform exceptionally well and are quick to spot trends or concerns. For instance, a slight decline in standards of pupils' writing recently has been halted by concerted, whole-school action.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their time at school thanks to the excellent quality of relationships. Their behaviour is exemplary and this helps all pupils to feel safe in school. The inclusion of pupils from the Resource Base in lessons and at playtimes and the reverse, when mainstream pupils join in lessons in the Resource Base, promotes pupils' social and moral development exceptionally well, encouraging tolerance and friendships. The excellent progress that pupils make in their basic skills added to the very positive attitude pupils have to working with others prepares them exceptionally well for their future.

The teaching and learning are of high quality. Excellent relationships between pupils and staff result in a positive classroom atmosphere, allowing pupils' learning to blossom. Lessons have very good pace and challenge for pupils. Staff have improved the marking of pupils' writing in recent terms so that pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. This excellent practice, however, is not reflected in other subjects. The curriculum is outstanding, providing not only excellent opportunities for pupils to develop basic skills of literacy and numeracy but to explore a wide range of subjects and activities, including modern foreign languages, music and sports in lessons and after school. The high quality of care, guidance and support given by all staff ensures the safety and well-being of all pupils. Partnerships with other agencies and schools are used fully to promote the achievement of pupils, especially those in the Resource Base and others with additional needs.

Leadership and management, including governance are outstanding. The headteacher's sustained and enthusiastic leadership is extremely well supported by the deputy headteacher and a strong senior leadership team. Arrangements to monitor teaching, learning and the performance of pupils are outstanding and lead to very accurate school self-evaluation. The commitment of all staff to doing the very best for all pupils, whatever their need, is excellent and leads to the outstanding outcomes evident in pupils' achievements and personal development.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is good with some outstanding features, for example, assessment is extremely thorough, enabling staff to very effectively monitor children's progress. The children enjoy their learning and have a very positive and caring attitude toward one another. They get a good start in the Nursery class where the majority enters at levels in line with those expected for their age. Children achieve well so that by the end of the Reception year, in personal, social and emotional development and in communication and language - areas of specific focus - children's attainment is above that expected nationally. Good teaching and support from teaching assistants make a positive contribution to the good progress of the children. There is a good balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. There is much for children to enjoy indoors, although resources for outdoors are only satisfactory. A current priority is to improve the quality of the outdoor activities. There are good arrangements for introducing children to school and keeping close partnerships with parents. Good leadership and management ensure that children's needs are met and good links with outside agencies assist those children with additional needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the excellent practice in the marking of pupils' writing to other subjects so that pupils better understand how they can improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make progress at a consistently high rate across all year groups so that by the end of Year 2, standards are on course to be above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing. The school's current focus on improving pupils' writing skills has had a good impact on this aspect of their work. Pupils from the Resource Base are included in assessments when appropriate and in the current year group, two pupils have achieved as well as their classmates in Year 2. This is outstanding achievement. Excellent progress is maintained in Key Stage 2 and newcomers to school, including the few who are new to this country, do exceptionally well. By the end of Year 6, overall standards are usually significantly above the national average in most years. In the current Year 6, standards are above average overall. Because of the nature of this year group, with half of the pupils joining the school since the end of Year 2, there is an atypical mix of pupils, many of whom are working at above expected levels and a larger than usual number who are below the expected level.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. All pupils work and play together very happily. Pupils' attendance, which is consistently above the national average, reflects their enjoyment of school. Punctuality is very good. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and make very good choices about the food they eat in school and the exercise they take. The very good take up of activities after school and the pupils' keen involvement in inter-school sports are testament to this. Pupils have a very good awareness of personal safety. The contribution that pupils make to their community is outstanding. For example, being buddies or members of the school council, roles which they

take very seriously. Pupils from the Resource Base are included in these responsible roles. Pupils contribute very well to the wider community through their collections for local, national and international charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The outstanding quality of teaching and learning leads to the excellent achievement of pupils. Very good support from teaching assistants for individuals and groups of pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, makes a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers monitor pupils' progress very well and make very good use of this information when planning work. This helps to ensure that lessons are matched to pupils' needs. There is a very good range of activities which provide interest and challenge. For example, pupils who are more able in numeracy have weekly sessions on solving mathematical problems with older year groups. Teachers' good use of questioning enables pupils to extend their vocabulary in their responses. For example, pupils in Year 6 used terms such as 'logical', 'methodical' and 'in order' to describe how they should approach problem solving. Pupils respond particularly positively in lessons where imaginative use is made of interactive whiteboards. Whilst pupils' work is marked regularly, there are inconsistencies in the quality of marking across subjects and pupils do not always have clear guidance on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

A variety of external awards adds much to the outstanding curriculum. The work towards these underpins, for example, the way the school promotes healthy living and creative and sporting skills exceptionally well. Pupils of all abilities are encouraged to take part in a wide range of sporting activities, many on a competitive basis with other schools where they are often highly successful. Themed weeks, for example, one on Africa, help pupils to gain an excellent insight into the richness of the cultures and crafts of the continent. This topic is an excellent example of the benefits the school enjoys as a result of the establishment of the Resource Base, because the lead for this whole-school event was work led by staff in the base. Pupils learn one of two modern foreign languages and sample the other. This year, there is an opportunity for a residential visit abroad for older pupils to practice their growing skills at speaking French. Personal, social and health education is given a high priority and promotes pupils' awareness of matters of personal safety and well-being very well. There are excellent opportunities to learn a musical instrument and to make practical use of computer skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

These are key strengths and contribute fully to the outstanding personal development and well-being of pupils. All aspects of health and safety, including child protection and the safe recruitment of staff are in place. The school has as its mission to do the best for all pupils and since the last inspection has improved its work with those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or are newly arrived in this country. Parents are especially appreciative of the expertise and support of staff. A comment typical of many is, 'I feel this school meets all of my child's needs and I am proud she attends here.' The monitoring of attendance is robust and

results in pupils' good attendance. The tracking of pupils' personal and academic development is extremely effective. The information is used very well to meet pupils' individual needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

At all levels, leadership and management are highly effective in promoting excellence. For instance, staff have grasped the opportunity provided by the establishment of the Resource Base in school to widen their own and the pupils' experience of learning disability. This has been a key priority for the manager of the base, who as a member of the senior leadership team works closely with the headteacher and senior staff in the success of this endeavour. The outcomes in terms of the achievement of the pupils and the attitudes of all pupils are very impressive. All staff are fully involved and consulted in school self-review and forward planning, and the governors have an excellent strategic overview of the school. They have close links with subject leaders and are knowledgeable advocates for the school. They are exceptionally well led and fully informed about all matters of curricular, financial and premises development through committee work.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 1 |
| 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? | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 |

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 1 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 |
| 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

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 1 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 1 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 1 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 1 |
| 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 |

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you very much for your help when we inspected your school. We enjoyed our visit very much. I would like to share with you what we found out about your school.

Yours is an outstanding school. Here are just some of the excellent features:

- The staff take excellent care of you all and teach you exceptionally well.
- It is clear that you enjoy school very much and are all becoming mature students who want to do well.
- You have a very broad understanding of how to keep safe and healthy.
- You are making excellent progress in your school subjects and that includes those of you who find the work difficult.
- The staff provide you with excellent opportunities to take on responsibilities in school and to enjoy activities at lunchtimes and after school.
- The excellent leadership means that your headteacher and deputy headteacher know you all exceedingly well and make sure the school does all it can to help you to do very well.

Part of my job is to make suggestions about how the school can be even better.

There is one thing to do:

- When the staff mark your writing, they have introduced some good ways to let you know how to improve. The next step is to help you do the same in other subjects, such as mathematics and science. You can help by taking notice of the marking and always trying your best.

Congratulations to everyone! Please carry on working hard and enjoying school.