

SS John Fisher and Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 105531 |
| Local Authority | Manchester |
| Inspection number | 336509 |
| Inspection dates | 24–25 February 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Denise Shields |

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 of pupils on the school roll | 316 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Chris Wilson |
| Headteacher | Mr Dominic Hemington |
| Date of previous school inspection | 21 February 2007 |
| School address | Woodhouse Lane Benchill Manchester M22 9NW |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons or part lessons and these included the observation of 15 teachers. Just over half of the inspection time was spent collecting first-hand evidence of pupils' learning. Meetings were held with governors, staff and groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documentation, including pupils' past and present work, assessment and tracking information, monitoring and evaluation records, and additional evidence of the support for vulnerable pupils. Inspectors also looked at whether the school meets statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding. In addition, 86 parental questionnaires and a representative sample of questionnaires returned by pupils and staff were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6, to determine if attainment in English is rising quickly enough
- the quality of teaching in all year groups, to find out if it meets the needs of all groups of pupils, particularly the more able
- the organisation of the curriculum, particularly in Years 3 to 6, to establish its impact on pupil outcomes especially in English
- the quality of self-evaluation by leadership and management at all levels, and its effectiveness in identifying key priorities to raise standards of attainment
- the rigour of arrangements to monitor and secure improvements in attendance.

Information about the school

This is a larger than the average size school. Nearly half of the pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, this is more than twice the average and the proportion has increased since the previous inspection. Just over a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language and are at an early stage of learning English. Eligibility for free school meals is high and has increased since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or

disabilities is below average. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision comprises Reception children being taught in two classes in the main school, while the Nursery is situated in a building in the school grounds. The school has gained several awards including Healthy School status, Eco School bronze, Activemark gold and the Inclusion Quality Mark gold.

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant staff changes and a new headteacher was appointed in September 2008.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. Pastoral care is very good and ensures pupils are happy and secure at school. As a result of the excellent collaboration with external agencies, those pupils who are most vulnerable receive very good support, as do their families. Relationships are strong and the school is a harmonious community. Pupils show a clear understanding of the need to respect people's differences, beliefs and values. Pupils comment, they really enjoy the activities beyond lessons, especially in the Arts, music and sport. A great many participate eagerly in these and as a result, their confidence and self-esteem improve significantly.

Children get a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Overall, in Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils' achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in mathematics and science, but well below average in English. Significantly fewer Year 6 pupils than average attain higher Level 5 in national tests. The school recognised the need to improve pupils' reading skills. Recent robust initiatives to boost the progress of identified groups have had success. As a result, pupils' achievements and their attainment are rising strongly in reading. Improvements in standards in writing, however, have not been as strong.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. There are examples of good practice, for example, in the teaching of mathematics. When teaching is most effective, the rate at which pupils learn accelerates. However, not all teaching has the same high expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, pupils' enjoyment of learning and their progress is uneven. Assessment does not always make clear to pupils the progress made or the steps required to improve. Pupils generally behave well in lessons. However, when teaching fails to capture their attention, or work is not matched to their needs, concentration slips and pupils become restless.

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's future. He has established a strong team of staff and governors who share his commitment to bring about improvement. School self-evaluation is broadly accurate and developing well and so priorities for improvement are, in the main, correct. Firm action has been taken to introduce new management systems to bring about improvement, but many are still embedding. Nevertheless, success is already evident. The rigorous focus on pupils' attendance, for example, has brought about rapid improvements and it is now average. The school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing by ensuring that:

- there is a consistent approach to teaching writing throughout the school
- activities are provided to increase pupils' eagerness to write in all subjects
- pupils have more chances to improve their speaking skills
- more opportunities are provided to enable pupils to improve their spelling.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons
 - assessment information is consistently used to adjust lesson planning and teaching, so that work is precisely tailored to pupils' needs and abilities, in particular for the more able
 - more consistent use is made of new technology in lessons.
- Enable pupils to know what progress they have made in their lessons and how to improve their work by ensuring that:
 - time is provided for pupils to reflect on what they have learnt
 - there is an agreed system which provides plentiful opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work, either by themselves or with a partner
 - pupils' learning targets are clear, closely matched to their abilities and clearly inform them of the next steps to improve their learning
 - marking consistently matches the quality of the best practice.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

■ **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

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Pupils learn best when activities are practical and new technology is used. In the best lessons, pupils' attention is captured, they become engrossed in learning, apply themselves to their tasks carefully and their progress speeds up. When given the opportunity they work cooperatively with a partner or in groups and this helps them to become more confident learners. Where tasks are mundane and fail to gain pupils full attention, however, they show little enthusiasm and their learning slows. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are at an early stage of learning English, make satisfactory progress because of the sensitive guidance they receive in lessons from the teaching assistants and the specialist language teacher. Pupils' attainment is below average on entry to Year 1. They make satisfactory progress and, by the end of Year 6, their attainment is broadly average overall. Significantly fewer Year 6 pupils than average attain the higher Level 5 because they are not given sufficiently challenging work. Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils' learning and progress are strongest in mathematics because the school has successfully introduced revised approaches to teaching numeracy. Progress in reading is accelerating strongly and attainment rising because successful intervention programmes and revisions to

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

teaching reading are effective. There is no consistent approach to teaching writing. Pupils have too few opportunities to practise and improve their spelling and speaking skills. As a consequence, standards are not rising as quickly as in reading and in mathematics.

Pupils express their opinions confidently and improvements have been made to the school as a result of their suggestions. Pupils undertake and enjoy a wide range of responsibilities. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. Pupils make an extensive contribution to the local and wider community and within the parish. This broadens their experiences, improves their self-confidence and helps develop their good awareness of diversity within society. They have a good knowledge of how to live healthily and safely. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. 'Behaviour is good, but in lessons – not all the time! Āthere is not enough to do at break and lunchtime and so sometimes children are naughty', is a typical view. In lessons, teachers successfully manage pupils' behaviour, but, when tasks do not fully engage pupils they sometimes disrupt the learning of others. Although pupils are well supervised outside, their behaviour is occasionally boisterous, especially when they do not have enough equipment to play with. Pupils say they feel safe at school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 3 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹ | 3 |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 3 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 3 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 3 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 3 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 3 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

How effective is the provision?

In the best lessons, time is used well and the pace is lively. Teachers make good use of visual resources to bring learning alive and new technology is used effectively to capture pupils' interest. In these good lessons, ample opportunities are provided for pupils to talk in pairs or small groups: these successfully promote their speaking and listening skills. The end of lessons is used well to reinforce key teaching points. These features, however, are not consistent in every class and some teaching fails to fully engage pupils. Teachers are starting to make better use of assessment information to identify individuals and groups in danger of falling behind. Lesson planning, however, does not always take sufficient account of this information. As a result, work is not tightly matched to the needs of individual pupils, especially the more able. Learning targets are not always communicated clearly enough so that pupils know what they need to do to improve their work. In the best practice, marking is helpful and provides constructive comments to help pupils improve, but this is not so in all classes. Sometimes, pupils have the opportunity to reflect on what they have learnt but this is not a consistent feature in all classes.

The curriculum is appropriately adjusted to meet the requirements of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English. Programmes to boost pupils' progress in reading make a positive contribution to their rising standards. There are, however, too few occasions when pupils can practise their writing skills in other subjects. The needs of more able pupils are not fully met. There are very good arrangements for pupils' personal, social, emotional and health education. Activities available beyond lessons are rich and varied. There is an appropriate breadth of visits and visitors to enrich learning.

The school provides good guidance and support. Pastoral care is a strength because teachers know pupils very well. The very good interventions, such as those to support vulnerable groups, have led to noticeable improvements in their attendance, behaviour and self-esteem. Individual learning plans for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are satisfactory, but parents and carers have minimal involvement in drawing these up. Arrangements to help children settle in the Nursery and Reception classes are good. Provision to support pupils as they move from year group to year group and then on to secondary school, is satisfactory. Rigorous and robust arrangements to monitor and promote attendance have resulted in a significant reduction in persistent absence and a rapid rise in attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| The quality of teaching | 3 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 3 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 3 |

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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|--------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 2 |
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How effective are leadership and management?

Since his appointment the headteacher has managed the period of significant staff change very well. With the support of knowledgeable governors, a new teaching team has been established. Teamwork is strong. The high return of questionnaires from staff indicates they feel that they are valued members of the school community. A robust system to monitor and evaluate the work of the school is becoming increasingly effective and is used successfully by senior and middle leaders to drive improvements. However, many of the new management systems and initiatives are yet to fully impact on enhancing provision and improving pupils' outcomes. The roles of subject leaders are developing well because staff readily undertake a good range of training in order to improve their expertise. They have a good grasp of how well pupils are doing in their subject areas. The effective governing body holds the school to account and governors are not afraid to ask challenging questions. They are becoming increasingly more involved in monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision and of pupils' performance. The school complies with current statutory requirements for safeguarding, health and safety and child protection.

Satisfactory arrangements are in place to promote equal opportunity and to tackle discrimination. Relationships with most parents and carers are good. As a result of the good range of programmes organised by the school, parents and carers are becoming more involved in their children's learning and well-being, and in the life of the school. Some notable success has been achieved with individual families, for example, in improving their children's attendance and punctuality. There is a good flow of information and parents' and carers' views are regularly sought. Community cohesion is good with strengths in partnerships within the local community and parish. Good partnerships, particularly with external agencies, help to raise pupils' aspirations and the quality of their learning.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 3 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 3 |

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| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 3 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

As a result of good teaching and learning, children make good progress from their well below expected starting points, but still enter Year 1 with below average skills. Children who are at an early stage of learning English make good progress in their language development because of the help they receive from staff and bilingual parent-helpers. Limited, but good input is received from the specialist language teacher due to the restrictions on her availability. The activities planned for indoors have a good balance between those children can choose for themselves and those led by an adult. In the Nursery, children have continuous access to the outdoors, but are currently using resources that are tired and old. There are firm plans to build a new outdoor area for the Reception classes; work is due to start soon after the inspection. Staff, however, ensure Reception children get plenty of chances to learn and play outside, as a result, their learning and progress is not held back. Children are safe and well cared for and all welfare procedures are in place. Relationships are very good and children play happily together. The key worker system (adults who have special responsibility for the care of children and are the first point of contact for their parents and carers) is effective and helps to establish close links with the children and their families. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Teamwork is strong. The difficulty posed by the Nursery and Reception classes being housed in two different buildings is managed well. Leaders have an accurate view of what to do next which informs effective plans to develop the phase further.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |

Views of parents and carers

Inspectors received questionnaire responses from just over a quarter of parents and carers. Analysis of responses indicates that in the main parents and carers are happy with their children's experience at school. Most indicate their children enjoy school and

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that the school keeps their children safe. Inspectors endorse these views. Although a few parents and carers felt the school did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour, most expressed a positive view and inspectors endorse this. While most felt the school took account of their suggestions and concerns, a few parents and carers disagreed. However, inspectors found no evidence that the school did not regularly consult with parents and carers and act, where appropriate, on suggestions made. A few parents and carers expressed concerns about the effectiveness of leadership and management, however, most expressed a positive view and inspectors endorse this.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at SS John Fisher and Thomas More Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 86 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 316 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 57 | 66 | 25 | 29 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 52 | 60 | 29 | 34 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 40 | 47 | 40 | 47 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 46 | 53 | 38 | 44 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 49 | 57 | 37 | 43 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 42 | 49 | 40 | 47 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 39 | 45 | 40 | 47 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment) | 36 | 42 | 40 | 47 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 39 | 45 | 41 | 48 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 36 | 42 | 31 | 36 | 11 | 13 | 4 | 5 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 39 | 45 | 34 | 40 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 2 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 38 | 44 | 34 | 40 | 10 | 12 | 1 | 1 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 45 | 52 | 36 | 42 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
|---------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 39 | 58 | 3 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 13 | 50 | 33 | 4 |
| Secondary schools | 17 | 40 | 34 | 9 |
| Sixth forms | 18 | 43 | 37 | 2 |
| Special schools | 26 | 54 | 18 | 2 |
| Pupil referral units | 7 | 55 | 30 | 7 |
| All schools | 15 | 49 | 32 | 5 |

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

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| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school. |
| Learning: | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners. |
| Overall effectiveness: | <p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support. |
| Progress: | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started. |

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ss John Fisher and Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Manchester M22 9NW

I am writing to tell you about what we found when we inspected your school and to say thank you for helping with the inspection. You were all very helpful. Your school is satisfactory and some aspects are good.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes have a good start to their education. You have lots of exciting activities after lessons, as well as interesting visits and visitors; these help you learn many new things. Adults take good care of you and help you to learn about healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe.

A lot of you told us, in the questionnaires you filled in, that behaviour is not good enough. We agree that occasionally behaviour outdoors can be boisterous and that sometimes in lessons some of you get restless.

You told us that generally lessons are 'alright'. We agree and have asked your school to improve teaching so that it is always good or better and to ensure work is always just at the right level to help you learn more quickly. You can help too by always working hard and trying your very best.

You make satisfactory progress in mathematics, science and reading. Your progress in writing is not as good. We have asked your school to give you lots of enjoyable opportunities to write and to practise and improve your spelling and speaking skills. Many of you also said that you are not sure how to improve your work. We agree and have asked your school to look at ways to make your learning targets easier to understand and to involve you more in assessing your own and other pupils' work. We have also asked your teachers to make sure that when they mark your work their comments tell you how you can improve.

Yours sincerely

Denise Shields

Lead inspector

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