

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115295
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338555
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Sutherland-Harper

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	387
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Harold
Headteacher	Mrs Jacqui Richards
Date of previous school inspection	13 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 23 lessons taught by 13 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, governors and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school improvement plan, the School Improvement Partner's reports, minutes of meetings of the governing body, policies and data about pupils' attainment and progress. The team analysed the responses to 231 questionnaires returned by parents and carers in addition to those completed by staff and pupils.

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

- the progress made in addressing the issues raised at the last inspection
- the quality of learning and progress in Key Stage 1 and in writing across the school
- the impact of the curriculum in raising attainment
- the progress of groups of pupils, including the gifted and talented, and boys
- the impact of all leaders, including governors, on the quality of provision and pupils' progress.

Information about the school

St. John Fisher is a larger than average primary school. Many pupils live a considerable distance from the school and travel each day by bus. Most of the pupils come from White British families. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average but increasing, and the number learning English as an additional language is low. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and with statements of special educational needs is below the national average. The school holds a number of awards including Healthy Schools status, Investors in People and the Eco Schools Bronze Flag.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School is a good school. The feeling of community in this happy school is balanced by deep respect for the individual. Pupils get on well together and the headteacher and her staff ensure that no one misses out on opportunities to learn and grow. As one parent said, 'St John Fisher is a school where we feel we are fully integrated members of its family. The children undertake experiences which really enrich their lives.'

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which they enter with skills generally below national expectations for their age. They settle quickly and make good progress as they move through the school. The school has sought to ensure enjoyment of learning, especially through the innovative curriculum and increased use of information and communication technology, both of which have improved since the last inspection. This has helped to ensure that by the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average in mathematics and science, and above average in English and in other subjects. Attainment in Key Stage 1 is broadly average, except in writing where progress has been slower but is now accelerating. Additional strategies, such as topic work tailored to meet the learning needs of boys and the gifted and talented, are now in place and narrowing the gap between pupils' reading and writing skills. Key Stage 1 staffing is more secure and monitoring more intensive to ensure steady progress, especially with writing. The strong team of teachers and support staff work well together to provide good learning opportunities although teachers do not systematically share best practice across the school in teaching, analysis of data and assessment practices to develop these skills to the highest level. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because work and support are closely matched to their learning needs. There are missed opportunities in some lessons, however, for pupils to develop their skills through working in groups and undertaking more independent learning. Provision for information and communication technology, music and sport are strengths of the curriculum. Good care, guidance and support enhance pupils' sense of well-being. Parents value the contribution of all staff to their children's welfare. The guidance provided to pupils has been improved through target setting and increased advice for pupils on how to improve their work. Helpful marking, especially in English, is helping pupils to develop their skills.

Pupils are unfailingly polite. Well above average attendance reflects pupils' enjoyment of what the curriculum now offers. Pupils feel very safe and participate enthusiastically in whole-school events. Behaviour is consistently good and sometimes outstanding, especially when pupils are fully engaged in learning. In an assembly, pupils were involved as leaders although this is not the case often enough across the school. The

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school council provides opportunities, in addition to the school's active seeking of their views, for pupils to share in decision-making. Pupils are keen to take every opportunity to contribute to the community. Prayer and reflection are regular features of lessons. All these elements support outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The headteacher's purposeful leadership has created a shared feeling of progress and involvement. Self-evaluation is effective and, supported by an outstanding governing body, the school has an accurate picture of its strengths and areas for development. Many governors are extremely involved in the work of the school. Community cohesion is strong but the school has not yet fully evaluated the impact of its work in this area on school development. The commitment of staff and governors and their passionate belief in the school ensure that capacity for further improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance pupils' progress and build on the good quality teaching by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop skills in group work, independent learning and through taking a lead in activities
 - sharing best practice among the staff in teaching, analysis of data and assessment.
- Evaluate the impact of community cohesion on school development and the quality of education.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' achievement and enjoyment of learning are good. Pupils are positive and keen to do well in lessons. The school has tailored its work to meet all learning needs, for example, by topic-related work to engage boys and opportunities to extend writing skills. As a result, steady progress is being made in addressing any remaining underachievement, especially in writing. Work matched to pupils' different learning needs has increased the progress of gifted and talented pupils although opportunities for independent work and to take the lead in class are still developing. Largely as a result of continuing curriculum changes, boys are progressing as well as girls and the school's own data show that the rate of progress has increased at Key Stage 1. Pupils find learning fun because a wide range of methods engage them, such as making photographs to illustrate optical illusions with the use of information and communication technology, and because teachers take care to present information in terms that pupils can understand; as one Year 2 pupil in that lesson put it, 'It's fun to learn here'.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of safety and put this into practice. Attendance is excellent. Pupils are well behaved in school and around the site. Pupil questionnaires raised a concern about behaviour for a small minority of pupils; inspectors followed this up but could find no reason for any concern beyond a possible link to a topic under consideration at that time. Plentiful initiatives encourage healthy eating. Most pupils are involved in extra-curricular exercise in addition to two hours of physical education per

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week. Pupils have excellent opportunities to contribute, for example, as Year 6 play leaders or helping with park design, and are aware of their responsibilities as school representatives. Enrichment activities enhance workplace and other skills. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The 'green council' creates keen interest in ethical issues, whilst visits and community links offer good insights into other cultures and religions. The Catholic ethos of the school gives pupils a clear set of personal values. Bullying is rare and pupils show excellent consideration for others.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is consistently good. Lessons are often lively and interesting, and time is used very effectively. Expectations are high and increasing. Teachers ensure the needs of all pupils are met with gradually increasing development of the most able. Good progress has been made since the last inspection with use of technology, including computers. The recently acquired laptops are used well and continually. Teachers ensure that pupils know their targets and what they need to do to improve. Teaching assistants provide small group support for lower attaining pupils. Assessment and marking are used well to

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

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develop pupils' understanding but the quality of comments about how to improve their work is inconsistent in helping pupils to develop independent learning skills.

Pupils have many varied opportunities to partake of a broad and balanced curriculum, especially through the highly popular enrichment mornings and extended provision. Specialist provision for music is a strength. Planning for themes allows for skills progression through exciting content and sound practical activities. Pupils are increasingly pro-active in offering evaluations of the curriculum and suggestions for improvement. The curriculum is well organised. Cross-curricular provision, including literacy and numeracy and information and communication technology, is good. Pupils develop well and enjoy learning because they are motivated by the learning opportunities provided.

Support for pupils is well targeted. The special educational needs team and teachers have an excellent understanding of pupils' needs and teaching assistants are used well to support pupils in class and in small groups. The school works well with parents and outside agencies to support pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those with individual education plans. Pupils feel that the school is a safe place to be because of the welcoming atmosphere and the ethos of mutual respect. The school is working effectively to address a few remaining concerns with punctuality. Good transition arrangements ensure that pupils settle into the school quickly and parents are involved from the start.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders have created a shared sense of direction for the school and a commitment to improvement. Members of the enlarged senior team have a good balance of complementary skills. Rigorous tracking systems evaluate and support pupils' progress. Leaders ensure that teaching is good by close monitoring, lesson observation, scrutiny of pupils' books and teachers' planning and, more unusually, through feedback from pupils. Self-evaluation is accurate and monitoring is increasingly thorough. As a result, the school has been able to focus on areas requiring improvement, such as writing, boys' achievement and opportunities for the most able, with whole school training where required. Middle managers also ensure progress in all areas, in part through the extended curriculum.

Governors make an outstanding contribution to the work of the school by their

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commitment and thorough approach. They are constantly looking at ways to develop and improve, they support the work of the school through regular visits and have clear views to inform priorities for development. There is good commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities and ensuring that there is no discrimination. This is particularly evident in enrichment activities with opportunities for all to participate fully. The school places a high priority on safety and safeguarding and constantly reviews its policies. Robust child protection procedures meet all current requirements. The school promotes community cohesion well. Links with the local community and parishes are strong and there is a good understanding, as reflected in displays, of the global community. The impact of existing links with the outside world is not rigorously evaluated, however, to assess its impact on the quality of education and pupils' awareness. The school carefully targets funding and staff resources to ensure value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children develop very well from starting points which are below national expectations on entry to reach average standards by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They learn to work and play independently and cooperatively. There are many opportunities for them to be active learners. Children are secure and quickly develop a sense of belonging to a class and group. As a result, they are motivated to participate in learning and to make choices while respecting the views of others. Play opportunities and the enriched curriculum allow children to solve problems and be inquisitive learners. They develop good communication, literacy and numeracy skills from a low starting point and show a clear understanding of staying safe. Children are encouraged to be active and

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respond well to opportunities to eat healthy food. Good opportunities are offered for exercise. Adults have a good knowledge of children's learning, development and welfare, and skilfully promote positive attitudes. The learning environment, both inside and outside, is well-resourced. Planning is child-centred and offers challenging, enjoyable experiences. Assessment, based on thorough observations, informs planning. Relationships between adults and children are good. Leaders are focused on raising standards and improving the learning environment. They ensure equal opportunities for all groups of children whose individual needs are met by the curriculum. Resources are well managed to ensure good progress.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Most parents and carers are positive about the school. More than half returned a completed questionnaire. Parents are particularly pleased with their children's enjoyment of school and the fact that their children are kept safe and are well prepared for a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors agree with these views. A few parents expressed concerns about their children's progress and whether the school takes enough account of parents' and carers' suggestions and concerns. Most of these concerns relate to communication. Inspectors found that progress is good and that pupils are well prepared for the future. Inspectors shared the points about communication with the school. They found that communication is generally good but looked with the school at ways in which it might be further developed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St John Fisher 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 231 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 387 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	133	58	90	39	5	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	125	54	96	42	8	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	83	36	114	49	28	12	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	84	36	117	51	25	11	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	103	45	104	45	15	6	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	93	40	107	46	20	9	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	101	44	116	50	7	3	2	1
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)	85	37	108	47	12	5	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	92	40	96	42	24	10	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	87	38	107	46	23	10	6	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	79	34	104	45	25	11	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	111	48	94	41	15	6	5	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	117	51	92	40	18	8	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

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.



Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John Fisher Catholic Primary School, Loughton, IG10 2DY

I was delighted to visit your school recently with some other inspectors to look at its work and to see how well you are doing. I am writing to thank you for the welcome you gave us and the opportunity we had to share in the things you do. Your school is a good school and we especially liked:

- the strong sense of community but also the way you are valued as individuals
- the enriched curriculum which lets you develop your interests and skills
- the outstanding understanding that you have of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues
- the care that the governors are taking to move your school forward
- the commitment of the headteacher and all staff to improving your learning
- your good behaviour in and around the school and with each other.

The headteacher wants to make your school even better so we have asked her to do three things which will help:

- to provide further opportunities for you to develop skills in group work, as leaders in class and independently
- to make sure that teachers share with each other what they do best
- to look further at the impact of your local, national and global links on school development.

You can help to make your school even better by letting your teachers know when you are stuck or ready to move on to the next level.

We wish you every success and thank you again for letting us share in your learning.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sutherland-Harper

Lead inspector

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