

# St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Edward Street, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 0BW

**Inspection dates** 14–15 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- During their time in the school, all groups of pupils achieve well and make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a good start to their learning and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of what the pupils can achieve, and most pupils rise to the challenge.
- Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are good. Pupils say, and their parents fully agree, that they feel completely safe.
- The curriculum provides an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Partnerships to support pupils' learning and, particularly, their artistic and physical development, are excellent.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team have been successful in driving improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The governing body provides good support and appropriate challenge to school leaders.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not outstanding because teachers do not always set work in lessons which builds on what pupils already know and appropriately challenge them to achieve the best they can.
- The skills of middle leaders, many of whom are new to role, in checking that pupils achieve as well as they can, in all subjects of the curriculum, are not fully developed.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 19 lessons or parts of lessons, one of which was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- The inspectors also examined the work in pupils' books, sampled sessions where pupils were learning phonics (sounds and the letters that make them) and listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, the school improvement partner, a member of staff from a local high school, the attendance officer, the innovate group and groups of pupils.
- The inspectors spoke informally to pupils during playtimes and lunchtimes.
- The inspectors examined the school's own documentation relating to pupils' progress, the school's self-evaluation and policies relating to safeguarding.
- The inspectors took account of 25 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire.
- The inspectors scrutinised the 24 responses to the staff questionnaire provided by Ofsted.

## Inspection team

Clare Henderson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Karen Bramwell

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is well above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus is above average.
- The school has a breakfast and an after-school club which are run by the governing body.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A high proportion of teaching staff have joined the school in the past three years.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding in order to accelerate pupils' learning by ensuring teachers always plan lessons which build on what pupils already know and appropriately challenge them to achieve the best they can.
- Raise the quality of leadership and management to outstanding by ensuring the skills of middle leaders, in checking that pupils achieve as well as they can, in all subjects of the curriculum, are fully developed.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children generally start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are slightly below those expected for their age. They settle quickly and make good progress because of the well-structured and supportive learning environment. Consequently, the skills of over half the number of children in the class are in line with expectations by the time they begin Year 1.
- The attainment of all groups of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2012 and 2013 was broadly average overall. This represents good progress from pupils' individual starting points.
- Attainment dipped at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2011, and was only average overall. Swift action from senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching ensured that pupils' attainment rose sharply to above average in 2012 and continued to rise in 2013, particularly for the most-able pupils, in reading, writing and mathematics.
- All pupils, including the most-able, make good progress in all year groups. However, their achievement is good and not outstanding overall for all groups of pupils. This is because teachers do not always plan lessons which build on what pupils already know and appropriately challenge them to achieve the best they can.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 read well and use a mixture of phonics (the way letters link to sounds) and clues from pictures and the text to help them read unfamiliar words. Consequently, the proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the required standard in the phonics screening check of 2013 was above average.
- A strong focus on extending pupils' mathematical skills through problem-solving activities that demand pupils to use thinking and reasoning skills is seen in all classes.
- Pupils make good progress in writing because they are provided with a wide range of opportunities to apply and extend their writing skills across the curriculum.
- A higher proportion of most-able pupils are now aspiring to reach Level 6 in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6; they are being supported well in doing this, both by the school and through weekly lessons from staff from a local high school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because teaching and support staff understand their needs and give them timely and effective support to help them to work independently.
- In Year 6 in 2013, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals did as well as similar pupils nationally. However, because a significant minority had additional special educational needs, their attainment was generally behind that of their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics by at least one term. Nevertheless, they made good progress from their individual starting points.
- Additional learning and pastoral support helps pupils currently in the school who are eligible for this support to attain as well as the other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Through such close attention to pinpointing and addressing pupils' individual learning needs, all pupils, including the most-able, have equal opportunities to succeed.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Most of the teaching observed during the inspection was of good quality and some was outstanding. A scrutiny of the work in pupils' books and the school's records of the checks made on teaching indicate that teaching is typically good and improving.
- Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to question and probe pupils' understanding of what they are learning.
- When teaching is outstanding, teachers have very high expectations and check that every task builds on what pupils already know and is pitched at the right level of ability. However, this is not consistent in all classes. This is why teaching is good and not outstanding overall.

- When teaching is outstanding, adults inspire pupils to give of their best. In an outstanding Year 6 literacy lesson, for instance, all pupils were fully absorbed in discussing and writing arguments for and against keeping animals in captivity. High staffing levels, with two teachers and a teaching assistant leading the learning, skilfully developed pupils' literacy skills as they were required to use high-quality grammar and punctuation, excellent descriptive language and convincing arguments to persuade the reader to adopt their point of view. Consequently, pupils of all abilities made rapid gains in learning.
- Pupils' learning is securely based on what teachers learn from marking pupils' work. There are some very good examples of marking that is both supportive and tells pupils exactly how to improve in mathematics and writing. In addition, as observed in a Year 5 literacy lesson, pupils are given sufficient time to reflect on their learning as well as on teachers' marking, and to respond to the advice they are given.
- Highly skilled teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning, particularly for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs; consequently, these pupils make good progress.
- The teaching of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding, who are currently in the school, is well managed with appropriate resources available. As a result, these pupils make good progress from their individual starting points in their learning.
- Reading, mathematics, drama and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are successfully promoted and applied in all lessons. This prepares pupils well for their future lives.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- During the inspection, the behaviour observed in lessons was good and sometimes outstanding. This has a positive effect on pupils' good achievement. School records show that behaviour is typically good in classes, around the school and over time.
- Pupils generally behave well around the school, in the playground and the dining hall, showing good manners and courtesy towards one another and adults.
- Pupils are proud of the school and say that they particularly enjoy the wide range of exciting musical, sporting and creative opportunities which are provided, such as learning to play the guitar.
- Behaviour is judged as good rather than outstanding. Occasionally, when the pupils are expected to work independently of the teacher, they chatter to friends rather than concentrate fully on their learning.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They say that bullying is rare in school and is always sorted out quickly by the teachers.
- Pupils say, and their parents agree, that they feel safe and understand how to keep safe. Pupils say teachers and support staff have helped them to understand how to take care on the roads or when using the internet.
- Systems for recording and for following up any incidents of misbehaviour are consistent and secure. Strong links with social services and other educational partners ensure all pupils are given appropriate support and guidance.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of different faiths and cultures. They appreciate the differences in ability and background that make each person unique. They respect and value each other's differences and know that discrimination of any sort is wrong.
- Pupils respond extremely well to the strong spiritual, moral and social guidance they receive. They develop very positive attitudes to life and learning through the teaching of common values and expectations.
- The well-attended breakfast club gives a good start to the day. It has contributed to an improvement in pupils' punctuality and their currently above-average attendance. The after-school care club gives pupils a stimulating environment which helps them to develop their personal and social skills well.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher and senior leadership team have been the driving force behind the marked improvements to pupils' achievement made during the period of staff changes. They are ably supported by staff at all levels and the governors. There is a clear sense of teamwork and all questionnaires returned by staff during the inspection were completely positive.
- The leadership of teaching is rigorous and robust. Teachers new to the school have been successfully introduced to the school's procedures. Senior leaders have high expectations; procedures to improve the quality of teaching are effective because they focus clearly on how well teaching helps pupils learn. The local authority has provided significant levels of support in this work.
- The effectiveness of leaders at all levels is improving because of the strong focus on providing training to help teachers develop their leadership and training skills. The enthusiasm of new staff to undertake this work is fully evident. However, a significant number of staff are new to middle leadership and have not had enough time to fully develop their roles.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Pupils' learning is greatly enriched by residential visits, sport, music and artistic opportunities.
- The leadership of physical education is outstanding. Sensible decisions have been made about using the new primary school sport funding to give pupils greater access to a wide range of sporting activities and after-school clubs. Furthermore, specialist sports coaches are sharing their skills with all staff.
- School leaders have strong relationships with parents. They say they are well informed about the work of the school because of regular newsletters. As a result, parents are very supportive of the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors gain first-hand information about pupils' progress through regular visits to the school. They fully analyse the data presented to them to make sure that all pupils are making good progress. They support the headteacher well in making decisions about staffing and staff salaries, based on the management of teachers' performance and their pupils' progress.
  - Safeguarding and child protection procedures fully meet statutory requirements and members of the governing body carry out regular checks to make sure that pupils are kept safe. They check the impact of the pupil premium funding, which is used wisely to support learning by extending small-group tuition for eligible pupils of all abilities. The governing body monitors the financial position of the school carefully and measures the effect the new primary school sport funding is having on pupils' achievement and physical well-being.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111392
<b>Local authority</b>	Halton
<b>Inspection number</b>	423025

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	224
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dave Pich
<b>Headteacher</b>	Marcella Armstrong
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 April 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 4247794
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