

# St John Fisher Catholic First and Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	102232
<b>Local Authority</b>	Harrow
<b>Inspection number</b>	323607
<b>Inspection date</b>	27 January 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Martin Beale

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<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 on roll</b>	
School (total)	421
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Neville Ransley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Anne Lyons
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 December 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Melrose Road Pinner HA5 5RA
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8868 2961
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8866 5882

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspection focused on:

- the action taken to reduce the gap in standards of literacy between younger girls and boys
- the effectiveness of action to raise standards in mathematics
- how well the school has improved the use by pupils of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning since the last inspection.

Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons; school assessment data; a scrutiny of pupils' work and school documents; discussions with pupils, staff and two governors; and from the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

The number of pupils in this large school has been growing. Over a third of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds; the proportion of the pupils with a mother tongue other than English is average and rising. The proportion of pupils who need additional support with their learning is below average and decreasing, while the number with a statement of their special educational needs is broadly average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. Provision for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is through two Reception classes. The school has gained many external accreditations for the effectiveness of its work in many areas. These include the Healthy School and Artsmark Gold awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

St John Fisher is an outstanding school in all respects. It was outstanding at its last inspection and has moved forward in many ways since then. The headteacher's determined and strong leadership is central to the school's success. She is much respected. As one parent said, 'The headteacher is just brilliant! She knows the children well and genuinely cares for their needs.' She has developed a strong team of staff who are always looking for ways to make school life more exciting.

Parents report how much their children enjoy school, citing as the reasons for their children's success the high quality of staff care and support, the outstanding teaching based on a rich and interesting curriculum, and the stimulating additional activities. One parent summed up the views of many when writing, 'Our children are progressing well, challenged, cared for and nurtured.' Music plays a major part in the life of the school, as reflected in the award of Artsmark Gold. Many pupils are learning to play an instrument and they participate annually in many school productions. Drama workshops, visiting authors, and participation in 'Hark the Harrow Choirs Sing!' all add to the pupils' creative development.

A striking feature is the pupils themselves, who are tremendous ambassadors for the school. Pupils give back to the community in many ways, and show their care for others by taking the initiative in raising funds for a wide variety of charities both at home and abroad. This is a happy school, in which the pupils gain much from stimulating lessons and a wide range of interesting activities, both during and beyond the school day. Their enjoyment of school life is reflected in their exemplary behaviour, the respect that they show others, their determination to succeed, and high levels of attendance.

The headteacher sets the pupils challenging targets and everyone does their utmost to make sure they are achieved. This, and the high quality of much of the teaching, contributes directly to the pupils' outstanding achievement. Pupils rise to the challenge and high expectations of their teachers. Lessons are exciting and are made more interesting by the creative use of new technology and skilled questioning. From average starting points, pupils make rapid progress, so that standards are high by the end of Year 6 in all key areas. Virtually all pupils reach national expectations in all subjects, and very many exceed this level. This, and their exceptional personal qualities, gives them a very strong base for success at secondary school and beyond.

Much work has been done to improve boys' writing by introducing more stimulating contexts, successfully closing the gap between their standards and those of girls. Boys are now more engaged in writing and, consequently, their standards in English are rising. A slight fall in standards last year in mathematics has been tackled quickly and robustly, with the result that pupils in all years are on track to meet or exceed their targets this year. A review of the teaching of mathematics has led to greater challenge and the effective development of key skills. Attention is now being turned to science, even though standards are high. The school has identified scope for pupils to take a greater lead in designing scientific investigations and selecting the resources to use. This is part of its drive to help pupils to acquire the skills needed so that they can take greater responsibility for their learning and develop even greater independence.

The range of computer equipment and software available to teachers and pupils has been extended considerably since the last inspection. Pupils now use ICT in a wide variety of guises to support their learning, but again the school has identified that extending this further will

help to meet these aims. Pupils are aware of how well they are doing, and what they need to do to move to higher levels. There are examples of pupils evaluating their work and that of others, and from this identifying how a piece of work can be improved. There are times when they have some choice in the activities they undertake, and are expected to decide whether these are at an appropriate level for the next steps in their learning, but none of these strategies is adopted as consistently as the leadership team would wish.

Members of staff know the pupils well. They carefully check on the pupils' progress, and use this information to put in programmes of support where needed. This is particularly effective for those pupils who need additional help with their learning or language development. Parents are delighted that the care and welfare of their children are of paramount importance. Pupils say they feel safe, and are confident that their concerns will be handled sensitively and any incidents dealt with quickly.

Much is done to support the community through the school's partnership in the local extended schools cluster. The childcare provided before and after school, as well as during the school holidays, is much appreciated by families. The school also plays a central role in the life of the churches in its two local parishes. Partnerships such as those with schools in Beijing and Spain, as well as learning French and Spanish, help the pupils to develop a keen understanding of their place in their world community.

The pupils take great pride in their contribution to protecting the environment and developing a greater appreciation of the natural world. They enjoy their work as 'Eco Warriors', discussing issues and organising recycling. The recently created 'Awe and Wonder' garden links work in literacy, art and geography. It acts as a major focus, ranging from Reception children planting, tending, harvesting and cooking vegetables to Year 3 pupils growing herbs to flavour their pizzas. The pupils are enthralled by their new chickens and excited by the prospect of them laying eggs soon. The pupils are very clear about how to adopt healthy lifestyles, and make sensible choices in their diet, for which the school has received Healthy School status. The wide range of sporting and other physical activities are a high point, because, as one pupil put it, 'they help to keep us fit and healthy'. Furthermore, many now regularly walk or cycle to school, helping to reduce traffic in the area.

In spite of its success, everyone is striving to make the school even better. Governors have a very clear overview of the school and take a pivotal role in shaping its future. They support and challenge the headteacher and staff in equal measure. Skilled leadership from staff at all levels is a major factor in the school's sustained progress. Everyone plays a part in the quest for improvement. Accurate school evaluation based on a rigorous cycle of monitoring gives a strong platform for the school's move to the next level. This is a school that knows how well it is doing and where it is going. Its future is in very safe hands.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

The EYFS has improved since the last inspection, when it was judged as good. This is because of the sharp focus, from a well-led team, on stimulating the learning of the children at every opportunity. The welfare of the children is paramount, so they feel safe and are confident with staff. The Reception classes have, as one parent wrote, 'high-quality teaching and wonderful learning opportunities in the most caring, personal atmosphere'. Children thoroughly enjoy learning, and there is a purposeful buzz in the classrooms. They are enthusiastically engaged in the wide variety of exciting activities provided. One parent encapsulated the views of many

when writing, 'My child is learning so much, enjoying learning, making great little friends, and is bedded into the happy place that is our school.' The environment both inside and out is vibrant and stimulating, with displays at every turn that support and celebrate learning. Much attention is given to developing the children's speaking and listening skills; they are skilfully guided to discuss their work, so making excellent progress in their knowledge and use of sounds and letters. All adults closely observe activities so that they can plan and provide for the next steps in each child's learning. Children enter Reception with skills in line with those expected for their age. They settle very quickly, with their confidence and self-esteem enhanced at every opportunity. Their rapid progress is built on trusting relationships between all adults and children. Most reach and many exceed their goals in all areas by the time they leave Reception, preparing them well for the next stage of their learning journey.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Provide more structured opportunities for the pupils to develop skills which enable them to take greater responsibility for their learning, such as planning activities, selecting materials and evaluating their own progress.

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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	1

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

09 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John Fisher Catholic First and Middle School, Pinner, HA5 5RA

You will probably remember that inspectors visited your school not too long ago. I am now writing to let you know what we found out. Before I do, I would just like to thank you for making us feel welcome and for being so ready to share your thoughts about your school. We had a chance to talk to quite a lot of you, and have told your teachers how you were very helpful and polite. Through our discussions with you, it was great to hear how much you enjoy school. It was also good to hear about how safe you feel, and that there is always someone to talk to if you are worried. You, your parents and your teachers are right in thinking that your school is outstanding.

You make excellent progress during your time at school. Nearly all of you reach the standards expected by the time you move on to secondary school, and very many of you do better than this. You attend very regularly, work hard and behave sensibly. Your teachers make learning interesting, and you clearly enjoy extra activities such as music and sporting opportunities. You are clearly proud of the 'Awe and Wonder' garden, and I hope the chickens start to lay eggs soon! All members of staff help to make sure you are safe, and very well cared for. You take your responsibilities seriously and make a huge contribution to the life of the school. You have an excellent understanding of the importance of diet and exercise for a healthy lifestyle.

Your headteacher, other staff and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. There is one thing they could do - we have asked them to provide opportunities for you to take responsibility for your learning by planning your work, selecting materials to use and evaluating your work more frequently.

I am sure that you and your teachers will work hard to make this improvement. You can play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to show such pride and enthusiasm for learning.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Martin Beale

Lead Inspector