

# Fairfield High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	109290
<b>Local authority</b>	Bristol, City Of
<b>Inspection number</b>	377902
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Simon Rowe

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	772
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Catriona Mangham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8–9 October 2008
<b>School address</b>	Allfoxtton Road Horfield Bristol BS7 9NL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01179 527100
<b>Fax number</b>	01179 527168
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<b>Age group</b>	11–1611–16
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	21–22 March 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	377902



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Simon Rowe	Additional inspector
Wendy Boulter	Additional inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional inspector
Kaye Palmer-Greene	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out two days' notice. Thirty eight parts of lessons were observed and 36 teachers were seen. Three learning walks also took place. Meetings were held with students, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including: the school's self-evaluation document; the development plan; achievement data; and latest attendance and exclusion figures. The inspection team scrutinised questionnaires completed by 257 parents and carers, 105 students and 52 staff.

## Information about the school

Fairfield High School is a smaller-than-average sized school. The school's specialisms are Performing and Visual Arts. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is much higher than average as is the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals. The school premises also house Elmfield School for the Deaf.

A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection and she has restructured the senior leadership team and all aspects of the organisation. There is also a new Chair of the Governing Body. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which set the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress. Since the last inspection the school has gained Investor in People status and received the Arts Gold award, International School award and Healthy Schools Plus award.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. The headteacher, ably supported by her senior leadership team and middle managers, has implemented many new initiatives, systems and procedures that have significantly raised expectations. Many of these initiatives are relatively new but are beginning to impact. As a result achievement and behaviour has improved. Overall effectiveness is not yet judged good because these initiatives need more time to fully embed; the proportion of teaching that is consistently good or better is not yet high enough and there is scope to raise students' achievement further.
- Behaviour is satisfactory. It is improving and in lessons observed students' behaviour contributed well to their learning. Behaviour records indicate that incidents of poor behaviour have decreased considerably recently.
- Achievement has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory. The achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs is at least in line with similar groups nationally. Five or more GCSE passes at A\* to C grades including English and mathematics for Black African and Black Caribbean students continues to be low. Students' communication skills are not consistently well developed to ensure that their progress is not limited.
- Although there is some good and outstanding teaching in the school, much remains that is no better than satisfactory. Opportunities are often missed to deepen and extend students' learning through questioning. Many lessons do not proceed at a quick enough pace or provide opportunities for independent learning. Marking does not always inform students about what they need to do to improve. In the best lessons there are effective relationships between students and staff and rigorous planning ensures a variety of activities. Such lessons proceed at an appropriate pace and provide numerous opportunities for independent working.
- The school is well placed to continue to improve. Key to this has been the drive for improvement led by the headteacher and the raising of expectations. Teaching and staff performance are managed well. Raised expectations permeate through all leaders, managers and staff.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

- Raise achievement by:
  - implementing and embedding strategies for improving students' communication skills
  - continuing to work alongside families of Black African and Black Caribbean students to raise aspirations further.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by:
  - ensuring that all lessons proceed at a rapid pace, engage all students and provide good opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills
  - ensuring assessment data is used to plan and deliver lessons that challenge students of all abilities
  - using high-quality questioning techniques to deepen students' learning
  - ensuring marking consistently informs students about how to improve their work.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are usually significantly below average. Around 30% enter the school with low levels of literacy and/or numeracy. Attainment by the end of Year 11 has risen over several years but the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is still low, as is the attainment of Black African and Black Caribbean students. The progress students make is satisfactory. The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs is at least in line with others nationally and in some cases, above that. Students known to be eligible for free school meals are also making progress in line with similar groups nationally and gaps are narrowing. The school has recently appointed a member of staff to oversee providing additional support for students with weak communication skills as well as coordinating numeracy across the curriculum. This is important in raising achievement further and the school recognises the need for strategies to develop students' communication skills to permeate all subjects.

A very large majority of students say they learn well. During the inspection students often made good progress when they worked in groups and were able to discuss the tasks. This enabled them to deepen their understanding and also to develop their communications skills. For example, in a good mathematics lesson students were attempting to work out the area of a compound shape of which some sides were given algebraically. Students discussed their thoughts and ideas on how to tackle the problem and this enabled them to derive an effective strategy to solve the problem and a clear understanding of why this strategy worked. Most parents and carers feel their child is making good progress at the school. Inspectors found that although this was the case in many lessons observed during the inspection, progress is not yet consistently good across the school and achievement is satisfactory overall.

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

## Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory although some is good and occasionally outstanding. In lessons observed where teaching was no better than satisfactory there was often too much teacher talk which led to a lack of pace. Students were not able to get down to work independently quickly enough. Opportunities were missed to use questioning to deepen students' thinking and participation and to assess their progress. Also, such lessons did not provide challenge for the whole ability range within the class.

Characteristics of the best lessons are very good planning that matches work to each student's ability and builds in clear progression. There are strong relationships between students and their teachers and the lessons proceed at an appropriate pace. There is a variety of activities which promote independence, and high-quality questioning deepens students' learning and understanding. In a Year 9 science lesson, the teacher planned several structured activities which were delivered at a brisk pace. Carefully targeted questioning was used to probe the students' understanding and to deepen their knowledge.

Marking is variable and does not always show students what they need to do to improve. Developing students' communication skills is not a key feature of all lessons. School leaders recognise the need for this to be developed and embedded through the planned curriculum areas to provide students with the skills they need to be able to contribute fully during lessons, understand written and spoken information to be able to learn more effectively.

Inspectors observed some good teaching to develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Students indicated that this was a common theme in lessons. In an information and communication technology lesson, students were researching arguments for and against emotive topics such as fox hunting and vivisection. Students were able to explain both sides of the arguments showing a clear understanding of the issues.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is satisfactory. Inspectors observed much good and occasionally outstanding behaviour in lessons. When teaching failed to engage students fully, they became passive or disengaged. Students are able to work well independently and in groups, although they are not always given the opportunity to develop these skills during lessons. A very small minority of students have not yet developed good behaviour management skills during unstructured time.

A small minority of parents and carers disagreed that there is a good standard of behaviour at the school and that lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour. The same proportion of students also indicated this. Records of behaviour incidents and exclusions do indicate that behaviour is improving. This is due in part to the implementation of a 'new attitudes to learning' policy and restorative approaches which enable students to understand the impact of poor behaviour on others.

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Almost all parents and carers indicated their child felt safe at school and the large majority of students felt the school deals effectively with bullying. Students are very aware of different types of bullying and how to prevent them. Students commented that instances of bullying and racism were rare and said, 'it's way too multicultural for there to be racism, everyone has a friend or group of friends from different backgrounds or cultures.'

Attendance is improving and is now broadly average. Levels of persistent absence have also decreased. The school is working closely with other agencies to engage the families of particular students.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher has restructured the organisation since taking up her post. This took up a significant amount of time during her first year. Since then she has, along with other leaders and managers, implemented new initiatives. Amongst these is the setting of more challenging targets and raised expectations on the quality of teaching and behaviour. These initiatives will take time to impact fully but there is already strong evidence of improvement, particularly in terms of achievement and behaviour. The tracking of students' achievement is now rigorous and the school's self-evaluation is accurate. Performance management is used to set targets linked to raising achievement, whole school priorities and professional development. The school's capacity to improve is demonstrated by the improving trend. The school's inclusive ethos promotes equality and tackles discrimination effectively and every member of staff who responded to the staff survey said they were proud to be a member of staff at the school. Nevertheless, staff acknowledge that there is scope to raise the aspirations of some groups of students, particularly Black African and Black Caribbean students.

The school recognises that improving the quality of teaching is a priority and senior leaders are giving a clear steer to improving the quality of teaching. There has been training provided and the best teachers are being used to coach other colleagues in their practice. There is some evidence of teachers improving through this work and inadequate teaching has been eradicated. The emphasis now is on ensuring that lessons are consistently good or better. The curriculum is good. It is well organised and provides learners with a range of opportunities to meet their needs. Opportunities for the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are embedded and these extend beyond the classroom, with initiatives such as 'Live Lunchtime' and work with a local media company. The specialisms are also used to give students experience of the outside world and to develop their creativity.

The governing body supports the senior leadership team well. Its members are aware that there is work to do on ensuring they provide adequate challenge to senior leaders, particularly with regard to students' achievement data. The governing body has ensured that the arrangements for safeguarding the well-being of students meet statutory requirements.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.



## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



23 March 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Fairfield High School, Bristol BS7 9NL**

Thank you for your help during the school's recent inspection and for taking the time to talk with us. I am writing to tell you about the main findings.

We judge your school to be satisfactory overall. A number of things are beginning to improve especially your achievement and behaviour. The targets you are being set now really challenge you. This is helping you to get better examination results. Your attendance is broadly average, you work well together and you tell us you feel safe.

The school is in a stronger position to move forward now and to continue to improve. The headteacher, leaders and managers and all staff are all committed to ensuring this happens.

These are some of the areas we have asked leaders and managers to do to improve the school further.

- Help you to develop your basic skills, especially your communication skills.
- Make sure teaching is consistently good or better by:
  - ensuring lessons proceed at a good pace and give you the opportunity to work on your own and in groups
  - ensuring the work in each lesson challenges you
  - ensuring teachers use questioning well to develop your learning
  - ensuring marking tells you how you can improve your work.

You can help by behaving well and contributing as much as possible to lesson.

Yours sincerely

Simon Rowe  
Lead inspector

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