

St John Fisher Catholic High School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110907
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	378199
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2012
Lead inspector	Ian Middleton HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	750
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Rossi
Headteacher	Sean Hayes
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2010
School address	Park Lane Peterborough PE1 5JN
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

Ian Middleton

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Additional Inspector

Richard Boswell

Additional Inspector

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Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The number of lessons observed was 33, and the number of teachers seen was 32. Meetings were held with students, the Chair of the Governing Body, senior leaders, subject and pastoral leaders. 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 the plans for improvement, assessment information, lesson plans, the school's monitoring information, school policies and 50 questionnaires from parents and carers.

Information about the school

St John Fisher Catholic High School is a smaller-than-average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is well above average as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students identified with disabilities and those with special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is high in relation to schools nationally. An above-average proportion of students join the school after Year 7, some as late as Year 11. Many of these speak little or no English on arrival.

The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

The school works in partnership with the local Anglican high school and local colleges to widen course provision.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because despite improvements in teaching the best is still not sufficiently widespread to ensure that students make good progress in all lessons in order to achieve higher standards. New initiatives are at an early stage of having an impact because senior staff and the governing body have not embedded them yet or engaged parents and carers fully. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- The sixth form is good. Students continuing into the sixth form make a very positive contribution to the school and achieve well at A level.
- Students' attainment remains below average. However, taking into account their low starting points the increased proportion attaining five GCSEs at grade C or above including English and mathematics to above floor standards represents satisfactory progress. Students who join the school early on do better. Above average attainment in French, drama and geography shows what is possible.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall, and an increasing amount is good. Staff have collaborated well to improve marking and develop students' literacy skills. However, not all initiatives are applied consistently well. For example, despite much improved availability of assessment information, too many learning activities remain the same for students at different stages of learning.
- Most students behave well and inspectors noted good relationships between different groups of students around the school. Positive student attitudes developed through responsibilities and tutor groups made up of all years contribute to students feeling safe and supported. However in a few lessons, a minority of students, particularly in Year 10, did not concentrate on learning.
- Leaders and managers at all levels are clearly focused on raising standards. School performance, teaching and curriculum development are led and managed very competently. The school's strengths and areas for development

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are very well informed by internal review and addressed by judicious work in partnership with other schools and colleges.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' attainment and achievement by:
 - accelerating the progress of students joining the school in Years 10 and 11
 - reducing the variation in performance between subjects.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by ensuring that by May 2013 all teachers:
 - use assessment information to design learning activities matched to students' needs
 - apply whole-school policies consistently in order to maximise students' concentration and learning.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management by:
 - engaging parents and carers more actively in students' learning
 - ensuring that whole-school initiatives are fully embedded and rigorously evaluated in relation to the impact on achievement.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The proportion of students in Year 11 gaining five higher-grade GCSE passes including English and mathematics improved in 2011 to 39%, higher than the government floor standard and above challenging targets based on students' low prior attainment. In a minority of subjects including music and design and technology targets were not reached. The school's monitoring data indicate that, overall, current students have sustained improvement commendably from starting points on entry to the school that were lower than those of previous entrants. However, standards in most subjects remain lower than those attained by students nationally. The progress made by different student groups varies between years and subjects. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make progress equal to that of their peers. There are no lasting variations between the progress of different ethnic groups. Although boys and girls joining the school after Year 7, sometimes as late as Year 11, often make slower progress overall, their progress is satisfactory given the gains that most make in learning English as an additional language.

In lessons, inspectors observed students making satisfactory and often better progress in the vast majority of lessons. The development and application of their literacy skills is a particular strength because teachers and support staff make a concerted effort to build on students' good learning in English. Students show understanding of what they read. Often, students learning English as an additional language access resources independently to check vocabulary. The school has sound

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plans to ensure that students' progress in mathematics and their application of numeracy skills in the context of other subjects, develop equally well. Students enjoy practical tasks which require them to organise themselves and work collaboratively, although teachers' expectations of students' use of these skills are inconsistent. A Year 7 science lesson in which students took responsibility for setting up equipment, evaluating experiments in groups, and consulting a 'dictionary corner' independently showed that expectations were high in some lessons. In French, drama and geography students' attainment is consistently high. In these subjects students also participate enthusiastically and to a high level outside lessons, for example, performing at a national festival at the Royal Court in London. Students continuing to A level make good progress to attain national standards.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and improving. Over half of teaching is now good and little is inadequate. However, despite a comprehensive programme of training and support to help teachers improve their skills, not all teachers use the school's procedures and recommended approaches consistently well. For example, most teachers summarise their marking by giving students guidance about 'what went well' and what would be 'even better if'. But comments are not always written using easy-to-understand language, clarified by exemplification or the follow-up checked. Consequently, the impact on students' progress is limited. There are examples of good practice the school has started to share through a coaching programme involving all staff. The school's monitoring of teaching agrees with that of inspectors in that most staff teach some good lessons. Most parents and carers and students agree with this. But analysis of performance data and scrutiny of students' work show that not all sustain their best teaching to consolidate students' progress. In some lessons, good techniques that are repeated too often expose a limited repertoire to select from. Well-received lesson feedback throughout the inspection shows that staff are keen to refine and widen their skills. The shared responsibility shown for improving students' reading and writing is also a strength.

In the best lessons, teachers engage students early and actively through stimulating presentations, problem-solving challenges and open-ended questioning. Strategic grouping of students, frequent circulation by the teacher and selective intervention by teachers and assistants ensure that students' varying needs are met. This includes disabled students and those with special educational needs. Staff assess students and monitor their progress regularly. However, the extent to which teachers use their good knowledge of students to prepare varied activities, designate roles and responsibilities or target questioning and support is variable. In many lessons, the same activities are planned for students with different interests and at different stages of learning. Where all students progress equally well staff use their good knowledge of students skilfully. For example, in a history lesson the teacher ensured that Year 10 students contributed equally to discussion about the Second World War by eliciting responses to all students' views. The English, Polish and Italian heritage of students in the group was handled skilfully to encourage students to express themselves confidently, sensitively and with good humour. There are frequent

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opportunities in lessons for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which contribute to the school's positive ethos.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most students behave sensibly, move around the school in an orderly way and arrive at lessons punctually. At breaks and lunchtimes students from different ethnic heritages mix well. Although almost all of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire thought their children were safe at school, a third were less confident about behaviour in lessons. Students' questionnaires were similar. Inspectors visited lessons and also spoke to a range of students. These activities confirmed that behaviour is satisfactory overall. Inspectors saw few occasions where learning was interrupted by inconsiderate behaviour; these were often the same students in Year 10. Conversely, in a strong French lesson Year 10 students spoke confidently, worked productively in groups and displayed high levels of independence. However, there were missed opportunities for students to contribute to learning in other lessons, particularly through research and preparation for the activities planned. Where expectations of students are too low or the relevance of learning is unclear, students take too little ownership of their learning and low-level disruption occasionally occurs. These factors contribute to inconsistent achievement, and teaching and behaviour and safety that are judged satisfactory rather than good.

Students' attendance has improved; absences are monitored closely. Effective links with a wide range of services and agencies contribute to the strong sense of safety and support expressed by different groups of students. They feel reassured by the supportive relationships between themselves and the visibility of staff and the police community support officer based at the school. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable spoke highly of the guidance and support they receive. All age groups were very positive about the introduction of mixed-age tutor groups and the house system. House, charity and sports 'ambassadors', reading 'buddies' and school council representatives shared their responsibilities with pride. Students generally considered the school's anti-bullying and anti-racist initiatives effective and systems for dealing with any occurrences clear. Inspectors evaluated students' understanding of different types of bullying as comprehensive. The school's records show that when incidents have been reported, they have been dealt with appropriately.

Leadership and management

The school has continued to improve because senior and middle leaders have concentrated on improving the quality of teaching and breadth of curriculum in order to raise students' attainment and engagement. Underpinning this is much improved use of data to identify the impact of teaching and the curriculum on students' performance and participation. The identification of individual teachers' strengths and areas for development is also clearer and more comprehensive. However, it is too early to evaluate the full impact of actions taken on students' attainment by Year 11. Sensibly, senior and middle leaders have reviewed and reinvigorated provision at all stages in order to support students' progression. This strategy is raising current

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students' attainment, particularly those that joined the school early on. A review of provision for students learning English as an additional language, together with a concerted whole-school approach to improving literacy for all students, is starting to accelerate the progress of students joining the school as late as Years 10 and 11 speaking little or no English. Nevertheless, the school's own evaluation and development plan are right to prioritise raising attainment further for all students.

The increasing amount of good or better teaching is due to effective professional development and staff recruitment. The school's coaching programme involving all staff in making the best teaching more widespread is at an early stage of development. However, secure judgements by senior staff about lessons jointly observed with inspectors, and strong teaching and leadership by some middle leaders show that the school is building good internal capacity for improvement. Although not yet good, the impact of improved teaching and curriculum opportunities on students' better achievement, behaviour and safety, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, further endorse the school's capacity to go forward. This is strengthened by effective partnerships locally to enhance students' learning opportunities. For example, work with local schools and colleges contribute to widening opportunities and equality of access to courses best suited to students' needs, interests and aspirations. This is evident in no student without employment, education or training post-16, and improved retention of students completing courses in the sixth form. The development of a governing body with a wide range of relevant experience is also enabling governors to strengthen their level of challenge and support, although vacancies for parents and carers exist. The proportion of parents and carers taking opportunities to discuss their children's progress is increasing. Nevertheless, there is still much to do to involve parents and carers more regularly and actively. The arrangements for the safeguarding of students comply with regulations. The systems for identifying and supporting students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are effective. There is no discrimination.

The well-respected headteacher's vision for the school is becoming reality. Now established in excellent accommodation, the school is well placed to accelerate improvement by sharpening the focus and pursuing rigorously the impact of change.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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).

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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



25 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of St John Fisher Catholic High School, Peterborough, PE1 5JN

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school on 23 and 24 May, I would like to thank you for the welcome you gave us. We valued the opportunity to share your achievements and talk to you in discussion groups and lessons. This letter is to share our conclusions following the inspection.

Your school is satisfactory. We particularly liked these features.

- Your standards reached in the main school and sixth form are rising.
- You mix well together, contributing to students feeling safe and supported.
- Your lessons increasingly benefit from good teaching, particularly those that involve you actively and provide clear feedback about your strengths and improvements to work on next.
- You show positive attitudes in most lessons and your attendance is improving.
- Your contribution to the school, particularly through your responsibilities and community events such as the drama production, is a strength.
- You develop and apply your literacy skills well in different subjects.

We have asked the school to make further improvements by:

- making sure that you achieve equally well in all years and across all subjects
- helping students joining your school in the later stages to catch up quickly
- developing and sustaining more of the very best teaching
- using assessments to design lesson activities well matched to your needs
- ensuring that any changes contribute to increasing your achievements
- involving your parents and carers in your learning.

You can help by preparing for lessons, by making a positive contribution, and by responding to the advice you are given about how to reach higher standards still.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector

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