

# St John Fisher Catholic High School

Oxford Road, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, WF13 4LL

## Inspection dates

24–25 October 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Students' achievement is good. The proportion of current and recent students making the expected progress compares favourably with national figures. Many more students make good progress than in the past.
- The quality of teaching is good. As a result, students become involved in what the lessons are about, develop their understanding and learn new skills.
- Students feel safe and behave well. More students are attending regularly than in the past.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, have contributed strongly to what is clearly an improving school. Recent improvements in students' achievement are particularly evident in mathematics. Strategies to improve teaching have ensured that teachers use a wider range of skills that help students to learn effectively.
- The sixth form is good. As a result of good teaching and a broad set of subjects they can study, students have positive attitudes and achieve well.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Measures of students' progress are not consistently strong in all subjects over time. The proportion of students making more than the expected progress remains below average.
- Teaching does not always challenge students of all abilities to make the best possible progress. This is because, in some lessons, the work is too easy for the most able students or too difficult for the least able.

## Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, inspectors observed 43 lessons, including six that were observed jointly with senior staff at the school. They also made shorter visits to several other lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, staff and students.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including that relating to the work of the governing body and the achievement, behaviour and safety of students. They took account of 18 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, as well as responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Paul Chambers, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lyn Field	Additional Inspector
Pamela Hemphill	Additional Inspector
Pippa Jenkinson	Seconded Inspector
Chanan Tomlin	Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- St John Fisher is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- There are more boys than girls in the school.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- Fewer students than in most schools are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funds allocated by the government).
- The proportion of students who need additional help and are assessed as school action is below average, as is the proportion who are at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs.
- A small number of students in Key Stage 4 undertake courses at a range of other local schools and colleges for one or two half-days per week. A small group of Year 11 students attend work placements on three days per week.
- The school meets the current floor standards, the minimum standards set by the government for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Improve students' achievement further, particularly in science.
- Improve teaching, through ensuring that:
  - students of all abilities experience a suitable level of challenge in lessons
  - the school's policy for promoting students' literacy is applied consistently by all subject teachers
  - more of the written feedback that teachers provide in students' books matches the quality of the best practice in the school
  - teachers monitor students' responses to written feedback more carefully.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

**is good**

- There is a strong trend of improvement over recent years: for example, the proportion of students making the expected progress in mathematics has risen from 51% in 2010 to an unvalidated figure of 70% in 2012; the similar figures in English are 61% and 69%. The school's evidence of the progress of current students, together with other evidence from the inspection, indicates that recent rises in students' progress can be sustained.
- Several measures of students' progress compare favourably with national figures. However, this is not a consistent pattern over time, particularly for the proportions of students exceeding (rather than just meeting) the expected progress. Attainment is broadly average and improving.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make progress in line with other groups in the school. This is because tracking of progress is sufficiently rigorous to let staff know when and how they need to provide additional support in lessons.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good overall although there remains some unevenness over time and between different qualifications. For example, students' progress in AS levels and some vocational courses is generally stronger than their progress in A levels.
- Students who undertake some of their studies in other local schools and colleges value the additional opportunities offered through these arrangements. Recent students have gained appropriate accreditation in subjects such as hair and beauty, photography and dance.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity well. As a result, there is no established pattern of one group of students, for example boys, girls, those who speak English as an additional language or different ethnic groups, making more progress than other groups. However, in 2012, many more girls than boys made the expected progress in English.

### The quality of teaching

**is good**

- During the inspection, the large majority of teaching observed was good, with some that was outstanding. Evidence from examination results and students' books indicates that teaching over time is good, including in English and mathematics. Where inspectors and school leaders observed lessons together, there was broad agreement on the quality of teaching and how it could be improved.
- Teachers typically employ a range of teaching strategies that engage students and promote effective learning. They assess students' understanding in lessons, such as through the use of mini-whiteboards where all students contribute their ideas for the teacher to see. Students benefit from opportunities to compare their work with that of others or to discuss their understanding in pairs.
- Where learning is strongest, teachers probe and develop students' understanding through excellent questioning skills. They split up the lesson very sensitively so that students spend some time learning independently and some time learning with others as part of a pair or group. They use their knowledge of students' previous work to build effectively on prior learning.
- Where teaching is less strong, teachers pitch the work at a level that is either too easy or too hard for some in the class. As a result, not all students experience the right level of challenge that will help them to learn at the fastest possible rate. Some teachers miss opportunities to develop students' literacy skills as part of their subject teaching; inspectors noted that on occasions, students lack accuracy in writing or speaking using subject-specific vocabulary.
- While in-class assessment is good, the quality of written feedback in students' books varies. Some teachers give detailed and helpful comments so that students know precisely how they can improve; other comments are brief. Sometimes, teachers give advice about undertaking further work but do not follow up to check that the work has been completed.

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

- Students, including in the sixth form, show positive attitudes to work and want to do well. They behave well in lessons, responding readily to the tasks set.
- The small number of parents who answered the Parent View questionnaire say that behaviour in the school is good. This reinforces the views expressed by those who responded to the school's own survey. Staff and students in the school share this positive view.
- Students generally cope well with moving around the school in corridors that are, in some places, narrow and can get crowded. On a few occasions, when students are not under close supervision, their behaviour in the corridors can be overly boisterous. The school makes good arrangements to help disabled students with limited mobility to move around the school safely.
- Students understand the different forms that bullying can take. They explain that they learn about bullying in lessons such as personal, social, health and careers education where they discuss issues including the possible dangers of social networking sites. All are confident that the school deals with bullying effectively on the few occasions when it occurs.
- The number of exclusions has reduced rapidly from above average to below average. Excluded students are no longer dominated by one particular group of students.
- Attendance is in line with national figures and recent improvements have continued into the current school year. This is because staff time has been allocated to focus on identified groups of students, support for students with special educational needs has improved, and teaching is better at engaging students' interest.
- The school is careful to monitor the progress, attendance and safety of students who undertake some of their studies in other local schools and colleges. One student explained how regular work placements have improved her attitudes and that her attendance on school days is now better than in the past.
- Punctuality at the beginning of the school day is good. However, some students are slow to move between lessons during the day.

**The leadership and management are good**

- Leaders, managers and staff have a shared understanding of the long-term goals for the school. Targeted management decisions have contributed to improved outcomes, such as in mathematics, where additional funding allocated to the faculty and outside support have helped to raise standards. Leaders ensure that a clear link between pay and performance is maintained. They have a record of tackling underperformance robustly.
- The drive and energy of the headteacher lie at the heart of improvements to the school. The school's capacity to improve is demonstrated by recent improvements in GCSE results, better attendance and fewer students being excluded.
- Formal arrangements for setting annual targets for teachers and regular reviews at faculty level contribute to better teaching. Staff benefit from additional training to enhance their teaching or managerial skills. For example, the positive impact of a recent whole-school initiative that focused on teachers using a range of assessment methods to promote students' learning was clear in the lessons observed during the inspection.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate. Improvement planning is wide-ranging with an appropriate focus on improving students' progress and personal qualities. Where appropriate, plans include measurable targets that make subsequent review manageable and worthwhile.
- No students, including the most able, have been adversely affected by the school's policy of entering students for GCSE mathematics before the end of Year 11. Even after having gained a GCSE grade, almost all students continue their study of mathematics and seek to improve their grade by retaking the examination. Overall results in mathematics are improving.
- Parents' views of the school, as expressed through Parent View, are overwhelmingly positive. The one area where fewer parents are positive is on the subject of appropriate homework and this has been brought to the attention of the school. During the inspection, inspectors saw

evidence that homework is being set regularly and monitored appropriately.

- The local authority has provided strong support over recent years, particularly through regular visits to improve teaching in particular subject areas. A current area of focus is science, where recent results have not been as good as elsewhere in the school.
- Leaders and managers have spent the additional funds available through the pupil premium to target raising attainment, particularly in English and mathematics. Funds have enabled the school to employ additional staff to provide one-to-one tuition or act as learning mentors and have contributed to improving the progress of targeted students. In the most recent national figures, the gap between the average point score (a measure of the general standards attained) of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium and other students was narrower than the gap nationally.
- The school enables students to study a suitable range of subjects for GCSE and work-related qualifications. Options for the current Year 10 show an increased emphasis on giving more students the chance to study subjects that contribute to the English Baccalaureate. In the sixth form, a broad mixture of courses caters appropriately for the range of students' needs and interests.
- The curriculum supports the school's Catholic values in promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Teachers foster good relations, help students to support each other and chair discussions that challenge students to think about difficult issues. For example, one boy explained to an inspector how his study of the book *Of Mice and Men* had made him rethink his attitudes to people with mental disabilities.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are fully aware of the school's strengths and where it is seeking to improve, and contribute to updates of the school's development plan. They know where in the school the teaching is strongest and hold to account leaders and managers, including those responsible for particular subject areas, for the students' performance. They keep a clear overview of the school's salary structures and how managers set targets for teachers, and have ensured that the school runs a consistently balanced budget. The strategy of using the school's website to publish details of governors' meetings helps parents to stay in touch with key issues facing the school. Although evidence shows that school policies regularly come before the governing body for review, at the time of the inspection not all policy reviews were fully up to date.

## 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>	107783
<b>Local authority</b>	Kirklees
<b>Inspection number</b>	400936

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1187
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	212
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Joseph Cortis
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kevin Higgins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 January 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01924 527000
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