

SS John Fisher and Thomas More Catholic Humanities College

Gibfield Road, Colne, Lancashire], BB8 8JT

Inspection dates 20–21 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
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' attainment and progress have accelerated since the previous inspection and achievement is now good. Standards have risen year on year since 2009 and, in 2012, GCSE results in mathematics and science were the highest in the school's history.
- The quality of teaching is good and has improved markedly since the previous inspection. Relationships between students and between students and the adults who work with them are a strength. Teachers' questioning encourages students to think more deeply about their studies and teaching assistants provide sensitive support for students who find the work difficult.
- Students are proud to attend the school and speak highly of their classmates and of teachers and teaching assistants. They behave well in class and around school and have a strong social conscience, supporting a wide range of charities. They feel safe and say, 'This is a friendly, unthreatening environment'.
- The headteacher continues to have high ambitions for the school and staff and members of the governing body share the same clear view of how the school can move forward. The school knows itself well.
- Specialist status has a positive impact in all areas of school life and also provides strong support for the local community.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Data are not always used effectively enough by teachers to plan lessons where the work matches students' needs so they can all make good progress.
- Senior leaders do not always check on the impact of the work of subject leaders well enough. The quality of marking is inconsistent as a result.
- Support for students who are in danger of underachieving is successful in Key Stage 4 but is not yet fully embedded in Key Stage 3.
- In a minority of lessons, there are not enough opportunities for students to find things out for themselves.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 32 lessons or part-lessons. They listened to 12 students read, from Year 7 and Year 11.
- They held meetings with four groups of students, representing all years. They had discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body, the school chaplain and a representative of the local authority. They also talked to staff, including the special educational needs co-ordinator, the school business manager, learning mentors, pastoral leaders, heads of subject departments and the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors took account of 27 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as 53 returns from the staff questionnaire.
- They observed the school at work and scrutinised students' work during lessons, internal and external student progress data, school development planning and documentation on the school's analysis of how well it is doing. They also looked at documentation on performance management and on safeguarding, child protection, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

James Kidd, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Patrick Feerick	Additional Inspector
Peter McKay	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average size secondary school.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority, is below average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is just above that usually found.
- The majority of students is White British but there is an increasing number of students from minority ethnic heritages. Few students have English as an additional language.
- A minority of students in Years 10 and 11 takes vocational courses at Nelson and Colne College and, as part of the 'Voc 6' programme, students follow life-skills courses in their own school and also in five neighbouring secondary schools.
- The school has been a specialist humanities college since 2006 and received the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust award for being one of the top 100 improved schools. It is an Investor in People, holds nationally-accredited Healthy School status and, as a member of the Rainbow Trust, holds counselling sessions for young people who have lost loved ones.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further accelerate students' achievement and the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers use progress data more effectively to plan lessons with activities which meet more closely the learning needs of students of all levels of ability
 - embedding in Key Stage 3 the targeted support for students in danger of underachieving
 - strengthening the senior team's supervision of the impact of the work of the leaders of subjects, especially in ensuring that there is high quality marking
 - giving students more opportunities in class to work on their own and with others to find things out for themselves
 - ensuring that the feedback in teachers' marking gives students clear advice on how they can improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Standards on entry to Year 7 vary from year to year but are generally below average. All groups of students, including the few from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress in their studies across the school and they reach broadly average attainment by the time they leave. This represents good achievement and better achievement than at the time of the previous inspection. Most parents who completed the Parent View questionnaire expressed satisfaction at the progress their children were making. In addition, students following vocational and life skills courses at a local college and in six local high schools make good progress in both their academic and personal development. Early examination entry for GCSE is used only when staff believe that it will benefit students' achievement.
- Progress and attainment have improved strongly over a four-year period. In 2012, standards rose again and results in both mathematics and science were above average and the best the school has ever known. The percentage of students reaching five or more GCSE grades at A* to C was also higher than ever before. Inspection evidence shows that students in the current Year 11 are on track to reach even higher standards.
- Strategies to identify where students are not doing as well as they could and to provide relevant support are particularly successful in Key Stage 4: pastoral and academic staff, including the capable team of learning mentors provide focused support to help students improve their standards. Similar strategies are now being introduced in to Key Stage 3, for example 'Motive 8' and the early signs are positive. The school recognises, however, that these strategies are not yet fully embedded and that it is too early to see their full impact on increasing students' progress and raising their aspirations.
- Nonetheless, well-targeted use of pupil premium funding and regular checks on its impact are leading to this group of students doing at least as well as their classmates do. The gaps between their attainment and the attainment of all students nationally are closing rapidly. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are also making good progress, as a result of the skilled support received.
- Students enjoy books and read widely and confidently, evidenced by an unplanned discussion, during a reading aloud session, between Year 7 students on the different authors they like. Specialist status supports students' speaking and listening skills, through debating clubs and speaking competitions, for example.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good overall. Good relationships in the classroom, students being clear about what they are going to learn, strong support for students new to learning English and for those who find the work difficult are the hallmarks of typical lessons. In addition, teachers know their subjects well and often use electronic whiteboards to help students learn. Students are skilful in their use of computers and, as early as Year 7, use the Internet wisely and safely to research their work.
- Students speak highly of the adults who work with them and are grateful for the extra lessons teachers put on, to help them when revising for tests and examinations. In their words, 'Teachers are always willing to help us with our work.' In the best lessons, for example in a Year 8 French lesson where teaching was graded outstanding, students learn quickly, enjoy the activities and support each other when they find things hard. There is a range of different teaching methods, and the work set helps students of all abilities to learn well and at the right speed. In such lessons, teachers motivate students to want to learn; they ask questions, which make them think more deeply about the topics they are studying.
- In lessons where teaching requires improvement, data are not always used well enough to plan

activities which meet the learning needs of students of all abilities closely. In these lessons, the work set for some students is too hard; for others it is too easy. In these lessons students do not consistently have the opportunities to work on their own or to work in pairs and groups to find things out for themselves.

- The quality of marking is inconsistent across the school. It varies from exemplary practice, where students receive detailed and accurate advice on how they do better, to little more than ticks and brief comment or sometimes no comment at all on how to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are proud to attend the school and find it difficult to say anything about how it could be improved. They behave well, and often outstandingly well, in classrooms and around the school site and show good attitudes to learning. They value the caring, supportive and harmonious atmosphere in the school. They speak highly of the variety of extra-curricular activities, including sports activities, educational visits and trips abroad.
- They feel safe in school because, in their view, 'There is always someone to talk to if we have problems.' They believe that bullying is rare and is taken seriously by the school if it occurs; they have a good understanding of the many different forms bullying can take, including cyber-bullying and bullying based on prejudice.
- Students benefit enormously from the school's outstanding promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Specialist status plays its part here, too. For example, drama has a high profile and the drama studio is very well used: The school radio station is popular amongst students and staff and public speaking and debating, in the local community too, are key elements of school life. One student is a member of the National Youth Parliament. Students also enjoy the citizenship programme which, they say, teaches them about a range of moral and social issues.
- Students take the lead in recommending which charities they should support and they have a good reputation locally for the aid they give to people less fortunate than themselves.
- The school works hard to meet the needs of all its students and pastoral staff and learning mentors take the initiative in providing activities to promote students' confidence and self-esteem.

The leadership and management are good

- Staff pay tribute to the work of the headteacher and say they share his, and the senior leadership team's clear view of how successful the school can be. Heads of subject departments, heads of year and pastoral staff, including learning mentors, work well as a team to ensure that the academic and personal progress of students is checked regularly. The humanities specialism is led and managed well and the positive impact of its work can be seen within school and in the local community.
- Teachers say that morale is high, that communication between staff is good and that they all believe they are valued members of 'Team Fishermore.' This view is also held by administrative staff. As one commented, 'We are proud to work here; this school has a soul.'
- Members of the teaching and learning group have a key role in improving the quality of teaching. Middle leaders say that there are many training opportunities provided for staff to improve their classroom skills. The senior leadership team, however, does not always check on the impact of the work of middle leaders effectively enough. The curriculum develops continuously to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of students. Child protection and safeguarding policies and practice fully meet current requirements. The school promotes equality of opportunity well and rejects any form of discrimination.
- The local authority supports school development well, particularly in relation to providing training on using data to raise student achievement. Its support for how the school ensures that pupils moving from primary schools make a good start in their new surroundings, has been especially

successful: pupils in Years 7 and 8 say the school helps them to settle in well. The local authority also supports the development of individual subject departments.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Members of the governing body provide good support for the school but also hold the leadership to account with rigour. They have an accurate understanding of data and the school's strengths and areas for development and are fully aware of the quality of teaching and of how the school attempts to improve teachers' performance in the classroom. They ensure that performance management arrangements are closely linked to teachers' salary progression. In addition, they have a handle on the budget and oversee the spending of pupil premium funding and check on the impact of this spending closely. They take part in regular training provided by the local authority.

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

Unique reference number	119785
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	405889

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 - 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	736
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Thomas
Headteacher	Chris Bohills
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2011
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