

St John Fisher Catholic High School

Park Lane, Peterborough, PE1 5JN

Inspection dates 17–18 October 2013

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 make good progress as they move up the school. Attainment and progress rates are rising quickly.
- The proportion of students gaining 5 A*-C grades including English and mathematics has increased significantly.
- Teaching is good. Some is outstanding, and no teaching is inadequate.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are carefully taught and reinforced in different subjects.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are well supported, as are the large number of students who speak English as an additional language.
- Students who arrive after the start of Year 7 settle quickly and make good progress.
- The sixth form is good. It is well led and managed and students make good progress.
- Students feel safe. Their parents also say that students are safe and happy.
- Students are well behaved. They are proud of the ways they can contribute to the school.
- The headteacher has worked effectively to raise attainment and improve teaching. Subject leaders have key roles in these areas.
- Governors have a good understanding of data and use it well to ensure that attainment and progress continue to improve.
- Students of all backgrounds work harmoniously together and treat each other with respect.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding and some still needs improvement.
- In a few lessons, some students are held up because they do not quickly start working without help from adults.
- Staff are not getting enough opportunities to learn from outstanding teaching by colleagues.
- Marking does not always show students how to improve their work and students do not always act on guidance they are given.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 32 lessons taught by 30 staff. They also observed a range of activities to support small groups of students or individuals. Eight joint observations of lessons were carried out with members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the governing body, staff, the school's external advisor, two representatives of the local authority and four groups of students.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, the inspectors took account of the 18 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the school's own parent surveys and responses to an inspection questionnaire from 59 staff.
- The inspectors observed the school's work. They also looked at the school's development plan, data on students' progress and attainment, records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, a large range of policies and procedures, and arrangements for the safeguarding of students.
- Inspectors attended an assembly and visited the school's breakfast club. They carried out a scrutiny of students' work jointly with the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors listened to students reading.

Inspection team

Michael Sutherland-Harper, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Margaret Eldridge-Mrotzek	Additional Inspector
Lynn Lowery	Additional Inspector
David Davies	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The largest ethnic groups are White British, any other white background and Pakistani.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and whose first language is not or believed not to be English is significantly above the national average. A number of students arrive in the school at times other than the normal starting points.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion of students supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium is well above the national average. This is additional government funding for particular groups of students, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and children in local authority care.
- A few students in Years 10 and 11 attend alternative courses at Peterborough Regional College in Peterborough in subjects not offered by the school and which are mostly work-related. Some sixth form students attend the King's School in Peterborough for courses that are not offered at this school.
- The school runs a breakfast club and a homework club.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of all teaching and learning to good or outstanding by:
 - encouraging students to develop more independence in learning
 - making sure that challenge and expectations are high in all lessons
 - ensuring that marking is consistent in showing students how to improve and that advice given is followed up by students
 - identifying and sharing best practice from teachers and teaching assistants across the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From attainment on entry that is well below average, students of all ethnic backgrounds make good progress as they proceed through Key Stages 3 and 4. Though a comparatively high number of students arrive after the start of Year 7, they settle quickly and start to learn well. A significant number of students arrive with little or no English or do not speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students achieving 5 A*-C grades, including English and mathematics, although below average, is increasing rapidly. Mathematics has been weaker than English but standards improved by 20% in the 2013 examinations. Students currently in the school are on track to reach standards that continue the improvement, because mathematics is now taught by subject specialists.
- Sixth form results are improving at A level and attainment is broadly in line with national figures. Gaps are closing between different groups and subjects and are not significant. Students make good progress across the range of subjects and courses. AS-level attainment dipped last year because students started their courses with lower grades. To address their needs, the school took prompt action to set up new courses with a work-related slant. Students currently studying AS levels are on track to reach higher standards in 2014. Students also have opportunities to retake key subjects like mathematics and English with a good success rate. More students are staying on in the sixth form as a result.
- Intervention groups are very effective. Students who arrive during the course of the year are quickly assessed and put into appropriate groupings. Students have opportunities for reinforcement of key skills in small groups and on a one-to-one basis. A corrective reading programme in Year 7, through Year 7 catch-up funding, and additional literacy lessons mean that students' reading age has risen quickly in 6 months. Support work has been done either at breakfast club or after school sessions called 'Period 5' for nominated students.
- Students are not entered early for examinations in English and mathematics. The school uses the time available to consolidate students' skills in these subjects.
- Students who attend courses at other providers make similar progress to their fellow students. An assistant headteacher checks on their attendance and progress. A teaching assistant accompanies Year 10 and 11 students to the college on the days they attend.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. They are well supported in lessons. Many of the teaching assistants are native language speakers and provide language support for the many EAL students. The needs of students in both these groups are accurately assessed and their progress closely tracked against their learning targets to ensure that all students enjoy equal opportunities and that there is no discrimination.
- The impact of pupil premium funding is good. In 2012, the last year for which confirmed results are available, results of eligible students in Year 11 were half a grade behind their classmates in English and just under a grade in mathematics. This was a smaller gap than nationally. Progress rates of eligible students are now increasing rapidly in both English and mathematics as new syllabuses are brought in and teaching methods refined.
- Reading skills vary on entry but are generally low. Nurture groups for reading are very

successful. Key Stage 3 reading becomes more fluent because of good individual and small-group help, which enables students to break down words into letters and sounds accurately and enhance understanding. Progress is rapid at Key Stage 4 where students are increasingly able to explain the context of what they are reading and the meaning of complicated words.

- Parents and carers feel that their children are making good progress. Students say that they enjoy lessons, that there is always help available to take them forward and that they appreciate the close attention they get from support staff. As a result, they have very positive attitudes to learning.

The quality of teaching is good

- The large majority of teaching seen during the inspection was good or outstanding and none was inadequate. Over time, as seen in the school's records of monitoring and lesson observations, teaching has improved, School judgements are in line with the inspection judgements. During joint observations carried out with senior staff, inspectors and staff agreed on all grades.
- Where teaching was strongest, teachers had very good subject knowledge, planned lessons well to meet the needs of all abilities, including the more able, and re-shaped tasks to meet individual needs as the lesson progressed. As a result students of all abilities learnt rapidly. There was a clear expectation that students would rise to the standard expected.
- In a Year 8 lesson about volcanoes, students explored why people live near them and the possible results, thereby considering conditions in another country. The teacher and teaching assistants were fully alert to points where students might need help to understand subject terminology, so no one was held up. Students were given a variety of very effective activities to do, many independently of the teacher, and always at a brisk pace. As a result they were closely engaged and made very rapid progress.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Good questioning engages students in a dialogue with the teacher. Activities are well timed and result in learning moving forward quickly.
- Where teaching required improvement, teachers were slower to ensure that students worked independently to consolidate subject skills. As a result, some students spent time waiting to move on, or did not show the skills to work alone. Challenge and expectations were not always high enough to push learning on at the most rapid rate. The school is not making consistently good use of the outstanding practice of some teachers and teaching assistants, in order to support other staff.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are well supported in lessons and in one-to-one or small group sessions. Special visual clues on cards are well used to engage students who are at an early stage of learning English. The school takes pains to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to learn, through the range of support systems which are quickly provided whenever needed. Teachers and support staff go to great lengths to ensure that students' confidence levels increase and lead to improving progress.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are regularly reinforced in lessons across the school. For example, in a physical education lesson, students had opportunities to count pulse rates and picked up key subject words by means of an engaging quiz.
- Marking and assessment are usually good. Students' work is neatly presented. They assess their

own work and that of their peers regularly. In most lessons, marking provides clear guidance about what students need to do next. However, some teachers do not use the system consistently enough to ensure that all marking guides students to the highest standard and that students follow up on the guidance given by teachers to ensure further improvement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Students work sensibly together and are happy to help each other in and out of lessons. Students are courteous and polite to visitors. They feel listened to and valued. They point to the strong influence which the school council has had in helping to improve the school, for example through vertical tutor groups; students believe that in these older students set a good example for the younger ones.
- Students know that poor behaviour is not tolerated. The school can point to many examples where its clear policies have had a profound impact on the behaviour of individuals, for example, in reducing incidents fivefold. Students say that behaviour has improved greatly in the past few years.
- Students feel safe and their parents agree. Students are confident that there is always someone to whom they can turn in any situation because of the strong support offered by pastoral staff and within the house system. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe on the internet. Staff are trained further as soon as any new needs emerge.
- Any incidents of racism or bullying are taken seriously and acted upon swiftly. Students are proud of the fact that this multi-racial school is a harmonious community and that the school does not tolerate racist or homophobic behaviour or language. They are keenly aware of the different forms that bullying can take.
- Exclusions have fallen consistently over the last three years and are now in line with national figures. The school is quick to phone home and to visit families whenever there are signs of any problems so that exclusions are avoided. This system of closer contact with home has been particularly effective where families do not speak English as their first language and also means that fewer families now take holidays during term time.
- Attendance is below average. The school is doing everything it can to raise attendance, through its rigorous monitoring systems and increased communication with parents generally. The school follows up on absence and contacts social care professionals whenever any concerns arise over child protection. Persistent absence has fallen by two-thirds over two years.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is well respected within the school and local area. He leads a strong, recently re-developed senior leadership team. Several members of staff have progressed to senior positions through the 'Future Leaders' programme. The headteacher has worked very effectively with governors and staff to accurately identify areas for improvement. The whole team is now relentlessly focused on driving up achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because achievement and teaching are not yet consistently outstanding. Systems put in place and careful monitoring of their effectiveness mean that these areas are developing quickly.
- Subject leaders work closely together as a team. They are grouped in faculties for better

communication about how to keep progress rates moving upwards. Departmental development plans are linked to the whole school development plan. Subject leaders monitor data rigorously and this, in turn, has led to more focused observations of teaching and learning to secure improvement. They have undergone 'gap buster' training as part of their efforts with students receiving the pupil premium funding.

- The school uses the views of students systematically as part of assessments of teaching and accompanies this with coaching sessions for staff. The 'Learning Habits' student focus group goes termly into lessons to look at good learning from a student point of view and reports back to subject leaders and the senior leadership team.
- Procedures for the management of staff performance are rigorous. Teachers' progression up the pay scales is linked to their impact on students' progress and results. Every teacher has a target linked to students' achievement.
- The range of subjects on offer is broad and well balanced. The school looks continually to meet the needs of students by adjusting what it offers, and benefits from students' feedback, most recently by extending the work-related courses in the sixth form.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Two assistant headteachers work together – one with responsibility for the curriculum, the other for achievement. Students feel well supported pastorally and academically. Everyone who applied for higher education last year was successful. Students receive effective advice about plans for the future and are closely followed up once they have left the school.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. The school's students, who speak many languages and have many different cultural backgrounds, work harmoniously together. Results in GCSE modern foreign languages are strong. The school prides itself on how everyone is a member of the one community, irrespective of who they are. Students treat their school and each other with respect and have many opportunities to participate and lead.
- The school has a close relationship with the local authority, which has provided careful and effective guidance and support in tandem with the detailed work done by the external advisor.
- Safeguarding procedures meet all requirements. All staff have regular training in safeguarding, child protection and safer recruitment procedures.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors are well trained in the understanding of data and use it increasingly well to check on progress rates and the impact of steps put in place. They bring a wide range of skills to the school, are known to parents - with whom links are increasing - and visit whenever possible. Governors evaluate carefully how the pupil premium is used. They know how good teaching is, support the school's policies to develop the best teachers and ensure that procedures for the management of teachers' performance are rigorous. Governors share the determination of senior leaders and staff to continue the present rate of improvement.

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	110907
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	427174

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 sixth form	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Rossi
Headteacher	Sean Hayes
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2012
Telephone number	01733 343646
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