

# Inspection of St John Fisher Catholic Academy

Hookstone Drive, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG2 8PT

---

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 December 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected St John Fisher Catholic Academy as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils value the education that they receive at St John Fisher Catholic Academy. Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They have designed a curriculum which achieves the school's mission, 'educating for life'. Pupils leave the school well equipped for their next step in education, employment or training.

Pupils behave considerately and maturely. They wear their uniforms with pride. Their achievements are celebrated in rewards assemblies. However, a minority of pupils think that leaders do not celebrate positive behaviour as much as they could.

Leaders respond when pupils raise concerns. For example, leaders have improved indoor and outside areas of the school where some pupils felt uncomfortable in the past. This has helped pupils to feel safe in school. Pupils appreciate the support of pastoral staff. When pupils report bullying, staff tackle it directly.

A rich set of extra-curricular opportunities are available for pupils. Sixth-form students lead by example. Members of the school congress are proud of their leadership responsibilities. Sixth-form students willingly support lower school pupils. For example, some read with younger pupils while others help out at the 'space club'.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Careful thought has gone into the curriculum design. Pupils benefit from lessons that build upon what they already know. Teachers frequently check pupils' understanding and help them to remember important concepts. Pupils use their prior knowledge to perform increasingly complex tasks in subsequent lessons. They talk confidently about their learning over time. Although the curriculum is ambitious, leaders are making changes to the curriculum so that pupils in Years 7 to 9 can study topics, such as the Holocaust in history, in even greater depth. Senior leaders are working with curriculum subject leaders to introduce a new and even richer key stage 3 curriculum from September 2023.

Recent staff training has increased teachers' understanding of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In some subjects, such as physical education (PE), teachers skilfully support pupils with physical disabilities. However, not all pupils' needs are consistently catered for with the same level of expertise. For example, some pupils with dyslexia feel well supported by some teachers more than others. When pupils with SEND ask for help, sometimes teachers do not know how to support them fully. This is partially because leaders do not fully provide teachers with precise enough information about individual pupils.

There is an effective programme to deliver reading support to those pupils who need it. Pupils with reading difficulties are identified swiftly. Well-delivered reading sessions build pupils' reading competence and confidence over time.

The sixth form has a broad curriculum offer, as well as a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Teachers have secure academic and vocational subject knowledge. Students are consistently positive about their experience in the sixth form. They value the pastoral and academic support given to them. All students progress to suitably ambitious destinations.

Pupils behave with maturity and are tolerant of one another. The new behaviour and engagement policy has raised standards in pupils' behaviour. Although positive behaviour is celebrated, some older pupils feel that the messages given to them by adults about behaviour expectations are too negative.

A wide range of rich activities are available to help pupils develop their individual character. Regular opportunities to debate important ethical issues help pupils to develop their moral compass. An exciting range of extra-curricular clubs and activities are on offer. Information to help pupils to decide their next steps is improving. The strength of the careers offer in the sixth form is now being realised across the school.

New leaders have brought stability to the school. They are ambitious and have rightly raised expectations of pupils and of staff. Most parents and carers would recommend the school. However, a small but significant minority of parents do not feel that communication between school and home is effective. Previous instability in leadership has not helped. Sometimes leaders are slow to respond to parents who raise concerns. Over time, some parents of pupils with SEND have not been involved sufficiently in their children's education. Some parents recognise recent improvements in communication. However, more is needed to include the whole community fully in the school's improvement journey.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders keep a keen eye on safeguarding arrangements. They analyse safeguarding data and spot any emerging trends. This work informs what training to give staff so that they have an up-to-date awareness of contextual safeguarding issues. When concerns arise about pupils, swift action is taken to support those who need help. Governors closely scrutinise this work.

There are regular conversations with pupils about how they can be aware of risks to their safety. Regular visits from outside agencies, such as the police, help pupils to understand what risks they might face in the community. Most pupils appreciate the efforts that leaders go to when supporting them with any mental health issues.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not provide pupils with SEND with effective support in lessons. Some of the information that senior leaders provide to teachers about pupils' individual needs is not clear or specific. As a result, pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that staff are given precise information about the needs of pupils with SEND so that all pupils achieve the best possible outcomes.
- A small but significant minority of parents do not feel that communication between school and home is effective. Sometimes, when parents raise concerns or pass on their views, the response from staff is slow. As a result, some parents, including those of pupils with SEND, are not informed sufficiently about their children's education and their experiences in school. Leaders must engage more purposefully with these parents and involve them more effectively in school life.

### How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

### Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148855
<b>Local authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10240503
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,405
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	368
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Diane Gaskin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Steve Mort
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sjfchs.org.uk">www.sjfchs.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school converted to become an academy in December 2021 and joined the Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust. When its predecessor school, St John Fisher Catholic High School, was last inspected by Ofsted in October 2006, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The current headteacher joined the predecessor school in September 2020.
- The school is designated as having a religious character and is a voluntary aided school. The predecessor school's most recent section 48 inspection was in June 2018.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative provisions for a very small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders throughout the inspection. This included meetings with the deputy headteachers, the director of sixth form and assistant headteachers. Inspectors also met with the chief executive officer of the trust and other trust employees.
- The lead inspector also met with members of the school's academy council, including the chairperson and vice chairperson, and held a telephone conversation with the chairperson of the trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, science and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with other curriculum leaders, reviewed curriculum planning and visited lessons in other curriculum subjects to look at how teachers support pupils with SEND. Inspectors also reviewed a range of SEND documentation and met with pupils with SEND to discuss the quality of the support that they receive.
- An inspector met with the school's reading lead and visited some reading intervention groups.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), the deputy DSL and the headteacher. They reviewed safeguarding documentation, including referrals to external agencies. Inspectors also spoke with staff and pupils throughout the inspection about their safeguarding knowledge.
- An inspector visited one unregistered provider used by the school and spoke to pupils attending the provision.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for aspects of the school's personal development programme, visited a personal, social and health education lesson and visited registration at the start of the day.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection, formally and informally. They also observed break and lunchtime arrangements and reviewed a wide range of school documentation.
- The views of staff, pupils and parents submitted through Ofsted's surveys were considered along with free-text responses. An inspector also spoke with one parent via the telephone.

## **Inspection team**

Graham Findlay, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Bernard Clark	Ofsted Inspector
Katie North	Ofsted Inspector
Gordon Watts	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew West	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Whieldon	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2022