

Inspection of St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy

Oxford Road, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire WF13 4LL

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' experiences around school are too frequently disrupted by poor behaviour and a culture of disrespect. Some pupils' behaviour in the corridors at breaktimes and at lunchtimes can be intimidating. There are some deeply entrenched negative attitudes among some pupils that have not been addressed by leaders. Too many pupils are disrespectful towards their peers and staff. Derogatory, rude and offensive language is common. Pupils say that fighting between pupils is frequent. Some pupils feel unsafe because of the poor behaviour of others. There are staff at the school who feel the same.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is better. During the inspection, pupils were typically engaged in their learning. However, the school's own behaviour records show that a significantly high number of pupils are removed from lessons. Despite their best efforts, some staff have low morale due to leaders' lack of urgency in dealing with the behaviour and poor attitudes of some pupils.

The interim headteacher, who took up post in November 2022, has a strong understanding of the challenges facing the school. Leaders have worked on the development of the curriculum. Subject plans set out the most important content that pupils should learn and when. Staff recognise and appreciate the professional development and support they have received to help them plan the curriculum.

Pupils receive effective careers guidance, including in the sixth form.

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

For too long, the standards of behaviour and attitudes of some pupils at the school have not improved. Leaders have tried to create an orderly environment, yet their work in this area has not been effective. Poor behaviour is a common theme in the voices of pupils, staff, and parents and carers.

The school's behaviour records show that the number of incidents of poor behaviour is high. The removal of pupils from lessons, the use of the 'on-call room' and pupil suspensions are increasing. In unsupervised areas of the school, pupils exhibit unsafe behaviours, such as vaping. A culture of disrespect has been allowed to become the norm among too many pupils.

Too many pupils do not attend school often enough. Truancy is common. Leaders do not know where some pupils are during the school day because the systems to track pupils are not effective.

Leaders have developed curriculum plans that identify the most important knowledge that pupils need to remember. Leaders have thought about the order in which topics should be taught. However, there is some inconsistency in how teachers implement the curriculum. This, in part, has a detrimental effect on how well pupils remember some of what they have been taught. Approaches to

assessment such as 'the purple zone' and 'demonstrate and connect' are not embedded in all subjects. However, when these are used effectively, gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge are picked up quickly by teachers.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) accurately. Support plans are detailed. However, the monitoring of plans is not always thorough. As a result, the effect of learning interventions on pupils with SEND is inconsistent.

Developing a culture of reading is a focus for leaders. The school has invested in resources, such as a repurposed library and some staff training in teaching phonics. Although relatively recent, there are signs of improvements in the reading fluency of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9.

Pupils do not have a sufficiently strong understanding of aspects of the personal development curriculum. This is because particular topics are not taught to some year groups. Some pupils do not have a strong understanding of the issues they may face in the local community. Leaders have been quick to prioritise the teaching of values such as respect in the light of the current disrespectful attitudes shown by some pupils.

Effective careers advice and guidance are helping pupils to consider their next steps in education, training and employment. Careers provision is particularly effective in the sixth form.

Pupils have the opportunity to engage in a range of extracurricular activities, including sports and leadership development. Leaders are working to increase the participation of some groups of pupils so that they gain wider experiences.

In some subjects, sixth-form students' learning is stronger because curriculum plans are well sequenced. This means that students are able to build their knowledge over time. However, this is not consistent across all subjects. Students benefit from effective work experience.

Trust and senior leaders have not acted with sufficient urgency to deal with long-term failings in the school. Change has not been quick enough. The lack of leadership capacity, not helped by recent instability, has meant that behaviour has deteriorated. Leaders have not shown that they are able to bring about sustained improvement. The new headteacher has a clear understanding of the urgency needed in addressing the challenges the school faces. Staff are positive about the new leadership, although the long-term behavioural issues faced are impacting negatively on staff morale.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The poor behaviour of pupils between lessons and at break- and lunchtimes makes other pupils and some staff feel unsafe. Over a sustained period, leaders, including those from the multi-academy trust, have not done enough to address unruly and intimidating behaviour.

Pupils are frequently missing from school, including for part of the school day, but this is not tackled appropriately by staff. This means that leaders and staff do not know whether pupils are safe.

The single central record and pre-employment checks meet statutory guidance.

Safeguarding leaders are knowledgeable. They support the most vulnerable pupils effectively. Leaders work closely with external agencies to help pupils and their families get the support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The behaviour and attitudes of some pupils are extremely poor. The school is not a calm or orderly place to be. Expectations of pupils' behaviour are not high enough. Some pupils and staff find the atmosphere intimidating and do not feel safe. There are too many pupils who show little respect towards staff. Trust and senior leaders must act with urgency to ensure that the necessary changes are made, and leadership capacity is improved to address the school's culture so that pupils' behaviour and attitudes are much improved swiftly.
- Pupils' attendance at the school has not been good enough for too long. Truancy is common. Too many pupils are missing out on education. This means that adults do not know where some of these pupils are, or whether they are safe. Leaders, including those in the trust, must ensure that robust systems are in place, and that school leaders have the capacity to improve rates of attendance and to reduce truanting across the school.
- Trust leaders have not acted with pace to address some of the long-term failings at the school. Things have not improved quickly enough. Pupils' education has suffered. The interim headteacher has an accurate understanding of the significant weaknesses, including in behaviour, disrespect, poor attitudes and safety. Trust leaders should ensure that leadership expertise and capacity are developed quickly so that the long-standing issues affecting pupils' education are resolved.
- The new personal development curriculum is planned effectively. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is taught consistently in a way that supports pupils in each year group to gain a thorough understanding of issues they may face in the local community. Leaders should ensure that the plans relating to character education strongly instil a culture of respect across the school.
- Leaders have invested time and have developed ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum plans. However, the curriculum is not implemented consistently across

the school. Pupils' learning is affected. Leaders need to ensure that the planned curriculum is implemented consistently and with rigour across all subjects.

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

Unique reference number	141470
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10241177
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,074
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	126
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Antonia Dorsey
Headteacher	Jackie Rose (Interim Headteacher)
Website	www.stjohnfisher.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 and 16 March 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The interim headteacher was appointed in November 2022.
- The school is a member of the Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Academy Trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement 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.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the chief executive officer and the director of education of the multi-academy trust, senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, staff, pupils and the chair of the local academy council.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for behaviour, attendance, personal development and the sixth form.
- School documents were reviewed and scrutinised, including leaders' evaluations of the effectiveness of the school and information about pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, history and science. In each subject, inspectors met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, had discussions with staff and pupils, and sampled pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead, checked safeguarding records, scrutinised the school's single central record and spoke to leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses that were submitted by parents and carers to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View and the free-text comments submitted during the inspection. Inspectors considered the responses to the staff survey and the responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.

Inspection team

Julian Appleyard, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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