

Inspection of St John Fisher Catholic College

Ashfields New Road, Newcastle Under Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 2SJ

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 December 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Garrett Murray. This school is part of Christ the King Catholic Collegiate Multi Academy Company, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Theresa Madden, and overseen by a board of directors, chaired by Gillian Regan.

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils are happy at St John Fisher Catholic College. That said, for too many pupils, their educational experience is variable, and they find this frustrating. This variability includes the quality of education and how leaders ensure consistent standards of good behaviour. The sixth form is a strength of the school, where the curriculum is delivered to a more consistently high standard. Students in the sixth form appreciate this, as well as the advice and guidance they receive.

Leaders have worked on improving behaviour. However, pupils are clear that there are inconsistencies, and too often lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour. Leaders recognise that there is more to do to ensure consistency in the application of the behaviour policy. Pupils say they feel safe in school and are clear that there is a trusted adult they could talk to if they had concerns. In social times, pupils generally behave well. Leaders are working on improving pupils' punctuality, but this remains variable for some pupils.

Pupils can access a wide range of opportunities, such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, an ethos team, a dance group, a robotics group for the sixth form and an eco-stewardship team. There are also residential trips. Pupils value these opportunities.

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

The quality of education is too variable for pupils. Leaders have planned the curriculum carefully for most subjects, although the key knowledge that pupils need to learn is not always clear. In addition to this, pupils do not have sufficient time to study creative subjects in key stage 3. Pupils learn the intended curriculum well when teachers select appropriately ambitious tasks that take into account what pupils already know. However, teachers do not check carefully enough whether pupils have understood the key knowledge. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge persist. Too often, pupils' books show this lack of understanding of key knowledge, with incomplete work or work which does not build on what they already know. Leaders have started work on developing reading, and have identified weaker readers who need support. Although support is in place for younger pupils with weaker reading skills, the support for older pupils who struggle with reading has not had sufficient impact to improve their reading skills.

In the sixth form, the curriculum is much more effectively designed and delivered. Teachers check for understanding and adapt the learning accordingly. Although published outcomes are low, leaders have worked effectively to ensure that the quality of education is more secure for these students. Students appreciate the range of activities on offer to them, as well as the advice and guidance they receive about post-18 destinations.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs accurately identified, and teachers are provided with useful information to adapt

their learning activities. For pupils with education, health and care plans (EHC plans), these are well used by teachers to adapt the learning. However, there are inconsistencies in how teachers adapt learning to meet pupils' needs for those pupils who do not have EHC plans. This means that some of these pupils with SEND do not always achieve as well as they should.

Leaders have reset expectations of pupils' behaviour around the values of 'The Fisher Way': ready, respect, curious, responsibility, pride and resilience. This has had some success, but there remain inconsistencies in how behaviour is addressed, and too often poor behaviour is not challenged effectively by some staff. Thanks to close supervision, at social times pupils generally behave considerately towards each other. Leaders have a number of new systems in place to support pupils who struggle to meet the school's expectations. Their analysis shows some success in improving behaviour, although there remain groups of pupils who continue to need more support.

Attendance is high, and leaders have worked effectively to build positive relationships with families to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. However, there remain some pupils who still miss too much school. Leaders have recently led a new strategy on punctuality, which is having a positive impact for some pupils.

The school's work around pupils' personal development is a strength. Leaders have ensured the curriculum covering pupils' personal, social, health and economic education is comprehensive and well resourced. Pupils discuss protected characteristics in a mature way. Leaders have also worked effectively to provide a range of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils. These include a residential trip for Year 7 pupils and a mathematics trip. Pupils' understanding of future opportunities is enhanced by work experience opportunities, work with the national citizenship service and other links to local employers. There are appropriate links with post-16 and post-18 providers.

Governors and the directors have not secured consistent improvements in key areas identified in the last ungraded inspection. In addition, leaders do not have a fully accurate evaluation of the quality of provision at St John Fisher Catholic College. This is because there are leaders at all levels who have not had sufficient support or training to enable them to achieve consistently high-quality provision in their area of responsibility. Staff appreciate the way that leaders are mindful of their workload and well-being at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils' understanding is not checked systematically, which means that learning is not adapted well enough to meet pupils' needs, including for some pupils with SEND. This means that some pupils do not successfully build their learning on what they already know, and gaps in their knowledge persist. The school should ensure that all teachers use assessment effectively to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and then adapt the curriculum to ensure pupils learn the key knowledge they need to build successfully on future learning.
- The school has not provided sufficient support to all pupils who struggle with their reading. As a result, some pupils do not develop fluency in reading well enough. The school should accelerate its programme of support for reading, including phonics, and ensure it is provided for all pupils who need it.
- Leaders do not consistently check how effectively improvements have been embedded in their areas of responsibility. As a result, some development areas that are less effective are not identified and addressed. Leaders need to ensure that leaders at all levels know how to monitor the impact of their work, so that improvements in education in all aspects of the school lead to better pupil outcomes.
- Some staff do not apply the new behaviour policy consistently. As a result, some pupils do not meet the school's expectations or do not focus on the learning. The school needs to ensure that all teachers apply the behaviour policy as intended, so that behaviour across the school is of a consistently high standard.
- Governors and the board of directors have not supported and challenged leaders effectively enough to improve the quality of education. As a consequence, weaknesses in the quality of provision have persisted. Those responsible for governance need to ensure that they support leaders and hold them to account effectively to ensure that the quality of provision is consistently high across the school.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	140802
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10290609
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	1,121
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	101
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gillian Regan
CEO of the trust	Theresa Madden
Headteacher	Garrett Murray
Website	http://www.saintjohnfishercc.co.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 June 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St John Fisher Catholic College is an academy within the Christ the King Catholic Collegiate Multi Academy Company.
- The school uses three registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school is of Roman Catholic denomination. It was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in May 2023.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- As a part of this inspection, inspectors met with the trust CEO, trust representatives, trustees, governors, a representative of the archdiocese, senior leaders, subject leaders, teaching staff and other employees in the school. They also scrutinised minutes of trustees' and governors' meetings.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in: mathematics, science, geography, design and technology and English. They also looked at examples of pupils' work in other subjects. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also visited lessons in some other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's extra-curricular activities, enrichment programme and careers and personal development programmes with leaders and pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's behaviour and attendance records with school leaders.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, at various points in the inspection. They took account of responses to a staff survey, a pupil survey and Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Andrew Madden, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
David Hermitt	Ofsted Inspector
Neil Warner	Ofsted Inspector
Stuart Clarkson	His Majesty's Inspector
Nicola Beech	His Majesty's Inspector

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