



# Fairfield High School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 109290  
**LEA** Bristol, City of  
**Inspection number** 278173  
**Inspection dates** 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Janet Mercer HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

|                                    |                    |                           |                       |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>              | Comprehensive      | <b>School address</b>     | Fairlawn Road         |
| <b>School category</b>             | Community          |                           | Montpelier            |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>         | 11 to 16           |                           | Bristol BS6 5JW       |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>            | Mixed              | <b>Telephone number</b>   | 0117 9557407          |
| <b>Number on roll</b>              | 1000               | <b>Fax number</b>         | 0117 9413041          |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>       | The governing body | <b>Chair of governors</b> | Mr John Ashton        |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b> | 10 January 2000    | <b>Headteacher</b>        | Mrs Nicola McAllister |

|                              |   |                                    |
|------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| <b>Age group</b><br>11 to 16 | <b>Inspection dates</b><br>23 November 2005 -<br>24 November 2005 | <b>Inspection number</b><br>278173 |
|------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by team of two inspectors and two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

At the time of the inspection, Fairfield High School was in a period of transition following the recent closure of a local Catholic school. The number of pupils on roll has grown from 576 in 2003 to 1,007 in 2005, with a significant increase in the numbers of pupils joining the school this year in Years 7 and 10. The school is currently operating on two sites, as the Fairlawn Road site is not large enough to accommodate all pupils. The school is preparing to move into new accommodation in April 2006. At this time the pupils currently attending Elmfield School for the Deaf will join Fairfield High School.

The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is significantly higher than average, with 51% from different minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than average, as is the proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties and disabilities. A high proportion of pupils have English as an additional language. The school draws many pupils from areas with many social and economic difficulties.

## Key for inspection grades

|         |              |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  |
| Grade 2 | Good         |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   |

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Fairfield High School is an effective school, which provides a good standard of education and excellent care, support and guidance for its pupils. Examination results are in line with national averages and pupils' achievements are well above those found in similar schools.

Effective leadership and management have enabled the school to continue to improve since its previous inspection. Good progress has been made in addressing areas for improvement and the school demonstrates good capacity to improve further. Senior managers and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and the process of self-evaluation is rigorous in identifying areas and causes of underperformance. Inspectors agreed with the school's judgements that overall effectiveness is good. Resources are well managed and the school provides good value for money.

Teaching is good overall. Managers monitor regularly the quality of teaching and much good practice is shared. Most pupils enjoy their work and attend regularly, but in a minority of lessons poor behaviour disrupts learning. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils and a very good range of extra-curricular activities supports the taught curriculum effectively. Opportunities for pupils are also enhanced by the productive links the school has with other schools, further education colleges, employers and other external groups and organisations.

The majority of parents are very supportive of the school, but some expressed concerns about the effectiveness of communications with the school in recent months.

### What the school should do to improve further

- strengthen procedures for managing pupil behaviour around the school and in some lessons
- improve communications with parents.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils' achievements are well above those in schools with a similar intake. Most pupils achieve well, relative to their prior attainment. Many pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make very good progress. Results of national tests and examinations are broadly in line with national averages. Samples of pupils' work seen by inspectors meet required standards.

In 2003–04, the last year for which validated data is available, Key Stage 3 test results demonstrate an improving trend over the last three years. Pupils' average point scores in English, mathematics and science improved and were just above the national average. Many pupils start Key Stage 4 with lower than average prior attainment.

Whilst the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A\*–C grades at GCSE remains below the national average, pupils make good progress relative to their prior attainment.

The proportion of pupils achieving five or more A\*–G grades and at least one A\*–G grade is above the national average.

The school sets realistic and challenging targets for pupils. Target setting is rigorous and closely related to individual pupils' prior attainment. Pupils' progress towards targets is closely monitored and appropriate action is taken with individual pupils and in specific subject areas to raise achievements.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Most pupils enjoy school, are punctual for lessons and attend regularly. Strategies for improving attendance and punctuality are effective. Absent pupils are contacted promptly.

Pupils' personal development is good. Topics such as citizenship, drugs awareness and healthy eating have successfully helped pupils to make informed choices about their lifestyles. Healthy food options are available each lunchtime. Many pupils are members of the school's sports clubs including football, basketball and badminton. Dance clubs are also popular.

Pupils feel safe at school and are aware of the need for safe practices when using specialist equipment and when conducting themselves around the school. Pupils are confident that help would readily be provided if they needed it because they were being bullied.

Different cultures are widely celebrated throughout the school in many ways, including through activities during Black history month. Wall displays demonstrate the study of different countries and cultures. Pupils participate in the St Paul's Carnival by making costumes and dancing.

Pupils are articulate and confidently express their views. Pupils develop a range of skills that will help them understand the world of work and prepare them for their futures. Charitable events for good causes at home and abroad are regularly supported and sometimes initiated by pupils. Projects to paint the local railway bridge and making samosas and cakes in aid of the Pakistani earthquake have been undertaken.

Pupils' behaviour is generally satisfactory. Recreational areas in the school grounds are very limited and high spirits sometimes result in boisterous behaviour between lessons. A small minority of lessons are disrupted through poor behaviour. The school has strengthened its behaviour management strategies and provided further training for staff. Behaviour has improved and the number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced, but the school acknowledges that further work is needed.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. As a result, in most lessons pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress. Senior managers and heads of subject know the strengths and weaknesses of teachers well and work hard to make improvements where necessary. Because there are regular checks on teaching and many opportunities for teachers to share good practice, certain features of good teaching are common to most lessons. Objectives are set and there is usually an evaluation of how well they have been achieved at the end of the lesson. Pupils with learning difficulties are effectively supported in class by teaching assistants who help them with specific literacy problems. Learning is also helped by good relationships between teachers and pupils. However, there are occasions when, despite good planning and varied activities to meet pupils' needs, teachers' classroom control is not strong enough. Learning of all pupils suffers because of the disruption caused by some of them. Whilst most teachers create a good climate for learning by managing pupils well, the rather boisterous atmosphere around the school makes it harder for some teachers to set a calm tone at the beginning of lessons.

Throughout the school, the use of assessment to support teaching is well established and target setting is good, helped by regular review days. Procedures in subjects are effective, with good use of assessment information linking into whole-school monitoring systems. There is particularly good practice in some subjects, such as mathematics, that provides pupils with very good information on what they need to do to improve. Day-to-day marking is more variable, but some teachers do make helpful, analytical comments on pupils' work.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

There are many good features of the curriculum, with good emphasis on health and safety and very good programmes to prepare pupils for the world of work. In Years 7 to 9, pupils with learning difficulties are well served through special individual or small-group support. Those who are gifted and talented also have good extra provision throughout their time at school. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is being improved. The much larger size of the present Year 10 has enabled more choice to be available to pupils. However, the limited facilities on the present site mean that the planned work in information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11 cannot always be done. There is also less provision of vocational courses than the school would like.

Careful thought is given to how pupils can progress in their education from Year 10 through to the age of 18 and beyond. Good links with local providers of post-16 education ensure that pupils are well catered for, whatever their interests and abilities. There is commendable provision of extra courses after school for those who have been unable to fit some subjects into their normal timetable. Extra-curricular activities are

extensive and much valued by the many pupils who participate in them. So, although there are restrictions within the present curriculum, overall the school provides good curricular and other activities for pupils. A wider range of courses and qualifications is planned when the enhanced facilities of the new school become available.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school cares for and supports a diverse community of pupils very effectively. Teachers are sensitive to individual needs and strive to ensure they are met. The work of learning support assistants in lessons is well planned and successful. Support for the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is very good, clearly focused and provided promptly. Pupils with difficult support needs and new residents to the United Kingdom are actively welcomed.

Action plans to ensure good progress by pupils contain detailed and relevant information. Precise timescales are set for the achievement of targets. Progress is monitored regularly. The management of support through weekly meetings is excellent. Discussions by the support team are specific and actions are updated. Many pupils make very good progress. Issues of concern, such as anger management, result in timely changes to the curriculum for personal, social and health education. The school responds well to changing circumstances. For example, staff have recently been trained in deafness awareness in order to support a greater number of pupils with hearing impairments joining the school.

The school's work with many external agencies and community-based organisations is highly productive. Liaison arrangements between home and school are very beneficial at easing difficult situations and significantly reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions. The school has a clear child protection policy and arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good.

Induction is very thorough and welcoming, and helps pupils to settle into their new school quickly. Transitional arrangements recently undertaken for large numbers of pupils joining the school for Year 10 were excellent. Educational visits, summer camps, 'speed friendship' games and team building were implemented with success. Pupils receive good advice on future career choices. A very high proportion of pupils progress to further education, training or employment.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management of the school is good. At all levels, leaders and managers work well together as a team. They concentrate their efforts on raising standards of achievement and the personal development of all groups of students. The headteacher has provided excellent leadership during a period of considerable change and the senior team have managed rapidly changing circumstances effectively.

The school takes exceptional steps to ensure that pupils are well cared for, guided and supported. The leadership team draws on a wide range of indicators so that they can readily identify when pupils may not be achieving as well as expected or when the standards of teaching fall. Consequently, they can identify likely causes, provide support and give guidance so that shortcomings are effectively addressed.

Overall, subject leaders work well to bring about improvements in test, assessment and examination results and the quality of teaching within their teams. Not all are equally effective but senior leaders identify subject teams that need support and then work with them through a comprehensive line-management framework, in order to bring about improvements.

The governing body has a realistic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Underpinned by secure and prudent financial projections, they play an active part in policy making and strategic planning. The coordinating sub-committee, with the headteacher, works to a common purpose and sets a clear direction for all aspects of the school's work. Over recent years, the headteacher, governors and the senior leadership team have shown the capacity to lead and manage continuing improvement well. School leaders evaluate the school's performance well and provide good value for money.



**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Inspection judgements

|  |                       |              |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | <b>School Overall</b> | <b>16-19</b> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 2   | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | 2   | NA |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage  | NA  | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   | NA |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | Yes | NA |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes | NA |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |    |
|--|---|----|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 2 | NA |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 3 | NA |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | NA |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 2 | NA |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |    |
|---|---|----|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 2 | NA |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners   | 3 | NA |
| The attendance of learners  | 2 | NA |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community                                    | 2 | NA |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 | NA |

### The quality of provision

|   |   |    |
|---|---|----|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 2 | NA |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 2 | NA |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 1 | NA |

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 2   | NA |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2   | NA |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review      | 2   | NA |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 2   | NA |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money  | 2   | NA |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 2   | NA |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected  | Yes | NA |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>  |     |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily  | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise  | Yes |
| Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse   | Yes |
| Learners are educated about sexual health   | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>   |     |
| Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements                                   | Yes |
| Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place  | Yes |
| Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism                                | Yes |
| Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them   | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>  |     |
| Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships   | Yes |
| Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them                   | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>                           |     |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills  | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams                                  | Yes |
| Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form          | Yes |
| Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy               | Yes |

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Fairfield High School Fairlawn Road Montpelier Bristol BS6 5JW

25 November 2005

Dear Pupils,

My colleagues and I greatly enjoyed visiting your school on the 23–24 November. Thank you for making us feel welcome and for talking to us, both in some of your lessons and in other groups. Many of you told us that you enjoy school and the many different activities that you take part in. Some of your parents and carers responded to a confidential questionnaire and we also took their views and concerns into account when making our judgements. We encourage you to read the report as it will let you know in more detail what your school does well and how you can help your school to be even better.

What we liked most about your school:

that most of you make good progress in school and achieve the target set for you

the good relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff

the good range of activities outside school hours that many of you take part in

the excellent support from school staff to help you achieve the best results you can

the good leadership and management by the headteacher and senior staff.

We have made a few recommendations to make your school even better:

you need to make sure that you always behave well around the school and in class so that everyone can learn as well as they can

the school needs to make sure that your parents and carers receive regular information about your progress and other developments in the school.

With best wishes,

Janet Mercer Lead Inspector