



St John Fisher RC School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110907
LEA PETERBOROUGH CITY OF PETERBOROUGH LEA
Inspection number 278551
Inspection dates 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mr. Alan Clamp LI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Park Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		PE1 5JN
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01733343646
Number on roll	730	Fax number	01733347983
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Patrick Burke
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Ms. Mary Mihovilovic

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 23 November 2005 - 24 November 2005	Inspection number 278551
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St John Fisher RC School is a voluntary aided mixed 11-18 school with 730 students. A higher proportion than average of students are classified as mobile and the school population has increased from 640 in 2004. The school has a small sixth form and offers post-16 provision as part of a federation with four other schools and a local further education college. The school has a high proportion of students eligible for free school meals compared to other schools and higher than average indicators of social deprivation. Around 36% of students have special educational needs. The school has a high percentage of students whose first language is not English. Approximately 58% of students are from minority ethnic groups.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. Since the last inspection the attendance of students has increased, the quality of teaching in Year 7 has improved, and standards at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form are higher. Achievement and standards in the 2005 examinations were a little above the targets set by the school and local education authority, although further improvements will be needed at Key Stages 3 and 4 if achievements are to match national averages. Standards are particularly high in English but not as high in mathematics. There have been some improvements in information and communication technology (ICT) resources since the last inspection but these are not yet adequate. The personal development and wellbeing of students is good, particularly with regard to spiritual development and the extent to which students make a positive contribution to the community. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and good in the sixth form. The curriculum is appropriate, although students aged 14-19 years would benefit from a wider range of vocationally-related courses. Students enjoy their education and participate in a range of extracurricular activities. Care, guidance and support for students are outstanding. The school recognises the need to provide further careers guidance. The leadership and management of the school have been successful in improving the provision since the last inspection despite the significant changes in the nature of the school population. The very good practice of some curriculum co-ordinators sharing what is best about teaching, and its impact on standards, is not yet consistent in all subjects. The school works effectively in partnership with others to promote the wellbeing of students. Value for money is satisfactory. The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness is comprehensive and accurate. The capacity of the school to improve is good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Inspectors agreed with the school self-evaluation that the provision for post-16 students is good. The school has been part of a local federation since September 2004 which offers a wide range of academic courses at level 3 and is developing the vocational provision. Progression into the sixth form has increased since the school joined the federation but the school recognises the need to increase the range of level 2 provision. The standards reached by students are satisfactory. Most students start advanced level qualifications with relatively low prior attainment at GCSE and their progress is generally good. Teaching is good. Most students in the sixth form play an active role in the school community. Students receive appropriate guidance about sixth form courses and are well supported. Advice and guidance relating to higher education is good but students would appreciate more information about employment opportunities on leaving school. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The arrangements with the federation are well-managed and systems are being developed to monitor more closely the quality of provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Focus on improving standards in numeracy in order that they match or exceed the good standards in literacy. - Improve the availability and use of ICT resources throughout the school. - Broaden the curriculum for students aged 14-19 years. - Encourage curriculum co-ordinators to share best practice on teaching, learning and raising standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is below average. Test results for Year 9 students in mathematics and science in 2005 were below the national averages. Results in English, however, were good, with 82% of students achieving level 5 or above. Year 11 examination results in 2005 were below the national averages, though they were considerably better than in 2004. The proportion of students achieving the equivalent of at least five GCSEs at grades A*-C increased from 30% in 2004 to 43% in 2005. Students aged 11-16 years, including those with learning difficulties, generally make satisfactory progress. Students in the sixth form make good progress and achieve similar results to those seen nationally. Overall, the progress made by students and the standards they achieve are satisfactory. Female students in the school performed better than male students in Year 9 tests, particularly in English. Students with special educational needs in Year 9 did not achieve as well in science as they did in English and mathematics. Female students perform significantly better in Year 11 examinations than male students, although it should be noted that the female students entered the school with a significantly higher level of prior attainment. Students achieve well in GCSE English literature and French. Achievement is weaker in art and design, and ICT.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development is good. They are very aware of the significance of spiritual life, and this greatly supports their good moral, social and cultural development. All students take the opportunity to go on a retreat and value the experience. The cultural development of students is good, and the different ethnic and religious groups in the school enjoy harmonious relationships. Students tolerate and appreciate each other's cultural backgrounds. They enjoy their education, and their attitudes to learning are good. Many contribute actively and responsibly to the school and wider communities. Students behave well in lessons, although their behaviour is occasionally a little boisterous when they are in less formal situations. Students act sensibly and responsibly with consideration for others, but some occasionally need adult direction to reinforce issues of health and safety. The number of students excluded is below average. Attendance has improved considerably since the last inspection, and there is very little unauthorised absence. Attendance in the current term is broadly average. Students understand increasingly well what living a healthy lifestyle involves. Many participate in extracurricular sport. Most acquire useful

skills to make them employable when they leave school, for example, their basic skills in English are good. However, students achieve less well in mathematics. The mature attitude of students in the sixth form provides a worthy example for younger students.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Inspectors agree with the school self-evaluation that teaching is satisfactory overall in the main school and good for students in the sixth form. Teachers have good subject knowledge and effective working relationships with students. Activities in most lessons are interesting and relevant. Students come to lessons ready to learn and behave well. Most work hard and take pride in their achievements. The school self-evaluation has revealed some weaknesses in the teaching of ICT, mathematics and science, primarily due to staff absences and difficulties in recruitment. The school has responded well to adapting its teaching approach to the needs of a diverse and changing population of students. For example, all teachers have had training in teaching students whose first language is not English. Teachers have grown in confidence at planning to support all students, including those who have learning difficulties and those who have particular gifts and talents. However, lesson planning to meet the needs of all students is underdeveloped in some areas of the curriculum. The school is working hard to ensure that teaching assistants have a more clearly defined and supportive role in lessons. Effective attention is given to homework and ensuring that it is completed. Individual target setting for students is robust and students have a good awareness of their progress and what they need to do to succeed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Since the last inspection the school has carried out reviews of its provision to take into account the changing needs of students. This has led to improvements in the relevance of the curriculum, particularly in Years 10 and 11. A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 take part in the increased flexibility programme, studying motor mechanics, hair and beauty, catering, and leisure and tourism at a local further education college. Students would benefit from a wider range of vocationally-related courses at Key Stage 4. The school has been part of a local federation since September 2004 that offers a wide range of academic courses at level 3 to students in the sixth form. The federation has increased the range of vocational provision and plans to develop post-16 provision at level 2. Religious education is part of the curriculum for all students. Students participate in a good range of extracurricular activities. These include opportunities to enhance learning in a variety of subjects, sports activities, and performing arts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school takes outstanding care of students, many of whom have a wide range of needs. These are assessed compassionately and effectively by dedicated staff, so that care and support are very well directed. Those for whom English is not their first language get expert help and consequently progress as well as other students. Many students have learning difficulties and receive equally effective support. The school works hard to engage parents in supporting their children's education. Students' health and safety are a high priority and very well assured. Students report very little bullying or harassment. One student described the school accurately as a 'close-knit community, where everyone is involved and gets support'. Vulnerable children are cared for and supported very well. Outside agencies work in close partnership with the school to ensure all students' needs are met. Students receive helpful guidance on careers and educational opportunities, but would benefit from more extensive provision. Students know the targets set for them to achieve in their work, and receive clear direction on how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and the headteacher provides very good direction in a school that has developed in character in recent years. Some of the curriculum co-ordinators are particularly effective and the school needs to encourage these middle managers to share best practice on teaching, learning and raising standards. The inclusive admissions policy has seen a large increase in the numbers of students who speak English as an additional language, including some who are refugees and asylum seekers, while the school retains its Catholic identity at its heart. A key feature of the school is the outstanding support that it provides for all students. The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness is comprehensive and accurate. The performance of staff is monitored on a regular basis, including an effective element of self-assessment, and there are good performance management arrangements. The school recognises that it needs to ensure that the quality of all teaching matches that of the best. For example, the decision to promote literacy has seen good improvements to standards. The need is now to bring numeracy up to at least the same level. The appointment of suitably qualified and effective teachers has been a problem affecting provision in some subjects, such as mathematics, ICT and science. ICT resources in the school are not adequate. Equality of opportunity lies at the heart of the school's philosophy. Discrimination is tackled effectively and very good support is provided, enabling all students to gain full access to the curriculum. In a broader context, the presentation of a racial equality award to the school in January 2005 was well deserved. The effectiveness of governors has been hampered by a lack of foundation governors in 2004/05, but this has now been addressed and governance is satisfactory. Governors are well informed about the school and play an active role in strategic management. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

On behalf of the inspectors who visited St John Fisher RC School on the 23rd and 24th November I would like to thank you for introducing us to your school. We enjoyed the opportunity to share your achievements and talk to you in lessons and through discussions. Many of you helped us find our way around and made us feel welcome. We think that you might like to know our view of the school. Below is a summary of the report that you will also be able to read when it arrives in school. What we liked about your school: - That you are very well cared for, guided and supported - That the different ethnic and religious groups in the school enjoy harmonious relationships - That you enjoy your education and participate in a range of extra-curricular activities - That you make a positive contribution to the school community - That teaching is particularly good in the sixth form and students make good progress - That the school is well led and well managed. What we have asked your school to do now: - Focus on improving standards in numeracy in order that they match or exceed the good standards seen in literacy - Improve the availability and use of information and communication technology resources throughout the school - Provide a greater range of courses for students aged 14-19 years - Encourage curriculum co-ordinators to share best practice on teaching, learning and raising standards. The school has improved since the last inspection and staff work very hard to make it a place that everyone looks forward to coming to as a student or an adult. The school has very high hopes for the future and is in a good position to improve further, but it will need you to play your part. We wish you every success.