



# St John Fisher Catholic High School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 107783  
**Local Authority** Kirklees  
**Inspection number** 287915  
**Inspection dates** 21–22 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Josephine Nowacki HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Oxford Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Dewsbury
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		West Yorkshire WF13 4LL
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01924 527000
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	992	<b>Fax number</b>	01924 527004
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	174		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Dr Joseph Cortis
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Kevin Higgins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2002		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	21–22 November 2006	287915

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

St John Fisher Catholic High School has grown steadily since the last inspection and is much bigger than the average sized comprehensive school. The social and economic background of students is broadly average. The majority of students are of White British origin and the percentage who do not speak English as their first language is low compared with the national average. The number of students identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than in similar schools. Approximately 4% of students have statements of special educational need which is slightly above average. Attainment on entry to the school is average.

The school has had specialist Sports College status (with information and communication technology) since September 2005.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

This is a good and improving school. It is well led and managed by the headteacher and the senior management team, ensuring it provides good value for money. There is a clear commitment to raising achievement and helping students to develop and grow into thoughtful young people, able to play a full role in multicultural Britain. The Catholic ethos is at the very heart of this school where students feel valued and well supported. This, together with the school's specialist college status provides a high quality learning environment. Governors are very committed and knowledgeable about the school. Their role as 'critical friend' is instrumental in ensuring that the school continues to improve.

Leaders and managers know the school well and are aware of the areas where there has been improvement and where it is still needed. Self-evaluation is balanced and broadly accurate, but some actions for improvement, especially in students' assessment, need to be sharper so that outcomes can be measured more accurately.

Students reach average standards and make satisfactory progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. Standards and progress reached by students in the sixth form are also satisfactory. However, at all key stages there are variations in performance across subjects. Staffing shortages, mostly due to promotions and illness have been overcome and the school now has many good systems in place to improve its performance. Quality assurance of teaching and learning is robust and beginning to have an impact. Teaching and learning are good overall with some that is satisfactory and a small amount that is outstanding. The setting of targets for students is well established, but assessment practice is too variable. As a result of this, some students are unclear about how to improve their work to reach their targets. An improved, more personalised curriculum, especially in Key Stage 4 is helping to improve the school's performance.

The school has successfully addressed all of the points from the previous inspection. Data are used well and clear strategies are in place to raise achievement and standards. These are not yet applied consistently by some staff. However, the school is well placed to ensure that its vision to help students reach their potential academically, physically and emotionally becomes a reality.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The school judged its provision in the sixth form as good: inspectors found it to be satisfactory. Students are very positive about the support and guidance they receive in the sixth form and value their teachers highly. Pass rates at A level are high in many subjects, but there are variations in the performance of students across different subjects. Achievements on vocational courses are good. However, the progress of students overall is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students make reasonable progress in lessons. However, in some lessons, there is insufficient involvement of students in activities

to help them become independent learners. The use of data to monitor students' progress is good and students know their targets and what they need to do to improve. Students' personal development in the sixth form is satisfactory. The impact of sixth form students on the life of the school is limited. Self-evaluation of the sixth form is at an early stage and at present is overgenerous in its judgements.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that strategies to raise standards and achievement are applied consistently in all faculties.
- Improve the assessment of students' work so they know how to meet their targets.
- Improve provision in the sixth form.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Inspectors agree with the school's view that achievement and standards are satisfactory. Students enter the school having achieved average results in their primary schools. Results at the end of Year 9 in 2005 were at the national average. Standards were above average in English but average in mathematics and science. In 2006 test results were good in mathematics and science and satisfactory in English. The school has met its targets and the overall trend is upwards.

At Key Stage 4, there was good improvement in 2006 in the proportion of students gaining five or more higher grade passes at GCSE. In 2005 pass rates at GCSE were below the average and in 2006 they were in line with the national average. Results in 2006 show that students did particularly well in English, combined science, art, business studies, geography and Spanish. Results in religious studies have improved significantly, especially for boys. No students left without any GCSE qualifications in 2006 and this shows good improvement from previous years. The school has performed strongly against its own targets for students gaining higher grade passes at grades A\* to C and A\* to G.

School data for 2006 indicates a picture of improvement in achievement at all key stages. The progress that students make at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 is satisfactory. The school is aware that some groups of students, for example, boys of average ability, do not make the expected rate of progress and actions are in place to address this.

Standards in the sixth form are average. Data which compares GCSE scores with students results at the end of Year 13 indicate that overall, students made better progress in 2006 than in 2005. However, there is much inconsistency across subjects: students taking vocational subjects, including health and social care and business make good progress. In GCE A-level design and technology and in history, students do as well as they should. Students in GCE A-level media, psychology and physics underachieve.

In lessons, students make good progress overall though it varies widely. Where teaching was good and outstanding, students relished the opportunity to learn new ideas and knowledge at a rapid rate. Where teaching was satisfactory, so was students' progress. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who receive specific and effective support, make at least satisfactory progress.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students' personal development is a strength of the school's work and some of it is outstanding. Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that it is good overall. Relationships between students and staff are good. In lessons and throughout the school, students show positive attitudes and are well behaved. There are a few isolated incidents of poor behaviour but this is dealt with swiftly. The school has robust systems in place to monitor attendance and these have been effective: attendance has improved to above average.

A well considered personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme has been developed. Tutorials and assemblies offer good and sometimes outstanding opportunities for reflections on contemporary issues. Consequently, students' spiritual and personal development and their understanding of moral issues and other cultures are good. Rewards systems and assemblies that focus on achievement are highly valued by the students and their parents and are examples of the school's commitment to recognise the wide ranging achievements of its students.

Students enjoy the good extra-curricular programme offered by the school. The number of sporting activities has increased as a direct result of Sports College status. Additional school buses are provided so that more students can take part in the activities. Healthy eating is well promoted: food served at lunch times offers healthy options and students have easy access to drinking water.

Personal development of sixth form students is satisfactory. Students are well supported, but opportunities to discuss issues such as drugs awareness and sexual health are underdeveloped.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Teaching and learning are good overall, with some that is satisfactory and a small amount that is outstanding. In the best lessons students learn to use specialist vocabulary well because teachers model it for them and expect its use in return. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to engage students in learning

through different and lively activities. Relationships are always good and achieved by close adherence to the school's disciplinary policy. Students respond well and are encouraged to become independent learners. The result is an improvement since the last inspection in students' willingness and ability to express their ideas. In the satisfactory lessons, however, teachers talk too much, there are insufficient opportunities for students to explore and discover for themselves, and progress is slow. There are inconsistencies in the setting of specific lesson objectives and the checking of learning at the end of the lesson.

Assessment is satisfactory. The quality, timing and how the students' work is marked ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Students know what their targets are but are not clear enough about how they are performing and what they need to do to improve. Where assessment is very good, for example in English and history, teachers give clear information to students about their progress and involve them in assessing examples of work, so they know what is expected of them.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The curriculum is good, with a number of strengths reflecting the school's specialist Sports College status. Weaknesses from the last inspection in PSHCE and ICT have been thoroughly tackled so that statutory requirements are met. Access to ICT is good.

In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum is broad and balanced and meets students' needs well. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is particularly good in providing a range of opportunities to suit students' particular strengths. The result is that students of all abilities can achieve GCSEs and other awards. For example, students may combine subjects such as dance, music and drama alongside other GCSEs. A recently introduced Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) course in sport is proving both popular and successful in motivating other students. Good links with other local institutions have enabled the school to broaden the curriculum still further, particularly in modern foreign languages. Where a full programme of GCSEs would be inappropriate, students are offered alternatives which combine substantial work experience with academic study and supported study time to help them succeed.

An extensive range of extra-curricular activities, including visits and residential, enriches students' academic and cultural experiences. Students in the sixth form have access to a satisfactory range of academic programmes and a limited number of vocational courses.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Care, guidance and support for students is good. Procedures for child protection are well established and understood by all staff. Students said they feel safe in school and

know who to turn to if they need help. The school actively promotes social inclusion and works hard to encourage students to show tolerance and respect for each other. Systems to analyse and monitor progress by individual, class and year level are good. Most students know their targets, but not all of them receive sufficient information on how they might reach them. Students' achievements are celebrated widely and there are regular parents' evenings.

Arrangements for new students joining the school at the start of Year 7 are effective and help them settle quickly and confidently into the school life. Students make informed choices about courses offered at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 because of the good guidance they receive on options and career choices. Sixth form students receive good information about progression into further and higher education. Year 12 and 13 students speak highly of their sixth form experience and value their teachers who they find helpful and approachable.

The school works well with outside agencies, such as health professionals to provide good support for all students including the most vulnerable. The majority of parents and carers believe the school provides a caring and supportive environment. However, a significant minority say that the school could do more to promote better communications.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher and senior leaders provide a clear vision which reflects the school's aims and religious status. This inclusive vision is widely understood and shared.

The headteacher, senior staff and middle managers work hard to raise standards and achievement for all students. The school's self-evaluation is broadly accurate. Monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough and involves staff at all levels. Data are used well by most in the school to review and evaluate performance. Leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses and have been prepared to take firm action when necessary to improve provision. For example, results in several subjects, attendance, teaching and learning, the PSHCE programme and students' oral skills have all improved as a result of intervention strategies. The impact of this work on overall standards is only satisfactory so far. This is because there is still more work to be done to sharpen the focus on actions to improve the assessment of students' work.

Self-evaluation at middle leader level is developing, but is variable in quality. In the best examples a culture of critical reflection enables good identification of the main strengths and areas for development. Prioritised strategies for improvement are clearly set out and closely monitored. However, in some areas, self-evaluation is still too descriptive.

Governance is very good. Governors play an important role as critical friends: they know the school well. They are appropriately involved in setting direction and checking



on progress. The governors have successfully managed the school's finances, turning a deficit at the time of the last inspection into a surplus.

The school runs smoothly. Resources are used effectively to improve learning. The additional resources acquired through the school's successful bid for specialist status have had an immediate impact in several areas, notably the provision for ICT. Teachers are suitably qualified and are deployed well to meet students' needs.

St John Fisher is an inclusive school. Every student matters, as shown by the school's effectiveness in providing for students with restricted mobility, in its 'open access' sixth form and in the quality of its care and guidance. Leaders at all levels are determined that all students should make the best possible progress and know that it can be better than it is at present. They understand what needs to be done and have good capacity to achieve this.



## 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>
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### 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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
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

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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

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

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team into your school. We appreciated the time many of you gave to talk with us and to let us know your views. The purpose of our visit was to find out what your school does well and the areas that need to improve.

- Most of you make satisfactory progress but the school is working hard to ensure that you do even better than this.
- You behave very well both in lessons and around school.
- Your attendance and punctuality are good.
- The school provides a good range of courses for you, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Sports college status has meant that the school has some really good choices for you. For example, courses in dance and drama as well as opportunities to take part in other activities such as 'kick boxing'.
- The school cares very well for all of you and gives you good advice and guidance when you need to make choices about the next stage of your education.
- Your teachers work really hard to help you succeed and you said how much you appreciate the help you receive from them, but we found that in a few lessons teachers did not give you enough to do. We've asked the school to make sure that all lessons have a good variety of work for you to do to keep you motivated.
- Most of you know what your targets are and how you are performing. We have asked the school to tell you how you are doing more often and help you to understand what you need to do next to improve.
- In the sixth form many students do as well as expected. However, we've asked the school to make sure that more of you do better and succeed as well as you should.