

St John Fisher Catholic High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110907
Local Authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	344365
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Sue Morris-King HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	752
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	96
Appropriate authority	Interim executive
Chair	Ashok Khosla
Headteacher	Sean Hayes
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2008
School address	Park Lane Peterborough Cambridgeshire
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out at no notice by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 26 lessons and visited four other lessons for short periods of time, seeing 30 staff in total. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, three other senior leaders, the head of sixth form, the chair of the Interim Executive Board, two representatives from the local authority, and the parish priest who acts as 'Parents' Champion'. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including the school's evaluation of teaching and learning, data on the current outcomes for pupils, planning for community cohesion, and the results of a questionnaire which the school had sent to Year 9 parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of teaching across all year groups and subjects, with a particular focus on pupils' progress in lessons, the effectiveness of teachers' use of assessment to support learning, and the extent to which the needs of different groups of learners were met
- the arrangements for transition from an Interim Executive Board to a full governing body
- the extent to which parents are being enabled to engage with the school
- the school's planning for the next academic year, particularly the changes to the curriculum
- the capacity of the school's leadership to sustain the positive improvements seen on the fourth monitoring visit in October 2009.

Information about the school

When St John Fisher Catholic High School was inspected in April 2008 it was judged to require special measures. It was subsequently visited four times by Her Majesty's Inspectors prior to this inspection to monitor its improvement. The headteacher was seconded from another school in the Diocese to act as a temporary Executive Headteacher, shortly after the school was placed in special measures. He was appointed as the substantive headteacher in March 2009. There was a large turnover of staff at the start of the school's journey through special measures which has now stabilised. Following a drop in pupil numbers, the school is now full.

The school has a richly diverse population. Over 60% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, which is well above the national average. Approximately a third of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above average. Over half the pupils have a first language other than English, which is well above the national average. Around 40 different languages are spoken in the school. The proportion of students who are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Around 30% of pupils join the school after Year 7, some as late as Year 11. Many of these speak little or no English on arrival and a small number have never attended school before.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. Since the last section 5 inspection, the school has improved substantially and is now providing a satisfactory standard of education.

The headteacher's leadership is perceptive and determined. His unrelenting focus on continuous improvement permeates all aspects of the school's work, and both staff and pupils have risen to this challenge. Under his highly successful leadership, senior and middle leaders have become increasingly effective. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and the areas which need improvement and their actions are well focused. Middle leaders, teachers and support staff understand their key roles in raising standards and have responded well to the increased level of accountability. Pupils appreciate the improvements which have taken place over the last year and are rising to the ever-higher expectations which the school has of them. Members of the Interim Executive Board are well informed, supportive and challenging. The significant improvements which the school has made since the previous inspection demonstrate strongly that it has a good capacity to improve further.

St John Fisher is a school where diversity is celebrated and all cultures and needs are embraced. Consequently, pupils of all ages, backgrounds and ethnicities are considerate of one another, and are friendly and courteous to staff and visitors. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall and in the most effective lessons, behaviour is good and pupils are very keen to learn. Sixth form students have positive attitudes to school, attend well and are confident that they can succeed. All receive a good level of tailored support to meet their personal, social and academic needs, and this is increasingly successful in helping them to achieve. A growing range of curriculum choices demonstrates the firm intention of school leaders to meet equally the needs and interests of all students. Parents and the community are increasingly involved with the life of the school, and express positive views about the school's work.

Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 remains low and older pupils in particular have gaps in their learning because of previous inadequacies in teaching. However, teaching is now satisfactory, with a growing proportion that is consistently good. As a result, pupils are making at least satisfactory progress and some are starting to make good progress. Because pupils' progress has accelerated, attainment is improving, and more pupils, especially the younger ones, are now working in line with the expectations for their ages. In the sixth form, attainment is broadly in line with national averages. Students make the expected progress overall and some, particularly in Year 13, are making good progress.

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Staff know that pupils need to receive consistently good teaching in order to improve their attainment, and are striving, with growing success, to meet this aspiration. Where teaching is good, pupils are given structured opportunities to articulate their thinking and their reasoning. This has a good impact on pupils' understanding. However, this practice is not yet universal. Lessons do not always pay sufficient attention to the development of key subject vocabulary which, especially for those with English as an additional language, limits pupils' learning.

Teachers now have good quality information about pupils' different learning needs. Many, though not all, use this well to plan effectively for the range of learners, ensuring that all pupils are included and are able to make progress during each lesson. Senior leaders have introduced a range of assessment strategies to give pupils clear information about how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve. When teachers use these strategies well, pupils are enthused and take more responsibility for their own learning. The marking of pupils' work is generally satisfactory and some is good, but weaknesses remain. The school has accurately identified that while there are examples of good and occasionally excellent practice in planning, teaching, assessment and marking, these are not yet widespread enough to enable pupils to make consistently good progress and to take maximum responsibility for their own learning. These areas remain priorities for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment and achievement for all pupils by ensuring that all lessons:
 - are closely matched to pupils' individual needs and include all learners fully
 - extend pupils' abilities to articulate their thinking and their reasoning, using extended answers, including through group and paired work
 - have an emphasis on the development of pupils' spoken English, including key subject vocabulary and examination terminology as appropriate.
- Enable pupils to understand what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve in each aspect of their academic and personal development by:
 - maximising the use of target setting and tracking systems, both in lessons and through the tutoring system, so that pupils can take more responsibility for their own learning
 - ensuring that all staff consistently adhere to the school's marking policy, thereby giving pupils regular and constructive feedback on their work
 - ensuring that in each lesson, pupils reflect on what they have learnt, how this relates to their targets, and what are the next steps for improvement.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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Outcomes for all groups of learners have improved. Because teaching and the curriculum are better, pupils' progress in lessons is now satisfactory, and an increasing number are making good progress in a number of subjects. During the inspection, pupils made good progress in half the lessons observed and in these lessons they thoroughly enjoyed their learning.

As a result of all the improvements in provision, pupils' achievement is now satisfactory. The school met its challenging targets in 2009: examination results were significantly better than the previous year's and compared favourably to similar schools. Some of these pupils did not make the expected progress over their time in school but did make swift progress over their last year. Attainment gaps between different groups of learners are closing as a result of the school's accurate tracking and careful intervention with learners who are underachieving. Pupils who join the school in Key Stage 4, often speaking little or no English, progress well. All gain a range of qualifications by the end of Year 11. Much improved provision for pupils with special educational needs and those with behavioural difficulties is enabling them to make steady progress, both socially and academically.

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall. In the most effective lessons, behaviour is good or outstanding. In the weaker lessons, pupils are passive and then become bored, which leads to some low level disruption. Very occasionally learning is slowed by the inappropriate behaviour of some pupils who do not wish to engage in the lesson and spoil the experience for others. Almost all pupils move around the site sensibly and the school is an orderly and welcoming environment. Pupils feel well supported by staff and younger pupils benefit from the calm and mature presence of sixth formers, many of whom they know from their 'buddy reading' sessions. Attendance is in line with the national average across all ethnic groups, although a very small number of pupils have high levels of absence. Pupils respond well to the range of opportunities they have for collective worship and personal reflection and to support others in need.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹ The quality of pupils' learning and their progress The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
	4
	3
	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have worked hard to increase the range of effective strategies they use, with considerable success. Around half the teaching is now consistently good. In the good lessons, all pupils have ample opportunity to think, to reason, to discuss in pairs and groups, to work independently, and to extend their learning. Both literacy and spoken communication skills are developed well, and pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning. In the best lessons, assessment is used very skilfully to shape each step in the pupils' learning and to empower pupils to take some responsibility for their own progress. Where teaching is satisfactory, and particularly where it is barely satisfactory, the tasks are not as demanding and there are fewer opportunities for pupils to work at their own pace, deepen their understanding and reach higher levels. Sometimes the teacher dominates the lesson. In these lessons, pupils' progress is much slower.

The school has introduced a well thought out curriculum that now adequately meets students' broad range of abilities and interests. Previous weaknesses in provision, such as the lack of information and communication technology, have been remedied. A particular strength of the curriculum is the wide range of interventions which are carefully tailored to meet pupils' individual needs. For example, a small 'nurture group' for vulnerable Year 7 pupils has been very successful in enabling them to settle into the secondary school environment and to make progress. 'Sensory circuit training' helps some pupils with special educational needs to develop concentration and physical skills. All Year 7 pupils whose reading age is lower than their actual age have a sixth form or Year 11 'reading buddy'. An 'Assertive Mentoring' programme supports older pupils to reach their targets. Senior leaders have appropriate plans to expand the range of courses available for the next academic year.

Good attention is paid to students' personal development. Student Support Officers, each of whom works with a specific year group, provide good pastoral care which has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Support from outside agencies is very well managed and co-ordinated. Well organised, sensitive induction for pupils who are new arrivals to the country enables them to settle quickly and to become a part of the school community. A good monitoring and reward system has been effective in improving attendance.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has been a driving force in improving the opportunities and outcomes for the full diversity of groups and individuals within the school. His ambition for the school to improve at a rapid rate has been continually demonstrated by the series of well focused actions he has taken since his appointment. He has effectively implemented an appropriate staffing structure, clarified the roles of all leaders, and set a clear direction for future improvement. Other leaders have been empowered to become increasingly effective. A wide range of assessment data is gathered and analysed and is used increasingly well to tailor provision to each pupil's needs. Leadership of teaching and learning is a particular strength. Evaluation is rigorous and accurate and has led to good quality training and support for the whole staff and for individual teachers as required. Middle leaders have grown in strength and impact, though there remains some variability in the quality of their monitoring and evaluation.

The chair of the Interim Executive Board has been pivotal in helping to improve the school, providing a consistently high level of challenge and support. The Board members, and more recently the shadow governing body, know the school well. The local authority and the Diocese have worked very effectively in partnership with the school to provide well tailored support, and plans for their continuing input are appropriate.

The school has built strong partnerships with other schools, outside agencies and the community which have improved outcomes for pupils. Of particular note is the impact of the role of 'Parents' Champion', designed to address the issue of inconsistent communications between the school and parents/carers. The availability of the 'Parents' Champion', a local parish priest and a governor at the school, by phone, email and social gatherings after Mass at the local church has meant that increasingly parents feel involved with the school and have gradually started to attend school functions and parents' evening.

The school has developed community cohesion well, starting within the school and working outwards to the local and national community. A particular strength is the regular focus on a particular community represented in the school, such as the recent Lithuanian week and the Polish and Portuguese masses, in which pupils take a lead role. An Eid party was initiated and run by pupils.

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Arrangements to ensure that students are safe and secure meet with requirements. Meticulous checks are undertaken to ensure that adults are suitable to work with young people. Any area of potential risk is identified and measures taken to minimise their impact. Arrangements to train staff in child protection are robust and up to date.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory and improving. Students' work is usually assessed well and they receive helpful advice about how to improve. There is variation in the quality of the teaching of study skills. For example, students do not all learn how to select relevant materials from the internet or to plan the flow of their arguments before starting to write. Students express positive views about their experience in school. They have a good choice of relevant courses with over half of them taking the opportunity to study in the local federation of schools. They take pride in the extent to which they contribute to school life through a newly established prefect system, the enhanced influence of the school council and the roles that they take in supporting younger pupils, particularly as reading buddies. Around half of the students are involved in voluntary activities in school including supporting lessons. Their 'Change the World' campaign leads the school in growing seedlings to plant trees and in organising recycling. Almost all have responded to the invitation to register with a local agency for community volunteers.

Sixth form leaders and tutors care effectively for the students' welfare, monitoring their progress thoroughly and acting swiftly to deal with issues. Rigorous checking of their attendance and progress, supported by good communication with parents and schools in

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the federation, has encouraged students to do their best. Guidance about the next steps into education or employment is satisfactory and the school has responded to students' views by planning earlier and providing more thorough guidance. The recent improvements in outcomes are the result of good leadership and management. The appointment of a head of sixth form who also oversees progress from 14 to 19 years has brought about a clear focus on improvement of teaching and care for the students. Careful monitoring has improved the quality of feedback to students, who report that they appreciate the increased clarity of expectations in terms of standards and work rate. Movement towards shared responsibility between staff and students for the direction of the sixth form has helped to create a positive ethos.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

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Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John Fisher Catholic High School, Peterborough, PE1 5JN

Congratulations! Your school no longer requires special measures.

As you know, I have been visiting your school each term for nearly two years, and each time I have been able to see some progress. This time, it was clear that the school is now satisfactory. Senior leaders and teachers have been successful in improving the quality of teaching, and far more of your lessons are now good. This is enabling you to make much better progress. Two things which you told us had particularly helped are knowing your end of year and key stage targets and the level you are currently working at, and having your books regularly marked with 'www' and 'ebi'.

You clearly get on with each other well, and it is good to see how you celebrate your different cultures and languages, for example through the Lithuanian week, Polish and Portuguese masses, and the Eid party. We also noted how much more responsibility you now have in the school, through the school council, the 'reading buddies' and the sixth form's 'Change the World' campaign. Those of you in the sixth form also take pride in contributing to school life as prefects and by helping younger pupils in the school with reading.

Mr Hayes, your teachers and other adults in school, know what needs to happen next to make your school even better. Inspectors and senior staff agree that to build upon the many improvements already made the school needs to:

Help you to achieve even more in lessons and exams by making sure that all lessons are suitable for you; making sure that you have plenty of opportunities to explain your thinking fully; and supporting the development of your spoken English, including key subject vocabulary.

Enabling you to take more responsibility for improving your own learning by making sure you understand what you are doing well and what you need to do to improve; making sure that all teachers use 'www' and 'ebi' well; and checking progress against your target with you in each lesson.

Again, well done. You have played a very important part in helping the school to improve. I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs S. Morris-King, Her Majesty's Inspector

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