

St John Fisher Catholic Comprehensive School

Ordnance Street, Chatham, Kent ME4 6SG

Inspection dates

21–22 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- In 2016, outcomes for Year 11 pupils were well below those of other pupils nationally at the end of key stage 4. They are likely to remain low for the current Year 11 as a result of previous weak teaching and a narrow curriculum.
- In many subjects, including English and mathematics, too many groups of pupils have not made enough progress. This is especially true for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders have not effectively monitored the quality of teaching and learning. They have not held subject leaders and teachers to account for the outcomes of pupils.
- Governors have not challenged leaders well enough to prevent the decline in the progress of pupils since the last inspection.
- Teaching is inconsistent across subjects. This leads to a lack of progress for too many pupils. Teachers' questioning of pupils does not always challenge pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding sufficiently well.
- Teachers' inconsistency in the use of the school's assessment and marking policy means that some pupils do not know how to improve their work.
- Some pupils do not listen or concentrate well enough in lessons, leading to less progress. Some pupils do not behave well enough in corridors when unsupervised.
- Leaders have taken action to improve pupils' attendance. However, the attendance of vulnerable groups remains below that of other pupils within school and nationally.

The school has the following strengths

- Effective leadership from the new headteacher is leading to stronger accountability and rapid improvement in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress because teaching is consistently strong and the curriculum is well matched to their needs.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making more rapid progress in their learning. Their progress is similar to that of other pupils in the school.
- Pupils say they feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. The culture for safeguarding pupils is strong.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Governors and leaders need to improve monitoring and evaluation, taking action to improve outcomes further, by:
 - ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning across all subjects is at least good
 - continuing to develop the sharing of best practice in teaching
 - improving the quality of questioning and feedback to pupils
 - ensuring that all teachers model high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that strategic planning is more sharply focused on impact.
- Leaders need to further improve pupils' behaviour, by:
 - ensuring that pupils behave well, even when adults are not present
 - eliminating low-level misbehaviour in lessons.
- Improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils so that it is at least in line with other pupils nationally, by:
 - taking effective action to further reduce the level of absence
 - taking appropriate action to reduce the level of fixed-term exclusions.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, leaders have not done enough to reverse the decline in achievement. Leaders have not systematically checked the quality of teaching and learning or held subject leaders and teachers to account well enough for pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils' achievement, especially that of disadvantaged pupils, has been too low. Pupils' progress has been well below that of other pupils nationally across a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Clear accountability is now in place, so that senior leaders challenge subject leaders who, in turn, hold their staff to account for pupils' progress.
- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced to meet the needs of all pupils. This has led to some pupils having a lack of appropriate choice in their desired subjects. Leaders are making changes for the next academic year to ensure that the curriculum is more appropriate for all pupils.
- The new headteacher has taken swift action in implementing robust systems to check the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders are able to identify strengths and areas for improvement in lessons. This is leading to rapid improvements in teaching and learning across the school, especially in key stage 3.
- The headteacher involves all staff in the strategic planning of the school. Consequently, they have a clear understanding of what the school needs to do to improve further. Staff feel valued, and the rapid turnover in teaching staff has been halted. This has led to greater consistency for pupils.
- Teachers appreciate the coaching they receive from senior leaders and the opportunities they have to share good practice. Teachers value the training they receive with its clear focus on delivering outstanding teaching. Teachers' performance management objectives are robust and closely linked to their training.
- Newly qualified teachers are supported well. They are enthusiastic about the school and value the quality of professional development they receive.
- Senior leaders receive helpful support from the local authority school improvement adviser.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) provides clear strategic leadership to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes ensuring that dedicated funding is spent wisely to improve provision for this vulnerable group.
- The SENCo systematically analyses data to ensure that interventions and support are precisely targeted. Teachers are provided with strategies to support pupils in lessons. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making similar progress to other pupils.
- Previously, the use of pupil premium funding did not lead to improved outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. However, current spending is making a greater difference for these pupils. This is also the case for the school's Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-

up funding, which is now having greater impact, particularly in English.

- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain through personal, social, health, religious and economic (PSHRE) education. For example, pupils tackle topics on extremism, diversity and homophobia in these lessons.
- Pupils have opportunities to take part in a range of extra-curricular activities at both the upper and lower school sites. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well catered for. This was seen when pupils worked cooperatively in groups, and when Year 9 pupils led an assembly to celebrate World Poetry Day.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not challenged senior leaders well enough to prevent the decline in the progress of pupils since the previous inspection. Governors did not closely monitor the spending on use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils or challenge leaders for the outcomes of these pupils. This led to these pupils doing significantly less well than other pupils nationally.
- Governors recognise that improvements must occur rapidly and are working closely in partnership with the headteacher and external consultants to identify the key priorities to ensure that outcomes improve. At the time of the inspection, a number of key policies were not up to date. Governors have identified a programme to review all school policies to ensure that they are relevant and that they impact rapidly on learning.
- Governors have recently commissioned an external review of governance and have appointed new governors to strengthen the governing body.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Appropriate checks are carried out to ensure the suitability of all staff and volunteers who work with pupils. The recording of these checks meets statutory requirements. Although at the start of the inspection the safeguarding policy had not been updated, safeguarding practice in the school is fit for purpose.
- Leaders, governors and staff receive relevant and useful training and updates. Consequently, they understand their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe and carry them out well. Governors are trained in safer recruitment of staff. Relevant staff liaise with outside agencies effectively to ensure that pupils receive good support.
- Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe, including when online, and know who to talk to in school if they have a problem. Pupils feel safe in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching and learning has been inconsistent in the past. As a result, too many pupils have not made the progress that they are capable of. When teachers' subject knowledge is strong, teaching meets pupils' needs, pupils are engaged in their learning and make good progress.

- Teachers' questioning does not always challenge pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding. Where teaching is stronger, such as in humanities and physical education, teachers' questioning helps pupils to develop their explanations and analysis further. For example, in geography pupils were able to link different areas of the subject together as a result of the teacher's probing questions.
- Teachers do not apply the school's assessment and marking policy consistently enough. As a result, some pupils do not know how to improve their work further. Where the policy is used well, teachers' feedback helps pupils to make rapid progress in their learning.
- Pupils' care and attention to the presentation of their work remains too variable. When pupils take pride in their work, they have a good resource to learn from. When teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, pupils in all prior attainment groups produce high-quality work, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Literacy for learning is a school focus. It is promoted around the school with 'words of the week' displayed. However, when teachers do not follow the school's policy for marking literacy, pupils make repeated mistakes in their writing and they do not learn from their mistakes.
- In some lessons, the most able pupils are not effectively challenged and do not make enough progress. Where teaching is stronger, the most able are provided with work that is more demanding, leading to a thirst for knowledge.
- Pupils are aware of their target grades across all year groups, but not all pupils know how to improve their work further. Most teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils' individual needs and the needs of vulnerable groups and so are able to adapt their teaching accordingly.
- Teachers benefit from opportunities to work with teachers from other schools to moderate and check the accuracy of their assessment of pupils' work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils feel well cared for and safe. This was confirmed in the views of the majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Pupils know who to speak to if they have any concerns. Sixth-form students act as mental health champions to support younger pupils.
- The PSHRE programme supports pupils' emotional well-being. Assemblies challenge pupils' thinking, and pupils confidently make presentations on topics such as racial discrimination to their peers. Pupils are able to discuss issues in lessons well when provided with the opportunity.
- Careers information, advice and guidance are provided through the PSHRE programme. The programme begins in Year 7 with 'Raising Aspirations Week', while ambassador students from the University of Kent visit older pupils.

- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online. They are taught about e-safety and they are aware of the different types of bullying. Pupils know what to do and who to talk to if they are bullied. Pupils know staff will deal promptly and effectively with any bullying should it occur.
- Pupils are proud of their school. For most pupils their attitudes to learning are improving because their aspirations are rising.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In some lessons, pupils are not as attentive as they could be and so their progress is slower. When teaching is good, pupils respond well and are keen to learn.
- When some pupils are not supervised there is boisterous behaviour, particularly in narrow corridors. However, when adults intervene pupils respond very positively. Pupils can be very respectful of each other, such as in assemblies where they listen attentively.
- Attendance remains below the national average but is improving rapidly for all pupils, including for the most vulnerable groups. Attendance is also improving for pupils who are frequently absent, but remains much higher than that of others nationally. However, leaders are taking appropriate action to improve attendance, especially that of disadvantaged pupils.
- Permanent and fixed-term exclusions have been very high in recent years, but have reduced significantly this academic year through a consistent application of the new behaviour policy. The school's resolute approach to resolving poor behaviour is leading to a reduction in both behavioural incidents and repeat exclusions.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016, Year 11 pupils achieved outcomes well below those of other pupils nationally in many subjects, including English and mathematics. Too many pupils did not make sufficient progress from their starting points. This was particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those with low, middle and high prior attainment.
- In humanities, many pupils achieved outcomes broadly similar to those of other pupils in schools across the country, but this was not the case for disadvantaged boys, nor for pupils with high prior attainment.
- Pupils currently at the school are catching up in most subjects. Any differences in the progress made by those who speak English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities compared to other pupils are diminishing rapidly. For example, in Year 7 pupils who need to catch up in English make rapid progress because they receive effective support to address gaps in their knowledge.
- In Years 7 and 8, most pupils, including the most able, are making good progress in a range of subjects regardless of their starting points. In key stage 3, most disadvantaged pupils are working at the standard expected for their age, while pupils

who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making stronger progress than previously.

- School leaders have made the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils a clear priority for improvement. Staff are now very aware of this. As a result, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved to become similar to that of other pupils in the school and improving towards that of other pupils nationally.
- In Year 10, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to that of other pupils. There is good evidence in pupils' work that higher expectations and improved teaching are leading to improved outcomes.
- In Year 11, the combinations of qualifications that some pupils study do not prepare them sufficiently well for their next steps in education or training. However, curriculum changes made for other year groups will help to address this legacy.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth form is well led by a committed and knowledgeable leader. Students follow appropriate courses. As a result, retention is good. This is especially true of students on level 2 courses who are able to progress to level 3 courses the following year.
- Students' attainment and progress are good. In 2016, students taking academic subjects achieved outcomes similar to those of students nationally, and those taking vocational applied qualifications achieved well above the national average. All indicators suggest that outcomes will be at least as strong in 2017.
- Those students who did not achieve A* to C GCSE grades in English and/or mathematics do better than other students nationally in achieving these qualifications in the sixth form. In some cases, however, insufficient challenge means that students following these courses do not make rapid enough progress.
- Teaching is strong in the sixth form. Teachers use skilful questioning to address misconceptions, fostering good progress to meet or exceed targets. For example, effective questioning in a Year 12 psychology lesson encouraged students' higher-level evaluative thinking.
- Students know how to improve their work as a result of effective feedback from their teachers, combined with peer- and self-assessment. However, in some teaching groups there are limited opportunities for students to benefit from wider discussion of their work.
- Students benefit from a broad range of extra-curricular opportunities, including charity fundraising, and debating. They also enjoy leadership opportunities, including acting as mental health champions and mentoring of lower-school pupils.
- Work-based learning programmes are available for all students. The PSHRE programme in the sixth form has a strong focus on careers and work skills, supported by the school's partnership with the University of Kent. Students are prepared well for their next stage of education. Increased numbers of students are going on to higher education, often being the first to do so in their family. All students progress to either further study or apprenticeships, or enter the world of work.

School details

Unique reference number	118908
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10024852

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	826
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Clive Mailing
Headteacher	Mrs Dympna Lennon
Telephone number	01634 335757
Website	www.st-johnfisher.medway.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@st-johnfisher.medway.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 March 2013

Information about this school

- The school did not meet requirements on the publication of information about safeguarding and the accessibility plan on its website at the start of the inspection. These requirements had all been met by the end of the inspection.
- The school is a smaller than the average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- Just under half of pupils are of White British heritage, nearly a fifth are from other White backgrounds, and just over a tenth are of Black African or Black British heritage. Over a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language.

- The proportion of pupils who receive support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 45 part-lessons, and undertook a number of short visits to a further 15 lessons. Several lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. During visits to lessons, inspectors looked at pupils' work in books.
- Inspectors examined a selection of books from key stages 3 and 4.
- Meetings were held with staff including newly qualified teachers; academic senior and middle leaders; a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body; a representative from the diocese; a headteacher from another Catholic school; and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 51 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as written comments submitted by 25 parents. Inspectors examined 49 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Pupils' views were gathered from meetings with groups of pupils from Years 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and the sixth form, both formally and informally around the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation. This included the school's evaluation of its performance, the school's plan for improvement for 2016/17, information about standards and progress, the school's website, logs about behaviour and attendance, and a range of policies.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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