

St John Fisher Catholic Comprehensive School

Ordnance Street, Chatham, Kent ME4 6SG

Inspection dates

21–22 May 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, ably supported by her leadership team, has ensured that standards across the school have improved since the last inspection.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are strong across subjects. Teachers plan well so that activities meet the needs of pupils. Lessons are challenging, on the whole. Nevertheless, in some subjects, the most able pupils are not challenged as much as they could be.
- In 2018, Year 11 pupils made average progress across a range of subjects at GCSE. However, disadvantaged pupils made less progress than other pupils nationally.
- Overall, current pupils make strong progress, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Staff value the high-quality training they receive. They believe that the school is well led and managed.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils feel safe and are well cared for.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They have positive attitudes to their lessons and are keen to learn.
- Teaching in the sixth form is strong. The curriculum meets the needs of students. Consequently, students move on to appropriately ambitious destinations.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the school and they ensure that leaders are held to account. The Catholic Diocese of Southwark and the local authority work collaboratively with governors and provide effective support.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress. They benefit from the extra support they receive.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders are currently reviewing the curriculum to improve participation rates in humanities and languages.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the challenge provided for the most able pupils so that they achieve as well as they can.
- Further improve the provision for disadvantaged pupils so that their rates of progress increase.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher's uncompromising vision of a high-quality education for all pupils has led to improvements in the quality of education since the last inspection. Leaders have high expectations. They set high standards for staff, whom they hold to account adeptly.
- Standards across the school have improved, because leaders have introduced strategies and policies that are understood by staff and pupils. Initiatives are monitored closely by leaders so that they know what works well.
- Leaders have introduced a new assessment system, which allows them to maintain an accurate picture of pupils' progress. Leaders have worked with colleagues from other schools so that they have an external view of the accuracy of their assessments. The new assessment policy is clear and understood by teachers. As a result, teachers have a better understanding of how well pupils are doing in their subjects and what to do to help them improve.
- Leaders keep a close eye on pupils' progress. Groups of staff look at pupils' progress information across year groups and subjects. When pupils fall behind, leaders and staff intervene and provide extra support.
- The curriculum has been redesigned by leaders. They recognise that, even though the curriculum is broad and balanced, there are still changes needed. In 2018, only a quarter of pupils were entered for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). In key stage 4, the uptake of humanities subjects and languages is relatively low. Leaders are planning further adaptations to the curriculum to address this.
- Subject leaders are extremely positive about how much standards across the school have improved. They feel that they are held to account more effectively and that school policies are clear and easy to understand. Leaders listen to the concerns of subject leaders and staff. Leaders have ensured that all staff are an integral part of the school-improvement process.
- The Catholic Diocese of Southwark provides high challenge through the meetings it organises. Meetings of diocesan representatives, local authority representatives, governors and leaders enable the scrutiny of school improvement outcomes in a transparent way.
- The extra-curricular programme is wide ranging. Pupils appreciate the varied activities on offer. These help them develop their social and communication skills.
- Pupils have a developed understanding of fundamental British values, such as tolerance and democracy. They benefit from personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) tutor sessions. These sessions have been introduced since the previous inspection. Pupils told inspectors that tutor sessions make them feel better prepared for the next stages of their education.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Pupils feel that they are provided with valuable trips, visits from external speakers and numerous charity events.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a keen sense of their responsibilities. Notably, they take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously and work with the local authority to ensure that safeguarding procedures are robust.
- Governors monitor the effects of leaders' actions effectively. They carefully consider how to check the accuracy of what leaders tell them. Governors regularly visit the school to undertake visits to lessons with leaders. Governors also look at pupils' work in books with staff. As a result of these monitoring activities, governance is strong, and leaders are held to account well.
- Governors have a wide range of expertise. They have worked with staff over the past two years to refine the plans for school improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Procedures to check on the suitability of staff are sound. High-quality training is prioritised by leaders. All staff are trained securely in safeguarding issues and they have in-depth knowledge about local risks. Staff are aware of the risks of radicalisation and they have all undertaken appropriate training in this area.
- Staff understand how to report any concerns they may have about a pupil. As a result, vulnerable pupils and their families receive the support they need. Staff work well with external agencies so that, when extra support is needed, the school arranges it.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since the last inspection, teaching, learning and assessment have improved. Teachers now have consistently high expectations of what each pupil can achieve and how they should behave.
- Across subjects, classroom routines are well embedded. As a result, lessons are purposeful and pupils settle into their work quickly.
- A more effective assessment system has meant that teachers know what their pupils understand and what they can do. Consequently, teachers plan lessons that fit the needs of pupils. In subjects such as religious education, history, physical education and science, teachers' planning is effective in providing high levels of challenge for pupils. However, in some subjects, the most able are not challenged enough and do not make enough progress.
- Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are positive, because of improved teaching and strong relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils want to do well and they are keen to participate in activities.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They provide interesting activities that enthuse pupils.
- Teachers' use of questioning has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers use

their training in questioning to ensure that pupils deepen their understanding of complex topics and subjects through carefully constructed discussions. For example, in science, Year 8 pupils discussed what the world would be like without metal. The teacher's questions encouraged pupils to think hard about the types of metal that are common on earth and in human bodies.

- Overall, pupils take pride in their work. They methodically set out their work and improve their organisation skills as they move through the school. Occasionally, for example in mathematics, pupils', and particularly boys', work is untidy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are well cared for. Pastoral staff ensure that vulnerable pupils receive help when they need it. Staff also keep in touch with the parents of vulnerable pupils so that they can offer support to them.
- Pupils feel safe. They are taught about how to keep themselves safe online and about potential local risks. Pupils understand that there are staff whom they can go to if they have specific concerns or worries.
- A Christian ethos permeates through the school's values. Pupils' personal development is nurtured well, and pupils learn about Christian teachings in religious education and also in assemblies. Pupils also learn about the values and beliefs of other religions. For example, pupils with beliefs that are not Christian tell pupils about their faiths in assemblies. Consequently, pupils have a good understanding of the values and beliefs of a range of religions.
- Pupils are confident and self-assured. They were keen to talk to inspectors about their school and about the improvements that have been made since the previous inspection.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave sensibly in lessons. They listen to and follow teachers' instructions. Pupils help each other with activities. There is a purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Occasionally, when pupils' behaviour is not good enough, teachers use the school behaviour systems appropriately to correct this.
- The school is calm and orderly. Pupils conduct themselves maturely during social times. They socialise with each other in the outside areas or in the school restaurant. Pupils are polite and friendly. They wear their uniform smartly and ensure that the school is kept free from litter.
- The proportion of pupils who receive fixed-term exclusions is declining because of the effective behaviour strategies used by staff. However, disadvantaged pupils are overly represented in the proportion of pupils excluded from school.

- Attendance has improved since the last inspection. Over the past two years, tighter attendance procedures have been put in place. This has led to a reduction in the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent and those who are late to school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018, Year 11 pupils made average progress across a range of subjects, including mathematics and English. However, current pupils in key stage 3 are making strong progress, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Pupils' progress in key stage 4 is improving, particularly in mathematics and science. These pupils have been negatively affected by weaker teaching in the past and still have gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Improved teaching is rectifying this.
- Pupils with SEND are making strong progress across year groups because of conscientiously tailored support and improved teaching, learning and assessment.
- Work in pupils' books shows that, on the whole, pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding well across subjects. For example, in subjects such as history pupils develop an increasingly complex vocabulary because of strong teaching.
- Last year, most-able and disadvantaged pupils made progress that was below the national averages in a range of subjects. Currently, extra funds to support disadvantaged pupils are spent increasingly effectively. Leaders carefully monitor the effect of this funding, and initiatives are stopped if they prove to be ineffective. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils' progress, although not as strong as it could be, is improving.
- Overall, pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education. Pupils are aware of the opportunities available to them, and the qualifications they attain allow them to move on to appropriate education, employment or training.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth form is well led. Leaders have high aspirations for students and ensure that the curriculum fits students' needs. For example, students choose A-level courses or a selection of vocational qualifications.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to provide stimulating activities that encourage independent study and structured learning. As a result, students develop a high level of knowledge and understanding in their subjects.
- Last year, students' progress at A level was average. In vocational subjects, students' progress was above average. Currently, students are making strong progress across A-level and vocational courses because of the strong teaching they receive.
- Disadvantaged students made below-average progress at A level in 2018. However, current disadvantaged students are making increasingly strong progress across subjects.
- Students who retake English and mathematics GCSE in the sixth form make very strong progress in these areas. Disadvantaged pupils in particular make above-average

progress in the retakes.

- A wide variety of enrichment experiences are on offer to students. However, only a small proportion of students take up these opportunities.
- Students appreciate the support they get in their independent study sessions. These sessions are supervised by members of staff. As a result, students complete work outside of lessons and are better prepared with background knowledge when they go to their lessons.
- Students feel safe in school. They value the available opportunities to further their understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- Leaders in the sixth form have worked hard to raise the aspirations of students. High-quality careers advice, visits to universities and inspirational visiting speakers have resulted in higher numbers of students securing university places.
- Attendance has declined slightly over the past year. Leaders have put rigorous measures in place to address this.

School details

Unique reference number	118908
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10088135

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

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	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	825
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clive Mailing
Headteacher	Dympna Lennon
Telephone number	01634 543123
Website	www.stjohnfisher.school
Email address	headteacher@stjohnfisher.school
Date of previous inspection	21–22 March 2017

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2016.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school is on a split site, with Years 7 to 8 based in the lower school, half a mile away from the upper school.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is above the national average for secondary schools.

- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average for secondary schools.
- A Section 48 inspection (reporting on religious education) was carried out in July 2014.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons across key stages 3, 4 and 5. Senior leaders joined inspectors for several classroom visits.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, the headteacher, governors and local authority representatives.
- Samples of pupils' work were looked at by inspectors, and inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors met formally with groups of pupils from key stages 3, 4 and 5. Inspectors also spoke to a wide range of pupils during social times and lessons.
- The views of 18 parents who responded to the confidential Ofsted parental questionnaire, including 17 written responses, were taken into account by inspectors.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff from meetings with groups of staff.
- Documentation was scrutinised by inspectors, including the school's plans for improvement, its self-evaluation, reports on attendance and behaviour, records relating to pupils' safety, minutes of governing body meetings and information on pupils' outcomes.

Inspection team

Harry Ingham, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Murphy	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Roessler	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Baker	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2019