

Inspection of a good school: St John Fisher Catholic High School

Park Lane, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE1 5JN

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 June 2023

Outcome

St John Fisher Catholic High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils demonstrate the school's well-established Catholic values. They approach their learning confident in themselves and in the support they receive from their peers and staff. Pupils have high ambitions and work with determination to achieve them.

This is a school where pupils can be themselves, regardless of any differences they may have. Pupils conduct themselves respectfully. They show care for each other. Older pupils and students in the sixth form take positions of responsibility within the school. For example, sixth-form students maturely supervise younger pupils during lunchtime.

Pupils feel, and are, safe at the school. They have positive relationships with each other and staff. Should concerns arise, pupils feel confident that they can talk with their teachers and receive any necessary support. Pupils say, and school records show, that bullying is uncommon. When pupils experience bullying, staff effectively deal with it, and it stops.

Pupils appreciate the opportunities leaders provide to enable pupils to 'have life and have it to the full'. Pupils take up challenges leaders set for them, such as participating in unfamiliar activities. Half of pupils in Years 9 to 11 are undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. These contribute towards pupils' personal development well.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have designed, and are adapting, an ambitious curriculum. They give pupils, and students in the sixth form, opportunities to study a range of academic and practical subjects. Current uptake of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is low due to historically small groups of pupils studying languages. Leaders' actions to meet the government's ambition for pupils to study the EBacc is working. More pupils are now studying languages at key stage 4.

Leaders provide clear guidance about what pupils must learn. Teachers use this

information consistently and deliver the curriculum effectively. Central to the teachers' approach is their regular revisiting of what has been taught. This ensures that pupils remember key knowledge and develop a deeper understanding of the curriculum. Teachers use questioning skilfully to identify when pupils have forgotten or misunderstood something. When necessary, teachers provide timely support to prevent pupils from falling behind.

The provision for deaf pupils helps them learn effective communication strategies. For deaf pupils and other pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), leaders provide staff with useful information about how best to support these pupils. However, at times, staff do not understand or use all the guidance leaders provide in an effective way. Leaders do not always notice when this is the case. This leads to staff sometimes planning and delivering learning activities that do not help pupils with SEND overcome the challenges they face to be able to learn as well as they could.

Leaders ensure they have a clear focus on the development of literacy across the curriculum. To this end, they have ensured that reading is a priority at the school. Leaders' support for pupils who find reading difficult ensures that pupils improve their reading to be able to access the curriculum well.

Pupils learn in calm and purposeful environments, largely undisturbed by others' behaviour. Staff understand and use leaders' behaviour policy effectively to ensure that pupils behave appropriately in lessons and during breaktimes and lunchtimes. Pupils proudly receive merits when they successfully demonstrate one of the school's agreed '5 R's'.

Leaders prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Teachers' work on developing pupils' oracy is evident in the way pupils articulate their views clearly and sensitively. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about a range of world faiths, along with the varied beliefs and lifestyles found in Christianity. Personal, social, health and economic education gives pupils opportunities to consider the complex issues faced by young people in contemporary society. In the sixth form, students learn many of the practical skills they will need in adult life. Leaders also ensure that pupils start learning about career options in Year 7. Very few pupils leave Year 11 or the sixth form without clarity around their next steps in place for education, employment or training.

Leaders have built positive relationships with staff and parents. Staff said that leaders have been listening well to staff concerns about workload. Staff appreciate the efforts leaders have undertaken to make improvements.

Governors demonstrate the skills and tenacity needed to ensure that the school's provision is of the highest possible standard. They seek the information they need to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and challenge leaders when concerns arise.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have made sure staff are well trained and alert to signs of pupils at risk of potential harm. Staff know what to do when concerned about the well-being of pupils.

Leaders act swiftly and appropriately when necessary to support vulnerable pupils. They work well with external agencies to ensure pupils get the support they need.

The curriculum content helps pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in all situations, including when online.

Leaders have ensured that prior to working at the school, the necessary background checks are in place to determine the suitability of adults to work with children.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that staff consistently understand and use leaders' guidance about how best to support pupils with SEND. As a result, these pupils do not always learn as well as they could. Leaders must provide the necessary training for staff regarding the approaches they should take to support these pupils. Leaders also must check that the suggested approaches are routinely in place and effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	110907
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	10268597
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	786
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	128
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nick Ager
Headteacher	Kate Pereira
Website	www.stjohnfisherschool.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	21 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in 2019.
- The school serves as the local authority's specially resourced provision for secondary-age deaf pupils. The provision currently has capacity for six pupils.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school has a Catholic ethos. The previous section 48 inspection took place in February 2022 and the report can be found on the school's website. The next section 48 inspection should take place within five years.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the chair of the governing body, governors, the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, teachers, members of support staff, pupils, a representative from the local authority and a representative from the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: history, mathematics, physical education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors held discussions with leaders, staff, pupils and a leader from the alternative provision used by the school. Inspectors also considered child protection records and the register of background checks to determine the suitability of staff.
- Inspectors observed behaviour of pupils during lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors also considered records about incidences of positive and negative behaviour.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in 48 responses to Ofsted's survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed in 56 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 58 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Diana Osagie

Ofsted Inspector

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