

Inspection of St John Fisher Catholic Comprehensive School

City Way, Rochester ME1 2FA

Inspection dates:	29 and 30 October 2024
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a warm and friendly school that welcomes all pupils into its caring community. Pupils like coming to school and attend regularly. Typically, they feel happy and safe.

Covid restrictions had a negative impact on the school, particularly on staffing. Many pupils join at different points of the school year. The school recently moved from a split site to its new single site. Despite these challenges, the school is committed to an ambitious education for its pupils. However, this ambition is not being achieved. The behaviour of pupils is variable. Some pupils demonstrate negative attitudes to their learning. Too often, pupils are late to school and to lessons.

The quality of education that pupils in Years 7 to 11 receive is not as strong as it should be. Pupils do not remember enough of what they learn. Outcomes in public examinations are low. The provision for students in the sixth form is stronger.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils in Year 9 recently visited the trenches in Belgium to learn about World War One. All pupils greatly enjoyed the school's 'culture day'. Pupils have many opportunities to undertake positions of leadership or responsibility.

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

Pupils receive a broad and ambitious curriculum that meets national expectations. The school has thought carefully about what pupils should learn and the order in which they should learn it. For example, in science pupils study introductory units in forensics, medicine and engineering. This supports them with future careers choices. In physical education, pupils learn about team leadership and communication alongside different sports. All pupils study Latin throughout the school. Students in the sixth form follow a mixture of vocational and academic qualifications. These students enjoy studying here.

In the sixth form and in some subjects such as mathematics and science, teaching typically uses activities that enable pupils to recall prior knowledge and then build on it step by step. In these subjects, teachers give clear instructions, model examples well and correct misconceptions in a timely manner. The quality of teaching is not consistent across all subjects in Years 7 to 11.

In many subjects, teaching does not focus on the key knowledge that pupils must learn routinely well. The presentation of subject content does not consistently ensure that pupils are helped to grasp ideas correctly. As a result, pupils do not build their understanding of more complex ideas over time. The school has not thought enough about how to check what pupils know and understand as they progress through the curriculum. Teachers' checks do not identify the gaps or misconceptions in pupils' understanding as they arise. As a result, teachers cannot build on the next steps for pupils' learning effectively. This means that pupils do not achieve well, including in public examinations.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities quickly and effectively. These pupils receive extra support. Teachers adapt resources well to meet the needs of individual pupils. Pupils at an early stage of reading receive the support that they need to become accurate and fluent readers.

Too many pupils do not behave well in classrooms and around the school site. This resulted in a high number of suspensions last year. The school has clear systems for managing pupils' behaviour, but staff's expectations are not consistently high. This means that disruption to learning during lessons is too common. Pupils' behaviour across the school site is not routinely calm and orderly particularly during unstructured times. The school's approach to pupils being late and truant during the school day has not had a positive impact. Leaders rightly recognise that improving pupils' behaviour is a key priority. The school closely tracks pupils' attendance and takes effective action to address any emerging weaknesses.

The school is passionate about pupils' personal development. The school's well-structured personal development provision ensures that pupils are well-prepared for life in modern Britain. They learn about democracy and how to be a good citizen. Effective careers advice and guidance help pupils, especially those in the sixth form, make informed choices about their next steps. All pupils in Year 10 and Year 12 learn about the world of work through work experience placements.

Leaders at all levels are deeply committed to the school. Staff appreciate the opportunities for professional development and leaders' concern for their well-being. However, leaders are sometimes too positive about the impact of their work. This limits the effective use of strategies to improve key areas of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In many subjects in Years 7 to 11, teaching does not deliver the school's curriculum to a high standard. As a result, pupils do not develop their knowledge and understanding securely over time. The school's published outcomes remain low. The school should ensure a consistent delivery of the curriculum that has a positive impact on pupils' understanding over time, including in published outcomes.
- In many lessons, teachers do not check what pupils know and can do. They do not identify the knowledge gaps and misconceptions that pupils have. As a result, too many pupils develop a disjointed understanding of learning and the misconceptions they have persist over time. The school should ensure that teachers are able to use

strategies to check what pupils know and address any gaps in knowledge so that pupils develop a secure understanding before learning new content.

- The school does not consistently apply robust procedures to tackle lateness and internal truancy. As a result, a significant minority of pupils are routinely late to lessons and some pupils truant lessons during the school day. This results in a disrupted start to many lessons and some pupils develop gaps in their knowledge from the lessons they do not attend. The school should ensure that its policies and procedures to address poor punctuality and internal truancy lead to a sustained improvement over time.
- Staff do not consistently apply the school's behaviour policy. Some staff do not challenge pupils who break the school rules. The poor behaviour of some pupils has a detrimental impact on their own and other pupils' learning. The number of suspensions has been high. The school should ensure that staff are supported to enforce the behaviour policy routinely and consistently.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	118908
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10341528
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	1111
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Owen McColgan
Headteacher	Dympna Lennon
Website	www.stjohnfisher.school
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Roman Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Southwark. It was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in September 2021.
- The school relocated to its current site in February 2023.
- The school uses two registered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the school senior leadership team, a selection of subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors met with those responsible for governance, including the chair of governors. Inspectors also spoke with a representative from the local authority and a representative from the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, history, science and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils, and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, Parent View and surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Christian Hicks, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Annabel Davies	His Majesty's Inspector
Christie Ransom	Ofsted Inspector
Joseph Sparks	Ofsted Inspector

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