

The John Fisher School

Peaks Hill, Purley, Surrey, CR8 3YP

Inspection dates 24–25 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress and achieve well. As a result, the standards achieved by students in English and mathematics and in most subjects are above the national average. The school is improving quickly.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Lessons are well planned and teachers use resources effectively. The pace of lessons is good.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Students feel safe in school and any rare instances of bullying are dealt with effectively.
- There is an ethos of care and consideration for others. Very good relationships exist between staff and students. The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students achieve exceptionally well as a result of excellent teaching and are prepared well for higher education courses which meet their interests and aspirations.
- The sport specialism makes a valuable contribution to the life of the school. Students' achievement and personal development are supported through extra-curricular activities and many opportunities for leadership through sport.
- Senior leaders and governors have a clear vision and sense of moral purpose for the school and its students. They work very effectively with parents and the whole school community to develop 'very well-rounded young men, ready for life'.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The gap between the achievement of students supported by the pupil premium and their peers widened in the 2013 GCSE results.
- A minority of lessons require improvement because the needs of all students are not met when teachers' questioning and feedback are not strong.
- There is not enough outstanding teaching in the main school. Students, particularly the most able, do not have enough planned opportunities to investigate and research for themselves so that they make the progress of which they are capable.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons, of which 11 were joint observations with senior and middle leaders. In addition the inspection team made a number of shorter visits to lessons to evaluate particular aspects of the school’s work.
- Meetings were held with school staff including senior leaders, subject leaders, groups of students and representatives of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 167 responses to the online parent questionnaire and a small number of responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including students’ work, attainment and progress data, subject and school evaluation records, development plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspection team observed the work of the school including social spaces at break and lunchtime, spoke informally to students and visited registration and assemblies and other events happening in the school during the inspection.

Inspection team

Janet Hallett, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Helen Hutchings	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Jenkins	Additional Inspector
Gary Kirkley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The John Fisher School is an average-sized Roman Catholic boys' comprehensive school in the diocese of Southwark. It has a sports specialism.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked-after children and service family children) is below average. There is one looked-after child and no children from service families.
- A small number of students are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding, which is for pupils who did not attain the expected levels in reading and mathematics at the end of primary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school does not use any alternative educational provision.
- A few sixth form students attend some lessons at a neighbouring Roman Catholic girls' school in a reciprocal arrangement between the schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching to raise students' achievement, particularly for the most able students and those supported by the pupil premium, by ensuring that:
 - in all lessons, teachers consistently use questioning that is well targeted to make sure that students have understood the work and to deepen their understanding further
 - students' work is always closely matched to their needs and abilities and they are given more opportunities to investigate and carry out research for themselves
 - all teachers implement the school's assessment policy so that students' work is marked consistently and all students know how to improve it
 - students know that they are required to respond to teachers' comments to show that they have understood how to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with prior attainment that is above the national average and make good progress through their secondary education. Good teaching ensures that they achieve standards in their GCSE examinations and equivalent qualifications that are above average, and in some cases well above average.
- In 2012, more able students made progress in English and mathematics which was in line with the national average. In 2013, their progress in these subjects improved; it is now significantly above the national average. However, the most able students do not consistently achieve the highest GCSE grades in all the subjects they take, largely because teaching does not always meet the needs of this group well enough.
- In 2012 the achievement of students eligible for the pupil premium was in line with national figures for all students but below the achievement of others in the school by a third of a GCSE grade in English and half a grade in mathematics. Results from 2013 indicate that the gap in achievement for students eligible for the pupil premium widened. However, there is evidence that the gap for students currently in the school is closing. The school is resourceful in the use of its pupil premium funding.
- The school makes good use of the Year 7 catch-up funding for younger students. Reading and writing are taught effectively and interventions are well matched to students' literacy needs. Sixth form 'English ambassadors' are trained to contribute to the literacy programmes and support Year 7 students. Parents attending a literacy event during the inspection were very pleased with the initiative.
- The achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs is good as a result of effective and early identification of learning and communication needs. These are successfully addressed through a wide range of interventions.
- The school makes no significant use of early entry for GCSE examinations for whole groups or classes. Where it is used, it is for individual students to meet their specific needs and care is taken to ensure that they achieve the highest possible grades.
- Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding because of consistently good and outstanding teaching. Students in the sixth form are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education, with established progression routes and strong links into higher education.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good so that students make good progress and achieve well. There is not enough outstanding teaching for students to make more rapid progress.
- Teaching in all subjects, including English and mathematics, is good. Examples of outstanding teaching were seen in several subjects including science, physical education, art and humanities.
- Lessons are well planned; teachers have excellent subject knowledge and draw on a variety of resources to engage students. For example, in a Year 8 history lesson on the death of Henry VIII, the teacher used a picture of the event as the starting point for the activities. Students responded positively and showed their understanding of the symbolism in the picture through role play and discussion.
- Teachers have good relationships with students so that learning is enjoyable. Students respond well to teachers' high expectations of concentration and participation.
- Teachers use a variety of questioning techniques targeting individual students to check their understanding and asking more open questions to promote discussion. Searching, deep questioning is a particular strength in the sixth form but is generally used less well in the main school.
- Good examples of students developing their literacy and mathematics skills across the curriculum

were observed during the inspection. Students applied their mathematical knowledge and understanding in science to solve problems on the masses of substances in chemical reactions.

- Students are articulate and speak confidently. Their good reading skills enable them to research information well for themselves, although they are not given enough opportunities for this type of activity.
- Some outstanding teaching was observed in which teachers captured students' interest and enthusiasm very well, and the opportunities for independent work resulted in high quality discussion – such as Year 8 students giving each other feedback on their practical skill in a physical education lessons. However, this approach is not consistent across the school. Teaching is good rather than outstanding when teachers talk too much.
- Most work is marked regularly and provides useful feedback. High-quality marking highlights clearly what students need to do to improve but this is not yet consistent practice across the school. In particular, students are not always encouraged to enter into a dialogue with teachers about their work or to follow up on advice given in marking.
- Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations and use their excellent subject knowledge to plan lessons that are intellectually challenging and rigorous. In a Year 13 art lesson, students took it in turns to teach their peers. This activity encouraged participation, creativity and independence and students made rapid progress as a result. Sixth form students comment on the high quality of the teaching and support they receive and how much they enjoy their lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' behaviour is excellent. In areas where the design of the building makes congestion possible, students remain respectful and considerate towards each other and to staff and visitors. Older students are actively good role models around the school.
- Standards of behaviour in lessons are also very high because relationships are strong and mature.
- Student attendance is consistently above average, showing their enjoyment of school.
- Students, parents and staff are very positive about behaviour and safety in the school. Older students who have been in the school for some time describe how behaviour has improved. They know that any form of discrimination is not tolerated.
- Students' thirst for knowledge and love of learning is sometimes understated, in keeping with the school's ethos, but is evident in many lessons in the way they pose questions to each other and to teachers. In the best lessons, there are extended opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Bullying incidents are rare and students feel that they are successfully dealt with. Students are fully aware of what constitutes bullying including name calling, racist and homophobic incidents. They feel safe in school and understand how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.
- The school has worked hard to reduce exclusions and current figures show a clear reduction from the equivalent time last year.
- Demonstrating care for others and the mental well-being of students has a high priority in the school's ethos. Members of the sixth form have successfully set up a charity to provide training for peer counsellors and mentors from Year 10 upwards; this very effectively supports students and resolves issues. Students are rightly proud of this achievement and the strong links they have developed with national organisations working on these issues to support young people.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. For example, in a choral event, skilled singing by a choir of all ages was uplifting and reflective. The school encourages and enables all students to reflect on their lives and place in the world.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders have a clear vision for the direction of the school and high aspirations for students. They have made significant improvements to the quality of teaching which is leading to students making increasingly rapid progress. This shows the school's good capacity for further improvement.
- Strong leadership of the sixth form has led to an improvement since the last inspection.
- Senior leaders evaluate the strengths of the school accurately and use the information well to tackle areas identified as requiring improvement. They hold those with responsibility in these areas rigorously to account.
- Middle leadership is good. In particular, new subject leadership in English, mathematics and science have resulted in sustained improvements over two years in these subjects.
- Senior and middle leaders use assessment information effectively throughout the school to track the progress of individuals and to target action when a student is not making the expected progress. Nevertheless, this has not yet generated a strong enough focus on the performance of pupil premium students and the most able.
- Teachers receive good professional development. A lesson observation cycle is firmly established and teachers get rigorous feedback. Key development points, such as literacy and assessment, are taken forward through the school development plan and staff training, linked to performance management targets.
- The curriculum ensures that students follow a balanced range of academic subjects to equip them for the next stage in their education. The introduction of drama and food technology in the main school and extended project qualifications in the sixth form has added another dimension to students' learning.
- Students get clear and unbiased careers information to prepare them for education post-16 and working life.
- Valued links with the local authority are effective in supporting and checking the school's self-evaluation and promoting teaching in departments where it had previously not been strong enough.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body demonstrates great commitment to the school and plays a key role in defining and realising the vision for the school and the students. Together with their own direct knowledge of the work of the school, governors are well informed by senior and middle leaders attending committee meetings. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the school's student performance information and how this compares to other schools nationally. They are therefore able to take strategic decisions and to challenge and support the school as it moves forward.
 - Governors understand how the quality of teaching relates to students' achievement and the link between performance and salary progression.
 - Governors have the strategic overview of the pupil premium funding and keep its allocation and impact under review, determined to ensure equality of opportunity for all. The governing body checks regularly that the school meets statutory requirements for safeguarding students and child protection.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	103009
Local authority	Sutton
Inspection number	425630

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,036
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	261
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Emerson Samuels
Headteacher	Mark Scully
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 December 2008
Telephone number	020 8660 4555
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