

Inspection of a good school: The John Fisher School

Peaks Hill, Purley, Surrey CR8 3YP

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 June 2023

Outcome

The John Fisher School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders make sure that pupils benefit from taking part in lots of clubs and trips, including visits to places such as New York and Barcelona. A high proportion of pupils also represent their school in a wide range of sports, including in the many fixtures that take place on Saturday mornings.

Parents and carers typically report that their children are happy and safe at school. Pupils say that they learn how to stay safe through their relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) lessons. Leaders also put a lot of emphasis on supporting pupils with their mental health and well-being. This includes ensuring that there are trained 'wellbeing listeners' who pupils can approach to talk to about any worries or concerns.

Most pupils behave well and work hard in lessons. Pupils are taught to understand and respect school diversity and people's differences, including other faiths and beliefs. Leaders and staff have created a sense of community, captured through what many refer to as feeling part of the 'Fisher Family'.

Leaders have high ambition for pupils. This can be seen through the rising proportion of pupils who are studying the English Baccalaureate.

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

Leaders think carefully about the curriculum offer. For example, a range of different subjects are on offer to pupils, such as being able to study ancient history or economics at both GCSE and A level. They have also designed a broad curriculum through which pupils study a wide range of subjects to the end of Year 9. In Year 9, pupils also benefit from shorter units of work on themes such as sports, business studies and careers. These units help pupils when making their option choices. However, some pupils in Years 7 to 9, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not have access to the same full curriculum as their peers. Pupils are withdrawn from a modern

foreign language to have additional support with their literacy and/or social and emotional needs.

Leaders make sure that students in the sixth form have a wide curriculum offer, including A levels and work-related qualifications. Students also benefit from a range of additional courses to build up their curriculum, including RSHE, religious education and sports.

Oversight of the provision for pupils with SEND has been strengthened. Leaders make sure that pupils' needs are identified. They have improved the ways that information about pupils with SEND is shared with teachers. Staff use a range of strategies to support pupils with SEND successfully. However, occasionally, the support for pupils with an education, health and care plan is not as effective as it could be, particularly in helping pupils to build up confidence and accuracy in their writing. Leaders make sure that pupils who need support with their reading are identified quickly. Staff use a range of appropriate methods to help pupils build up their reading fluency and comprehension.

Teachers know their subjects well. They generally explain concepts clearly and help pupils to build up a strong body of knowledge. For example, in Year 10, pupils in English write speeches and then explain how they have used different rhetorical devices while drafting them.

Most teachers select activities that have a clear sense of purpose and help pupils to practise their skills. However, sometimes, teachers' activity choices do not help pupils to develop the deep body of knowledge that they could. Also, occasionally, teachers move on to new learning too quickly, despite some pupils having gaps in their knowledge.

Pupils have a sense of community. They regularly fundraise for local and national charities. Leaders have secured several awards for their work in fostering pupils' personal development. Students in the sixth form develop their leadership skills through a wide range of roles, including mentoring for younger pupils. Pupils also have a forum through the 'common ground' programme to debate issues such as misogyny.

Most staff comment that leaders are mindful of their workload and well-being when making decisions. Those staff new to teaching feel well supported with both developing their subject knowledge and in managing behaviour. Overall, staff say that pupils' behaviour is good. Inspectors agree. Most pupils have a positive attitude to learning and do not engage in low-level disruption. Leaders are developing their strategies, including using alternative provision, to help pupils who display more challenging behaviours.

The governing body has undergone significant change. This includes the appointment of a new chair and vice-chair since the beginning of the current school year. Governors have hit the ground running. However, the quality of information they receive from senior leaders is not well developed. This limits how well governors can hold senior leaders to account, particularly for the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide a range of in-school support to help keep pupils safe and well. This includes pastoral teams for each year group and mental health first aiders. Leaders know the local area well and the risks that pupils may face, including risks to those pupils who travel to school from further away. Leaders seek advice from external agencies to support them with their decision-making in dealing with safeguarding concerns.

Most pupils say that they feel safe when they are at school. Leaders make sure that pupils are aware of a range of ways to seek advice for their well-being, including access to online support.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, there is some variation in how well teachers deliver their subject curriculums. For example, sometimes, teachers' activity choices do not support the ambition underpinning the intended curriculum. Therefore, sometimes, pupils do not develop the depth of subject knowledge that they could. Leaders need to review their subject-specific training to help staff better understand how to ensure that their activity choices and use of assessment fully support delivery of the curriculum.
- A few pupils with SEND do not have access to the same curriculum as their peers. A few pupils are not being well supported with their literacy. Leaders should review their curriculum decisions for these pupils. This should include ensuring that the quality of literacy support is consistently strong for all pupils with SEND.
- Governors acknowledge that the information they receive from senior leaders has lacked rigour. Consequently, their ability to hold leaders to account, particularly for the quality of education, has been limited. As the relatively new governing body builds on its initial successes, governors should now prioritise making decisions about the information that leaders should provide to them and when. They should use this information to hold leaders to account more effectively.

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	103009
Local authority	Sutton
Inspection number	10268830
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,165
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	251
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrew Theobald
Headteacher	Philip McCullagh
Website	www.johnfisherschool.org/
Date of previous inspection	16 March 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a catholic school within the Diocese of Southwark. It had its last section 48 inspection in May 2019. This is an inspection of the school's religious character.
- The school currently uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provider.
- 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

The inspectors carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior staff. Inspectors also met with or had telephone calls with representatives of the local governing body, the diocese and the local authority.
- The lead inspector also spoke with representatives from the alternative providers currently being used by the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, modern foreign languages, art and design and geography. During each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, and spoke to teachers and pupils about their learning. Inspectors also reviewed samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work in a range of other subjects.
- Inspectors met with leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and behaviour. They reviewed a wide range of documentation, including pre-employment checks on staff, case studies, attendance and behaviour information. Inspectors also considered the views of parents, staff and pupils to help evaluate the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors also considered replies to Ofsted Parent View and the online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

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