



# St John Fisher Catholic Comprehensive School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 118908  
**LEA** Medway  
**Inspection number** 280432  
**Inspection dates** 7 December 2005 to 8 December 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Robin Hammerton HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Ordnance Street
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Chatham
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19		Kent ME4 6SG
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 842811
<b>Number on roll</b>	1180	<b>Fax number</b>	01634 825915
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Father Chris Baker
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17 January 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jennifer Morris

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 19	<b>Inspection dates</b> 7 December 2005 - 8 December 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 280432
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

The school caters for boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 19. Most of the students are White British with a small number coming from a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds. The intake is influenced by the school's proximity to local grammar schools and, consequently, the school recruits fewer pupils of the highest academic potential than it otherwise might. Pupils come from a wide area and there is a mixture of socio-economic backgrounds. A small group is learning English as an additional language. The sixth form is located on a separate site and is part of a consortium with other local schools.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 4**

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well in all the circumstances than it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to provision and standards in the sixth form.

The school considered itself to be providing a satisfactory standard of education. Inspectors agree that this is the case for pupils in Years 7 to 11. However, in the sixth form, provision and standards are inadequate. Teaching in this part of the school is weak, there are not enough vocational courses, and A level results are too low. This means that, overall, the school is not as effective as it should be.

Teaching and standards have improved in recent years in Key Stage 3 and, even more so, in Key Stage 4, where most pupils now make good progress. However, there is still more to do to make this consistent in all subjects and lessons. GCSE grades rose significantly in 2005 and the Key Stage 3 results also improved. Standards in English are high. Pupils' spiritual development is very good.

The headteacher leads well. Her evaluation of the school is broadly accurate. She has brought stability after a difficult period when the previous headteacher was unwell. She has a clear vision for the school, and has masterminded the recent improvements in Key Stages 3 and 4, but has not paid enough attention to the sixth form, where urgent improvement is needed. Other senior staff, and the governing body, give her valuable support. Most parents agree that the school has improved in Key Stages 3 and 4 but rightly feel that they should be better informed and consulted about school issues.

The school has a long standing deficit budget. This is now managed well but restricts some developments. Given this, and the sound achievement of pupils by age 16, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 4**

The sixth form is inadequate. Many students are set very low target grades for A level and AS courses and are not on track even to attain these. A number of students, in fact, are targeted to achieve unclassified grades, which is entirely unsatisfactory. Although students are attentive and keen to learn, they are taught in a drab environment where too little is done to stimulate their interest. The library is significantly under-resourced and does little to encourage independent learning. Students are not given enough guidance on how well they are getting on and how they could do better. The range of work-related courses on offer has been increased but the headteacher knows there is a need to extend this provision further to meet the needs of many of the students. The school has been too positive in its evaluation of the sixth form but recognises that there is underachievement.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision and standards in the sixth form
- ensure that the improvements in teaching, identified in the school improvement plan, are achieved consistently across the school
- make the curriculum more relevant to all pupils by increasing the number of vocational courses in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form
- improve communications and consultation with parents.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 4

Standards are below average when pupils enter the school and remain so in the Year 9 and Year 11 examinations. This represents satisfactory achievement for these pupils. However, these bald statements mask a positive trend of improvement in standards in Key Stage 3 and, even more so, at Key Stage 4, as a result of better teaching. A new school system for tracking pupils' progress and setting challenging targets ensures appropriate expectations of what pupils can achieve. There is no significant underachievement by any group. In Years 10 and 11, most pupils, including those with learning difficulties, progress well and meet their targets in most subjects. Boys achieve particularly well. Very few pupils fail to attain any GCSE passes. Standards in English, at Years 9 and 11, are particularly high but GCSE results in mathematics and geography are below expectations. In the sixth form, however, students underachieve. Standards are very low in almost all subjects, although recent vocational results show signs of improvement.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Pupils generally behave reasonably well around the school. They enjoy the good lessons. However, where the teaching is uninspiring, their behaviour sometimes deteriorates as they become bored. Some parents voice concerns about bullying. However, pupils say that they feel safe in school and that bullying, when it does occur, is dealt with effectively.

Attendance improved greatly last year and is now better than average. This is mainly due to the newly formed and very effective welfare and attendance team. Some older students enjoy acting as 'buddies' to Year 7 pupils. Their separate location limits the opportunities for sixth formers to take on whole-school responsibilities.

Pupils often show good understanding of moral issues in lessons. They relate well to others. Many show the ability to reflect on spiritual matters very well in assemblies, discussions and appropriate lessons. Most pupils enjoy healthy exercise in Years 7 to 11. The school is working towards the Healthy Schools Award which is having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes.

Pupils demonstrate a willingness to become involved in the school community and the student council provides a forum through which they can express their views. There

are some opportunities to contribute to the wider community. For example, there is an annual sixth form sleep out in aid of the homeless.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 4**

Teaching is satisfactory overall in Key Stages 3 and 4. Teachers know their subjects in depth, which enables them to explain issues clearly to pupils. Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive.

There is a whole school drive to improve teaching. This has included significant staff training and is having a clear positive impact, especially in Key Stage 4. Many lessons now have better pace and opportunities for pupils to contribute. However, inconsistencies remain. For example, the school has introduced a policy that in all lessons pupils should be told what they are expected to learn and evaluate how well they have learned it. In practice, this is done much better in some lessons than others. Another inconsistency is in marking. Some examples of very good marking explain to pupils how they can improve further. However, often it is not as helpful. These variations mean that, in some lessons and subjects, pupils do not make enough progress whereas in others they do particularly well. In the English and physical education departments, for example, teachers generally match the activities to the individual needs of pupils and tell them clearly how they are getting on. Pupils sometimes assess each other. This leads to high achievement in these areas.

Teaching in the sixth form is inadequate. The improvements seen in the rest of the school are not much in evidence. Too many lessons are unexciting and slow paced. Staff do not make enough use of assessment information to plan work to meet the individual learning needs of the students. This results in tasks that are too difficult for some students but not challenging enough for others.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 4**

In Key Stage 3, the curriculum meets all requirements. At GCSE, most pupils pursue 10 subjects, which is unusually high. Vocational GCSE courses are only offered in science and information communication technology (ICT) and references to work-related learning are rare in most subjects. Not enough vocational options are provided to meet the needs of all students. However, some lower attaining pupils follow a worthwhile life skills course. Pupils take part in work experience in Year 10 and they receive suitable careers advice.

English, history and dance are strong subjects with interesting lessons. The physical education department provides a range of worthwhile activities despite the very poor

accommodation. Facilities are also poor in science, which diminishes the pupils' experience. Pupils sometimes use ICT in lessons in other subjects. The school has clear plans to increase the opportunities for this through the purchase of new computers.

The school offers a fair range of A level subjects in the sixth form but the vocational provision is limited with courses only available in business studies, ICT and leisure and tourism. Students who have studied applied science at GCSE have no matching post-16 vocational science course to progress to. There is no core physical education provided in the sixth form.

There are several worthwhile extra-curricular and enrichment activities, for all years, which pupils enjoy.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 4**

Members of staff know all pupils very well and are able to target help to those who are identified as being at risk of underachieving or who are vulnerable. However, a large number of parents consider that they are not given enough information about pastoral issues related to their children. Lower attaining pupils are well supported in lessons. However, specific provision for students with English as an additional language is limited, although staff work hard to include these pupils.

The school generally provides a safe learning environment. The arrangements for dealing with child protection are sound with all staff having received recent training. Very effective liaison and communication with external agencies enhances pupils' welfare.

Pupils have a clear understanding of the overall targets they are working towards in Key Stages 3 and 4, especially in core subjects. Parents are informed about this and many value the information they receive from staff concerning the academic progress of their children. Suitable advice is provided about subject options.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 4**

The headteacher successfully promotes a strong vision for the school. Working with governors and senior staff, she has accurately identified the main strengths and weaknesses, identifying appropriate areas for development. Her strong personal drive has raised morale and ensured that many improvements have been made in Key Stages 3 and 4. This has led directly to the higher standards in these areas.

Other senior managers also contribute suitably and are supportive of the direction in which the school is moving. Most particularly, the recently appointed deputy headteacher has begun to make an important positive impact. He has led the introduction of regular lesson observations across the school. These are at an early

stage but are starting to support the improvements in the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11.

The school improvement plan is effective in driving change. It identifies realistically and inventively what needs to be done to move things forward. However, it is not always as clear about how success is measured and progress checked. This has led to some of the recent good improvements in teaching being adopted inconsistently across the school. Many parents feel, and inspectors agree, that they are not consulted and informed sufficiently about the school's educational priorities.

Insufficient attention has been given to the sixth form. The school improvement plan says very little about it. However, the school has some well thought out, but unwritten, aspirations for the sixth form and its ample capacity to make planned improvements has been demonstrated in the other key stages.

The governing body is supportive of the school and has a clear strategic view of the place of a wide ability Catholic school in Medway. Governors understand the main issues facing the school but have underestimated the difficulties within the sixth form.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	4	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	No

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	4
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	4
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	4

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

We enjoyed our visit to your school. All of you, and the staff, made us very welcome. We particularly liked talking to you. You were really friendly. We were impressed by the way you can think about things reflectively. You told us honestly what you think of the school and showed us what you are proud of. Some of you even told us some good jokes and funny stories, which lightened our days. Thank you!

In most ways, your school is getting better and better. The staff know you very well and you told us that they look after you. In Key Stage 3 and 4, exam results are going up in most subjects. Well done! In English, the results are very good indeed. It was great to see lots of you enjoying lessons in many different subjects. We were impressed with how well most of you know your targets because this helps you to learn faster. The teachers are working hard to make the lessons even better all the time. Some lessons aren't interesting enough for you, though. These need to be worked on more. Some of you might enjoy some more practical, or work related, subjects. Your parents would like to know more about what's happening in the school, and to have a bit more of a say. We agree with them about that.

The main problem for your school is in the sixth form. At present, A level results are not as good as they really ought to be. The facilities in the sixth form building need to be much better. It can be hard to do good independent work there, for example. Some of the lessons aren't helping you to learn fast enough and meeting your needs closely enough. We think this can be put right with your help. Keep working hard and tell your teachers how you think things could be better. After discussions with Mrs Morris, we decided to give the school a Notice to Improve the sixth form. This means that some more inspectors will come to the school in about a year to see how things are going. They will have a look at all of the school, not only the sixth form, and will write a report and a letter just like this one.

I wish you all well for the future.