



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St John Fisher Catholic College

URN: 140802

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham on:

Date: 17-18 May 2023

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The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	x
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	x
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- Staff, governors, and students use a common language to articulate the school's mission and understand fully how Catholic virtues are applied to their everyday lives.
- A comprehensive range of activities is provided to enhance the school's Catholic life, enabling students to understand and grow in faith.
- The level of pastoral care provided to all community members is a living example of the school's mission.
- Religious education contributes to students' spiritual and moral development. All leaders and members of the faculty make a significant contribution to this.
- Leaders model the caring Catholic ethos, which permeates all aspects of the school's work.

What the school needs to improve:

- Ensure that religious education receives the required teaching time per the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and the Archbishop of Birmingham's expectations.
- Continue to develop strategies to narrow the gap in the attainment of disadvantaged students and boys in Key Stage 4 religious education.
- Ensure that behaviour for learning strategies are implemented consistently by all staff members to enable all students to make progress in religious education.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1



Students feel welcomed into the family of St John Fisher Catholic College regardless of background, faith, or ability. Students are cared for equally, which reflects the inclusive nature of the school's ethos. This makes students feel valued for who they are and what they achieve. Students are immensely proud of their school and speak enthusiastically about its distinctive Catholic nature. Students understand and fully embrace 'The Fisher Way – Joy, Faith, Love'. They best understand the school's mission through the emphasis placed on Catholic virtues. Students are encouraged to demonstrate these virtues daily and consequently speak confidently about when, for example, they have been 'truthful' or 'curious' or 'compassionate' or 'loving'. Students value opportunities to take on leadership responsibility through 'The Fishers' chaplaincy team who lead acts of remembrance, rosary lessons and the Year 7 welcome Mass. The Fishers also visit local primary schools to support pupils in their preparations for First Holy Communion and Confirmation. Students lead the 'Eco Stewardship Team' and have already achieved the Eco Schools Award with merit. The 'Proclaim' group provides music for Mass and leads the music for special events across the archdiocese. Students participate in numerous fundraising events for Cafod, the local SVP, Dougie Macmillan Hospice, the Alice Charity for Christmas, and Father Hudson's. This work is celebrated using 'Finlay the fundraising fish' and enables students to respond to Catholic Social Teaching practically and meaningfully. Consequently, students share a growing awareness of their responsibility to others, demonstrating their moral development well.

Catholic life is at the centre of the strategic direction of the school. Faculties understand how their subject contributes to the Catholic ethos. They plan and deliver theme days throughout the year, supporting the students' spiritual and moral development. The school's environment

reflects its mission and identity through effective signs and images. Each teaching block is named after a particular saint, further promoting the school's ethos. Student well-being is promoted effectively in various activities, and students are encouraged to be healthy and safe and articulate this well. A recent example has been the promotion of the 'walk to school week'. Consequently, students make informed choices and strongly understand right and wrong. There are several opportunities to celebrate success through assemblies and various social media platforms. Reward trips also encourage students to work hard and achieve.

Leaders and governors have a shared understanding of their responsibilities in leading a faith community and are committed to developing it. The head teacher has a clear vision for Catholic education and provides inspirational leadership for all community members. Excellent relationships exist between students and staff, and parents highly regard the school. Students contribute to the evaluation of Catholic life through questionnaires, and governors are kept fully informed through the head teacher's report. The chair of governors has detailed knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The religious education link governor plays a vital role and visits the school to review procedures and discuss progress against targets and barriers to improvement. Leaders and governors ensure there are good working relationships with the archdiocese. Outreach work includes collaboration for the Good Shepherd Mass, and parish links are strong. Training is provided each September to develop teachers' understanding of the school's educational mission and ethos. The biennial day of reflection across the collegiate is an opportunity for the whole community to come together to celebrate Catholic education and is a strength.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

2

Students engage in various activities, and most enjoy their religious education lessons. Behaviour is typically good in lessons. In the best lessons, no learning moment is wasted, and students immediately engage in challenge. A few students demonstrate limited ability to concentrate and work independently in lessons. When this happens, little work is completed, and learning is limited. This occurs because behaviour for learning strategies are only sometimes applied, consequently enabling all students to make progress in each lesson. Students make progress broadly in line with other students nationally and with other core subjects. However, disadvantaged students do not achieve as well, and a gap remains in the attainment of boys at Key Stage 4 compared to outcomes achieved by girls. The faculty is providing additional support for these groups of students through various appropriate interventions. Progress is evident in exercise books and enables students to build on prior learning. Key vocabulary is revisited regularly, supporting students in becoming religiously literate and knowledge to become embedded. Students treat each other respectfully and nearly all listen attentively when discussing religious concepts and alternative views. However, a few students do not engage with learning sufficiently, which interrupts the learning of others in the class. Foundations for extended writing are built in Key Stage 3 and explicit links are made to exam content and skills. Students with lower prior attainment are effectively supported so that they and all students experience a sense of success.

The religious education faculty is a strong team. They have excellent relationships with students and are authentic witnesses to their faith. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and, as a result, ask incisive questions to test and develop student understanding in lessons. Lessons are well-planned, and there are many opportunities for creative work in Key Stage 3. Where questioning is used effectively, it provides appropriate challenge and promotes high-

level thinking. However, an overreliance on closed questioning sometimes results in missed opportunities to develop pupils' understanding. Work in books is typically well presented, demonstrating that students take pride in their work, which compares favourably with other core subjects. Feedback has been a focus for the faculty. Policies such as the purple pen for peer assessment are embedded and consistently applied. Because of this, students understand what they need to do to improve their work. The strategies used are effective in developing knowledge and reducing learning gaps. Sometimes, teachers do not have high enough expectations surrounding the need for all students to complete their work.

Before now, leaders and governors have not ensured that religious education receives the curriculum time allocation required by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales because the teaching of relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) is conflated with religious education. However, plans are already in place to rectify this for the next academic year. The resourcing of religious education is broadly in line with other core subjects in terms of staffing and accommodation. Additional funding is made available for faith development and is used appropriately. The curriculum is planned coherently to build on knowledge and skills and follows the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Revision guides for Key Stage 4 are available on the school website to support students' learning. The monitoring of learning and teaching is regular and varied; learning walks, work scrutiny and student questionnaires are all used effectively to inform future planning for the development of the faculty. Moderation is extensive, involving external agencies and linked primary schools, providing leaders with confidence in their staff's assessment of pupils' achievements. Records of governor visits are written and presented at governors' meetings, contributing to effective support and challenge, which enables subject improvement.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

Provision

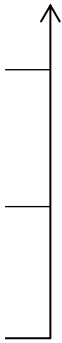
The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1



Prayer is central to the life of the school, and there are several opportunities for students and staff to experience prayer. Students are respectful and engage thoughtfully in prayer, though knowledge of the gestures associated with traditional Catholic prayers is not yet embedded for all students. Students benefit from the Fishers chaplaincy team, who lead the stations of the cross and say the rosary. Students are involved in the planning, delivering, and monitoring of prayer in all year groups. Form tutors acknowledge the importance of considering students' different experiences of prayer so that everyone feels able to contribute. The newly refurbished chapel is a calm, reflective space open to students to pray throughout the day. Mission days in the summer term are an opportunity to reflect and prepare for the celebration of Mass at the end of the term. This enables students to agree on a tagline used as the basis for theme days during the following academic year. However, developments resulting from staff training are not yet applied consistently by all staff to ensure that formation time in the morning is a worthwhile and reverent experience for all students.

Praying together is part of the daily experience for all students and staff and is embedded into daily routines. Prayer is always in keeping with the Catholic tradition, and Scripture is routinely referred to. Students are aware of the school's structure for prayer, including 'gather, listen, respond, go forth'. Themes are appropriately linked to the liturgical year, supporting the school's Catholic identity well. Reflection is used effectively to allow students to make connections between current issues experienced by communities around the world and their impact on their daily lives. Masses, retreats to Alton Castle and Soli House, and important celebrations in the liturgical calendar are all provided. Sixth form students can attend the diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes. Sixth form students also benefit from participating in the Alpha course, which contributes well to their spiritual development.

Leaders and governors place a high priority on the prayer life of the school. A prayer and liturgy policy is in place that clearly sets out their expectations. Student leadership of prayer is positive, and opportunities for students to contribute and participate are evident. However, this must be extended to include more students across the school. The work of the person in charge of Catholic life (PICCL) and the lay chaplain is valuable to the school's prayer life and provides an effective role model for students and staff. Leaders work effectively with the priest chaplain to ensure that all Holy Days of Obligation and other significant days are celebrated in school. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available to students during Advent and Lent. Students who cannot receive this sacrament are encouraged to speak with the priest during this time. The priest chaplain is an excellent role model to students and staff through his commitment to the school and engagement with the community. Staff articulate that good practice is shared in pastoral meetings, resulting in further improved student experiences. The governing body is kept fully informed about the school's prayer life through the head teacher's report. The religious education link governor also monitors prayer closely and informs full governors' meetings of outcomes and evidence seen. The governing body is encouraged to visit the school to participate in key celebrations. Consequently, they are highly ambitious for the school's prayer life to continue to develop well. The lay chaplain supports staff in the delivery of prayer, meaning they are keen to demonstrate high standards in how they participate and be good role models to all students.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St John Fisher Catholic College
School unique reference number (URN)	140802
Full postal address of the school	Ashfields New Road, Newcastle Under Lyme, Staffordshire, ST5 2SJ
School phone number	01782 307551
Name of head teacher or principal	Garrett Murray
Chair of governing board	Gillian Regan
School Website	saintjohnfishercc.co.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Christ the King Catholic Collegiate
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	11 to 18
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	May 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Garry Maher	Lead inspector
Helen Burrows	Team inspector
Chris Martin	Team inspector

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement