



John F Kennedy Catholic Secondary School

URN: 149743

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

31 January – 1 February 2024

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

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

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

1

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

2

What the school does well

- Pupil behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is exemplary at all times.
- The faith commitment of pupils permeates every aspect of school life at John F Kennedy Catholic School.
- Pupils feel valued and well supported, leading to a strong sense of community throughout the school.
- The Youth Ministry Team is a beacon within the community for pupils preparing, leading and evaluating collective worship.
- The principles of Catholic social teaching are clearly displayed, understood by all and underpin everything that takes place in the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Put strategies in place that will support the achievement of all pupil groups.
- Develop the quality of teaching and learning across the religious education department through the support network of the Trust.
- Market and promote the uptake of A level Religious Studies.

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

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

1

President John F Kennedy once said, 'We must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them'. The charisma of leadership and service he displayed are reflected in the school's mission, 'Inspire, Achieve, Serve' and the pupils of John F Kennedy Catholic School do not just know and understand the statement, they live it to the full. Pupils demonstrate their commitment to the mission of the school by leading liturgies within forms, houses, year groups and the whole school community. Youth Ministry Leaders inspire and serve the faithful in the parish church through their roles as Eucharistic ministers, lectors, altar servers and stewards, and by leading children's liturgy and choir. The promotion of the principles of Catholic social teaching and how they relate to pupils' lives is a real strength of the school. There is a whole school focus on a different principle each half term. Pupils live out their understanding of Catholic social teaching and put love into action through their enthusiastic participation in events such as sponsored sleepouts for the homeless, international food night celebrations in local parishes, Christmas gift appeals for families in need and an annual sponsored pilgrimage to St Alban's Cathedral. Pupils also gladly embrace their personal responsibility to the environment through their stewardship work which includes sustainability projects including the apiary project and the regeneration of the old pond and gardens.

Loving attention has been given to the school's Catholic character which is proudly displayed in the physical environment of the school. St Mark's, the onsite church, is the spiritual heart of the school and is widely used by pupils and staff. For many, the church is seen as a haven and pupils fully appreciate the uniqueness of the provision. Many pupils visit daily at break and lunch to offer votive candles or participate in the worship prepared and delivered by the Youth Ministry. There is a strong culture of welcome to all who enter the school. As one parent commented, 'I have been very impressed with the way the school promotes Christian values as well as tolerance and appreciation of other faiths and those with no faith'. There is also an inclusivity group which is led by sixth formers and supervised by the subject leader for personal, social, health and economic education. Pupils, staff, parents and parishioners in the John F Kennedy community

benefit from and appreciate the enriching programme of prayers, collective worship and social action organised by the Leader of Youth Ministry and the Youth Ministry Team. The provision for relationships, sex and health education meets both statutory and diocesan requirements. The programme is carefully planned and mapped across each of the key areas.

Leaders and governors place Catholic life and mission at the centre of all they do. The head teacher and senior team provide joyful and inspirational leadership in the pursuit of the school's Catholic mission. There are strong and effective links with the parishes and leaders work hard to include parents in the Catholic life of the school. The weekly newsletter often includes the Sunday Gospel reading and links to Catholic social teaching as well as celebrating achievements and extra-curricular activities. Many parents commented that their child's journey has been supported by the school community. One parent said, 'John F Kennedy school is not only a great place for my child to be educated but also a hub for their spiritual growth'. The appointment of a Leader of Youth Ministry by the governors and the parish priest has been nothing short of inspirational. The school should now look at ways of extending the Youth Ministry to neighbouring parishes, thus raising the profile of the school further afield. The school puts into practice the Church's preferential option for the poor by providing practical help for pupils, including: a transport support policy, sixth form bursary, equity for pupil premium pupils and funding for extra-curricular trips for looked after children.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

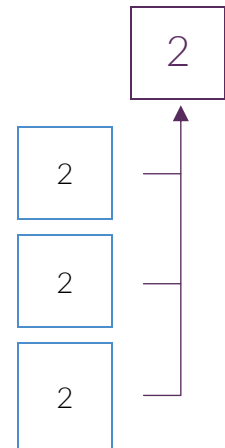
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

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

Leadership

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



The quality of curriculum religious education is good. Pupils are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect the learning required by the *Religious Education Directory*. Pupils make good progress in knowing more, remembering more, and doing more when measured against the planned curriculum for each year. They use their knowledge, understanding and skills, to reflect spiritually, and to think ethically. As a consequence, most pupils are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. An example of this occurred during a Year 12 lesson when students showed their understanding of Catholic social teaching by linking all the principles to the topic of Fairtrade. Pupils contribute to class discussions and some can speak confidently about what they have learnt, but opportunities remain to further develop pupil fluency and confidence in what they have learnt. Pupils make good progress when compared with other core curriculum subjects and consistently achieve above the national average for GCSE Religious Studies. However, in spite of the good results at GCSE, the uptake for A level RS remains low. The department now needs to raise the profile of the subject and attract more A level candidates. There is an improving trend in recent years for most groups. The focus going forward is for all groups to achieve the best possible outcomes in all years and phases. Behaviour for learning is strong in the classroom, which is fostered through extremely positive teacher-pupil relationships. This allows pupils to feel comfortable in their religious education lessons. Pupils show notable independence in their learning and this was particularly evident when Year 7 pupils used their Chromebooks to research the appearance and identity of Jesus and also when Year 8 pupils worked collaboratively on their Chromebooks to research the spread of Christianity in Britain.

Staff are committed to their subject and to the teaching of a Catholic curriculum which is seen as the 'core of the core'. The curriculum has a positive impact on the spiritual development of pupils and creates time for moral and ethical issues to be explored through class discussion. This was evident in a Year 9 lesson as the pupils displayed curiosity and interest in issues surrounding absolute and relative morality and a fruitful discussion ensued. Various forms of

questioning are used which are effective methods of engaging pupils and identifying where they are at in their understanding, thus improving learning for most pupils. Pupil effort is often celebrated leading to good levels of motivation as witnessed when pupils proudly accepted 'spirit points' for outstanding work and contributions in lessons. The displays of pupils' work in some classrooms were most impressive. Teachers provide pupils with feedback which ensures most pupils understand what they need to do to make progress in their learning.

Leaders and governors place the utmost importance upon religious education; there is absolute parity between RE and the other core subjects. The department has a suite of rooms adjacent to the parish church which is constantly used to enhance the spiritual development of pupils. Religious education has 10% curriculum time and particular focus has been given to the planning and implementation of the new Directory. A sequential curriculum is provided which ensures subject content is introduced systematically as learners progress through the school. Professional development is seen as a key priority for the whole department. The curriculum lead works closely with the diocesan advisor and heads of religious education in the diocese. As the school has recently become part of a Catholic Academy Trust, opportunities are now available to avail of best practice in the teaching and learning of religious education in partner schools. Leaders' and governors' self-evaluation of religious education is informed by monitoring, analysis, and self-challenge. This results in strategic action taken by the school which leads to good outcomes.

Collective Worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

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

1

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

1

Prayer is at the heart of this school. There is a weekly lunchtime Mass with the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Eucharistic adoration and daily worship led by the Youth Ministry Team. Each form group has two 'Inspire leads' who help the rest of the form engage fully with the daily prayer and liturgy during morning registration. They are supported by Year 13 leaders as well as a member of the senior leadership team and the Leader of Youth Ministry. One member of the team echoed the words of President Kennedy, 'Do not pray for an easy life, pray to be stronger', when he said, 'I pushed myself to step outside of my comfort zone and that takes courage'. As well as a weekly assembly the school livestreams a pupil-led collective worship so that the rest of the school community can model best practice. The Inspire team meets weekly with the Leader of Youth Ministry to evaluate their presentations. Extraordinary ministers are trained and commissioned by the Leader of Youth Ministry and the parish priest and altar servers, lectors and cantors are also trained. Not surprisingly, the young leaders have been praised by the local community for their service within parish Masses, 'The Youth Ministry service produced by the school is nothing short of brilliant'.

The centrality of prayer and liturgy to the life of the school is very well evidenced. There is a carefully planned programme that ensures pupils experience the richness and breadth of the Catholic tradition. Staff, particularly the Leader of Youth Ministry and head teacher, are models of exemplary practice as leaders of prayer for pupils. The Youth Ministry Team lead retreats for each year group and voluntary retreat weekends are arranged for older pupils. The school has also organised successful pilgrimages to Rome and Krakow. Achieve leaders from across the arts faculty enhance worship by creating devotionals and liturgical resources to enrich the prayer life of the school and parish. The school is truly blessed to have its own church on site, St Mark's parish church. As well as this, the school hall, sports hall and outdoor spaces are also used to celebrate whole school Masses and other liturgical services. Pupils and their parents celebrate the start and end of their school life at John F Kennedy Catholic School with a Mass in the school church.

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is well formulated, though this will need to be reviewed to reflect the publication of the Bishops' Conference *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*. Leaders, including governors have ensured that prayer and liturgy have a high profile in the school. Staff have received training about the structure of prayer and liturgy and there is a clear understanding amongst all staff that the delivery of high-quality prayer and liturgy in all its forms is a priority within the school. The governors take an active interest in the prayer and liturgy activities and were involved in the formation of the policy. The impact of the Leader of Youth Ministry on the broad range of ways of praying in the school cannot be overstated. He can confidently articulate the Church's understanding of the relationship between participation and ministry and has a thorough familiarity with the Church's liturgical sources. Leaders, including the Leader of Youth Ministry, ensure staff and pupils feel supported and able to produce prayerful activities on a daily basis. The voice of the Youth Ministry Team is an integral and valued part of the school's evaluation of prayer and liturgy.

Information about the school

Full name of school	John F Kennedy Catholic Secondary School
School unique reference number (URN)	149743
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9194619
Full postal address of the school	John F Kennedy Catholic Secondary School, Hollybush Lane, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 2PH
School phone number	01442266150
Headteacher	Paul Neves
Chair of Governors/Trustees	Debra Gee & Emma Harris (Co-chairs)
School Website	http://www.jfk.herts.sch.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	All Saints Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	December 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Dermot O'Neill	Lead
Susan Grace	Team
Adam Hall	Team

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