



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

URN: 148990

Carried out on behalf of the **Most Rev. Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster** on:

Date: 18-19 October 2023

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The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- St John Fisher is a welcoming school that seeks to genuinely collaborate with other schools and work effectively with families in the community.
- The respect pupils have for one another, and their good behaviour encourages Catholic life and mission to flourish, leading to a joyful community rooted in Christ.
- The school seeks to work with the diocese and with the academy trust for the benefit of all who seek a Catholic education.
- The leader for religious education actively promotes her subject and robustly monitors it to ensure good progress is made.

- The school works closely with the parish to ensure that the most vulnerable in the community are cared for.

What the school needs to improve:

- Continue to further develop the work started on Catholic Social Teaching so that it permeates the curriculum.
- Plan creative lessons that are adapted to meet the needs of most able learners.
- Ensure all pupils engage in leadership of prayer and liturgy and effectively evaluate their liturgy.

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:

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2

Pupils in St John Fisher Catholic Primary School identify readily with their mission statement; they recite it and sign it. They are articulate when considering how the statement 'Learning together as we walk in the footsteps of Christ' impacts their actions. Pupils can relate to the character of St John Fisher as a martyr and saint. They are knowledgeable about his life story and the lives of their house saints. Pupils are happy to come to school. They are confident and express that they feel secure, valued and cared for in St John Fisher. Pupils can explain how scripture has led to action both locally supporting St Alban's Foodbank, nationally supporting CAFOD and globally supporting an orphanage in Tanzania. Pupils also support in times of crisis and are keenly aware of their responsibility to fulfil their mission. Good resourcing and a plentiful supply of Bibles has greatly impacted progress in this area. There is a significant proportion of pupils from other faiths and none. Pupils and their families feel very welcomed and well supported. This is an inclusive school that fosters respect for other faiths. As a result of the deep respect shown by adults for each other and for the pupils, behaviour is good in lessons and throughout the school. Pupils are very proud to be members of the pupil chaplaincy team.

Pupils have been provided with a shorter strapline mission statement as well as a longer version outlining their core values and a copy is inserted into their religious education books. St John Fisher is a supportive community rooted in Christ. Additional adults are well placed to work with the most vulnerable pupils. The inclusivity of the school community positively encourages those from various cultures and belief traditions. Families from other faiths and traditions expressed that they feel valued and welcomed. Staff know each pupil by name. They know the families well and have very good relationships with each other and with pupils. The school's strong link with the parish creates harmony as well a strong work ethic that ensures there are lots of opportunities to come together to focus on helping the most vulnerable in society. The head teacher leads relationship, sexual and health education (RSHE). She has consulted with the community and agreed upon a scheme to deliver the programme that is faithful to the teaching of

the Church. As the leader in this area, the head teacher actively monitors outcomes and ensures good progress is made.

The school is a member of All Saints Academy Trust (ASCAT) and this has fostered outward looking collaborative relationships built on mutual respect. The head teacher is currently working with a second school within the trust. The governors have clear systems in place to both monitor the school and offer support where needed. Governors are highly ambitious for the school and actively involved in its accurate self-evaluation. They are strategic and determined in their pursuit of excellence. Extremely well organised they value working within ASCAT and with their local Catholic schools. Leaders recognise the benefits of engaging with their parent body to support pupils. They also ensure that parents are aware of what pupils are doing to support those in need. A good example of this was the invitation to parents to come along to celebrate at the harvest assembly. Catholic Social Teaching is not yet fully embedded within the whole school curriculum and although some progress has been made more work is needed to ensure that it permeates the curriculum. Meeting minutes demonstrate that governors ask relevant and probing questions that both challenge and support leaders. Governors are strategic in their planning, committed and conscientious. Leaders ensure that every adult working in school has a voice and staff feel listened to. They appreciate the open-door policy and know leaders genuinely care about staff and pupils alike. The budget to support staff training is healthy and all staff, including those new to Catholic education, receive relevant professional development.

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

Pupils really enjoy their religious education lessons. Teachers plan lessons that make sure they are following the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* (RECD). Teachers' effective planning makes sure pupils reflect on what they have learned in previous lessons so they can make links with new learning and deepen their knowledge. Pupils make good progress in knowing more, remembering more and doing more against the planned curriculum. Pupils speak with confidence in their lessons and they are able to ask good questions. In the best lessons observed, creativity and subject knowledge were strengths. Pupils are used to having scripture-based lessons and are adept at using the Bible to find references that enhance their viewpoints. In an observed Year 5 lesson, pupils were looking at the book of Proverbs. The activities were engaging and challenging for pupils. The teacher's strong subject knowledge enabled her to encourage pupils to delve deeper and consider how a virtue from scripture might translate in today's society so that pupils made good progress. In an Early Years (EYFS) lesson, pupils were learning about the symbols of baptism. The teacher helped pupils explore this topic by encouraging their inquisitiveness as they engaged in a variety of creative activities. The pupils demonstrated that they remembered their previous learning about the creation story and recognised some of the symbols of baptism. Pupils enjoy their learning and behaviour is good. Pupils achieve as well in religious education as they do in other core subjects.

The leader of religious education ensures teachers avail themselves of high-quality professional development. As a result, teachers' subject knowledge is strong. Teachers questioning during lessons is effective, sometimes adapting their questioning to challenge more able pupils as well as supporting those who require it. Planning is linked to assessment; systems are in place for pupils to reflect on prior learning. Most pupils answer feedback challenges in their books by responding to next steps in purple pen. Teachers do not always ensure that activities are adapted to challenge more able pupils. Pupils enjoy gaining house points for their work and teachers celebrate pupils' achievements. Teachers recognise how

important it is for pupils to grasp the concepts in religious education, so they provide time for pupils to reflect on their work. This is a strength in this school. Additional adults are used effectively to support pupils who need help. Teaching is adapted to support those with additional needs.

Leaders make sure that their chosen religious education scheme is supplemented to meet the needs of the pupils. Governors and leaders set an adequate budget for religious education and as a result, staff receive high quality professional development and pupils have access to effective resources. The subject leader for religious education has a clear vision for teaching and learning. She supports other staff in securing their subject knowledge and as a result teaching is consistently good. The religious education curriculum is well planned, it focuses on ensuring pupils remember what they have learned and encourages them to make links in their learning. Most pupils make good progress in a sequential manner across key stages. However, the curriculum is not always adapted to meet the needs of more able learners. Leaders' self-evaluation is thorough and informed by a planned programme of monitoring, analysis and self-challenge.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:

2

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

2

Leadership

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

2

Pupils respond joyfully to experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school. In an Early Years (EYFS) lesson pupils were eager to gather and help their teacher with the candles and the statue of Mary. They could explain that October is the month of the rosary. The teacher created a real sense of awe and wonder as well as fostering independence. Time was given for pupils to pray and reflect. Pupils use scripture well and clearly understand how scripture influences their actions. In a harvest assembly pupils focused on Leviticus and St Paul to identify why they should gather food to share with the most vulnerable. Pupils engage in a range of prayers, they are used to praying traditional prayers, they write bidding prayers, and use reflection time well. Liturgy is enhanced with appropriate music. Pupils understand the liturgical year and have set up prayer spaces in the correct liturgical colours. Pupils do not yet fully engage in planning and evaluating all prayer and liturgy.

Prayer is central to the life of the school. Themed liturgy is planned at appropriate times of the year. Pupil chaplains support the teachers in whole school acts of worship and help the parish priest on his regular visits to celebrate Mass. They do not yet fully undertake leadership roles, and this is an area for development already identified by the school. Each class has its own class prayer book that goes home for families to pray together and contribute to the prayer life of pupils. Staff are good role models for pupils, they celebrate their prayer life both in school and within the wider community. The school has a prayer garden that pupils use to pray the rosary and the stations of the cross. There are prayer spaces in each classroom that are enhanced with religious artifacts and pupils' prayers. The school hosts the St John Fisher Mass Centre attended by the community every Sunday. The children's liturgy is prepared by staff from school. The parish priest celebrates Mass in this joyous liturgy of the Eucharist.

The school has an effective policy for prayer and liturgy. Leaders actively encourage pupils to plan prayer and liturgy which is developmental as pupils move through the school. However, pupils are not currently evaluating the impact of their prayer and liturgy. In the best example of good practice in prayer and

liturgy the element of awe and wonder contributed significantly. As a result, pupils were instantly aware that they were engaging in meaningful and prayerful liturgy. Leaders plan Masses and liturgy at key times in the liturgical year. Leaders offer new staff support and encouragement, new staff welcome the open-door policy of leaders and feel very well supported. Those new to Catholic education are well equipped to deliver lessons and facilitate prayer and liturgy. Leaders including governors regularly review the impact of their policy on prayer and liturgy. They seek the views of pupils and staff when monitoring as part of their self-evaluation.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St John Fisher Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148990
Full postal address of the school	Hazelmere Road, St Albans AL4 9RW
School phone number	01727 861077
Name of head teacher or principal	Patricia O'Donnell
Chair of governing board	Christopher Baker
School Website	www.sjfisher.herts.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	All Saints Catholic Academy Trust (ASCAT)
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Trustees	Diocese of Westminster
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	January 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Evelyn Ward	Lead inspector
Daniel Keane	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