

Report of the Denominational (Section 48) Inspection of
Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

St John Fisher Catholic High School

DFES No: 874 5413
URN: 110907

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Mr Paul Rossi

Headteacher: Mr Sean Hayes

Denominational Inspector: Mrs Sue Aldous
Associate Inspector: Mr Damian Wallace

Date of Inspection: 4th – 5th December 2013

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Information about the school.

St John Fisher is an 11-18 Catholic High School in Peterborough. The school has a richly diverse population. Nearly 70% of students are from ethnic groups, which is well above the national average. 44% of the students are from a Catholic background and around 21% are from other world religions. The proportion of students who are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is also above average. 60% of the pupils have a first language other than English. 45% of the students are eligible for pupil premium. A quarter of the students are eligible for free school meals.

Key grades for inspection

1. Outstanding 2. Good 3. Requires Improvement 4. Unsatisfactory

Overall Effectiveness. How effective is the school in providing Catholic education.

Grade 1

Outcomes for students, the provision for Catholic education, the effectiveness of leaders governors and managers at St John Fisher's Catholic High School and the capacity for sustained improvement are all judged to be outstanding. Given the majority of pupils' starting points, both the Religious Education (RE) exam results and the strong Catholic identity of the school are something to be celebrated.

Since the last inspection the school has implemented all of the inspector's suggestions to improve further. In particular the new Governing body is in place and in consultation with pupils, staff and parents has reviewed the School Mission Statement.

The Head of RE has developed consistency of practice across the department as seen in lesson observations with the result of improving exam results.

A school chaplain has been appointed and there are many opportunities to use the chapel for liturgies such as Morning Prayer, and weekly voluntary Mass and for private prayer.

The Catholic life of the school is monitored by a named member of the Senior Leadership Team. This monitoring has led to innovative ideas which inspire Catholic life within the School community. The resulting practice has been shared with the feeder Catholic Primary schools through inset on Catholic Ethos.

What the school needs to do to improve further.

Once departmental members have embedded the consistent approach to teaching outstanding lessons, allow them greater autonomy when appropriate to give opportunity for variety.

Plan differentiation tasks as part of the scheme of work and lesson plans to stretch the able, gifted and talented and support those with special needs.

Continue to monitor work to ensure regular and thorough marking in line with the school's marking policy.

Continue to develop the chaplaincy, looking for increasing opportunities for pupil leadership.

Outcomes for pupils.

Grade 1

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding.

There have been many opportunities for pupil representation at diocesan events, for example Pope Benedict XVI at Roehampton, the installation of Bishop Alan and the Masses at Norwich Cathedral for the opening and closing of the Year of Faith. They also experience the wider Catholic Church through pilgrimage to Taize. Pupils have opportunities to express their views and are confident that their ideas are considered. In particular they spoke of their role in evaluating 'Learning Habits', offering ways to improve pupils' learning. The distinct nature of the school is its diverse population. Pupils who have joined the school at different points can articulate the welcome they receive and feel that they belong to this community. Pupils get along with each other and respect each other's views. They identified this as a strength of the school. There are also many ways they play a part in developing the Catholic character of the school. The chaplain has formed a group called Lions (Revelations 10:3) to make pupil voices heard on the Catholic life of the school. There are two assembly representatives from each form in Westminster House who evaluate and plan collective acts of worship and this model is to be expanded further. The school council has been involved in review of the Mission statement and the school prayer. Pupils mainly express their commitment to the Common Good through their fund raising. Each House has a charity that is voted for at the beginning of the year and events are organised, including stalls on St John Fisher's feast day. Pupils raised funds for those who could not afford to go to Taize through singing in local churches and packing bags in a supermarket. The vertical tutor groups give ample opportunities for older pupils to support younger ones.

The appointment of a lay chaplain, though recent, is already giving support and confidence for pupils to take on responsibilities and leadership of the Catholic life of the school. There is a chaplaincy working group consisting mainly of adults but also including the Head Boy and Girl. In form time assembly pupils were encouraged to reflect on issues raised in groups, ending in silent reading of the school prayer. The example of pop singer Adele promoted pupil reflection and discussion relating to confidence about being themselves and to letting others be themselves too. Beverley House assembly was led by a Year 13 pupil. Pupils are not as familiar with traditional prayer such as the rosary or Stations of the Cross and the chaplain could plan opportunities for pupils to experience a greater variety of prayer styles. The weekly voluntary Mass is attended by an average of twenty pupils. St John Fisher is very much a cohesive community and pupils benefit from the diversity of family ethnic backgrounds as shown in their respectful attitude to those they encounter.

The RE subject leader has introduced clear classroom practice which encourages independent learning and the ability to evaluate pupil progress in each lesson. In all lessons observed, pupils were well – motivated and engaged with the learning process. All expressed the view that they enjoyed RE. In particular relationships with their RE teachers were strong. Pupils make good progress relative to their starting points and capabilities at all key stages. Key Stage 3 levels show progress but there is some confusion because of using GCSE descriptors and grades at this key stage which are meant to be used with older pupils. Class work is of a good standard and the homework booklets in years 7 and 8 consolidate and enhance the learning begun in class. RE GCSE results are improving year on year but have

yet to reach National averages. As a result the Inspector agreed with the school's self-evaluation of Grade 2 for Standards of attainment in Religious Education. Robust tracking suggests that the trend of improvement may continue for 2014 and beyond. In particular attention should be given to those targeted at the lower end to ensure they achieve their forecasts and improve pass rates A-G. At A/S and A level achievement is very good and at least in line with national averages. Pupils are enjoying the academic rigour provided in their lessons and respond well.

Leaders and Managers.

Grade 1

Governors ensure that the School Improvement Plan sets priorities for future action and that school targets for Catholic life and Religious Education are both achievable and sufficiently challenging to drive improvement. Governors monitor and receive reports on the achievement in Religious Education and are knowledgeable of the work of the school, including its strengths and weaknesses. Governors are very active participants in the life of the school. There is a link governor appointed for each subject area. As a result there is an ethos of continuing improvement. A strength of the school is in having a designated member of the Senior Leadership Team who has a clear mandate to oversee the Catholic life of the school. In her role she line manages RE, chaplaincy and PSHE, creating robust systems and processes and reporting back to Governors. As such there has been a lead from the front but one which develops the skills of others to have confidence to contribute to the Catholic life of the school. There has been INSET on the Catholic life of the school

With reference to Religious Education the Self Evaluation Form provides a concise analysis of departmental strengths and clearly identifies areas for improvement and plans to implement progress. The subject leader has a clear vision and passion for the subject. Based on exhortations in the Catholic Curriculum Directory, she believes that the RE Department should be a model of excellence and a beacon of best practice and works tirelessly towards this end. Her professional approach ensures standardisation and unity in the teaching of lessons and assessment of pupils across the department. Once this foundation is established greater autonomy could be given to departmental members to allow for some variety of pedagogical methods

Provision.

Grade 1

Voluntary Mass is held weekly and there is a rota of House Masses. For special occasions Mass is held and a Remembrance Mass in November drew a voluntary attendance of approximately half of the pupils. Reconciliation is held in Advent and Lent. Pupils spoke highly about the Service of Reconciliation prepared by the chaplain for Advent and the way they were helped to prepare fully for this. The service was also commented on favourably by visiting priests. As well as reflecting the Catholic character of the school in provision of collective worship, sacramental and prayer life, there are also opportunities for Muslim prayer and festivals. At the time of inspection daily acts of form worship were on the theme of Advent but all pupils had been invited to an Eid party in the previous week.

Much of the quality of teaching in RE is outstanding. Judgements showed parity with the school's own quality assurance systems through including one paired observation with the Head of Department who is confident of her team's performance in lessons and of their ability to teach at an outstanding standard generally. Every RE teacher was observed teaching and each key stage was included in the observation schedule. Of the 7

observations undertaken, teaching was considered good with outstanding features in 3 lessons and 3 were deemed outstanding. In the outstanding lessons pupils made excellent progress which was known by their teaching staff. Questioning and stimuli, in particular well-chosen video clips, developed pupils' understanding and promoted independent learning. Pace was maintained by sharing timing of tasks. Teachers use praise well to motivate and stimulate pupils and this led to a lively response and positive attitudes to learning. Some good examples of peer assessment were seen in lessons. As a result pupils make progress. An observed Teacher Assistant was enthusiastic, knowledgeable and had a good grasp of the RE curriculum as relevant to the lesson and so was able to support pupils allowing for their individual needs. Although high levels of differentiation were evident in some lessons greater consistency is needed across the department to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers mark and assess pupils' written work fortnightly but inspection noted some inconsistency across the Department in diagnostic marking and formative comments. More consistency could enable all groups of learners to know how to make improvements.

The Religious Education curriculum is effectively planned to meet the needs of students at differing stages. The content of curriculum Religious Education provides for a deep and systematic study of God; the teachings and central beliefs of the Catholic Church; the life of Jesus, and how all these relate to faith and life and as such meets the requirements of the Catholic Curriculum Directory. The Religious Education curriculum makes a very significant contribution to the spiritual and moral development of all students, as does the school's Sex and Relationships Education programmes which are delivered through Religious Education in accordance with Catholic teaching. The curriculum time given to classroom Religious Education at Key Stage 4 meets the Bishops' requirement of 10%. At Key stage 3 there is a shortfall in lesson time by 2%. At Key Stage 4 the department follows the Edexcel examination specification which covers the requirements of the diocese. Years 12 and 13 follow a study of the New Testament and are developing into confident exegetes. There is a very good General Religious Education course that fully meets the needs of pupils in the Sixth Form.

EAST ANGLIA DIOCESAN SCHOOLS' SERVICE



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18th December 2013

Dear Pupils

Section 48 Inspection

When I was in the school with Mr Wallace we greatly enjoyed our visit. During the two days we were with you we talked to quite a lot of you. We appreciated how welcome you made us feel. You told us how happy you are at St John Fisher and how proud you are of it. It is clear that your Headteacher and his staff have worked with you to improve your school and are making it a great place to be.

The focus for our visit was to look at your learning in Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school. You are beginning to make good progress in RE and you told us that you have good relationships with your RE teachers which helps you to do so well. We think your teachers will continue to look at ways to help you do even better.

While we were at the school we attended some House assemblies and tutor group liturgies and Morning Prayer in the chapel. Some of you were participating by reading passages and prayers. We saw that you want to be more involved in acts of worship and have great ideas of your own about how to get across the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. We also saw your commitment to raise money for your House charities. We have asked that your chaplain makes sure you get as many opportunities as you can to take a leading role in the Catholic Life of the school.

Everywhere we went we saw you behaving well and there was a calm and purposeful atmosphere in your classrooms. You should be very proud of yourselves.

Finally Mr Wallace and I wish you all a happy and holy Christmas and a good 2014 for St John Fisher Catholic High School.

Yours Sincerely,
Mrs Susan Aldous Section 48 Inspector