

NOTTINGHAM DIOCESAN INSPECTION REPORT ON DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATION

Summer 2011



St John Fisher Catholic Primary School,
Shenley Road,
Wigston
Leicester.
LE18 3QL

Date of Inspection: 13th June 2011

(Section 48, 2005 Education Act)

Name and address of School:	St John Fisher Catholic Primary School, Shenley Road Leicester LE183QL
Headteacher:	Mrs Mary Hirst
Chair of Governors:	Mr Martin Stanley
Date of Inspection:	13th June 2011
Inspection Team:	Mrs. Anne Recchia Mr Michael Geraghty
URN & DfS Number:	120217/8553343
Overall Grade Awarded:	2

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

St John Fisher is situated in a residential area in the south-east of Leicestershire. It is an average size school with seven classes. There are currently 198 on roll (96 girls and 102 boys.) 8.2% of pupils have a free school meal entitlement, which is below the national average. The proportion of children identified as having special educational needs is 18.9%, with 5% at school action plus and 1% having a statement. The school identifies 26% of children as "more able" across different areas of the curriculum. There are 22% of pupils with English as an additional language - this has increased by 12% since the last inspection.

The school's catchment area is extensive. It encompasses the parishes of St. Mary's, South Wigston and The Immaculate Conception, Oadby. Within this catchment area the Local Authority operates a 10+ transfer and St John Fisher is the only primary school offering a Year 6 class. The majority of pupils transfer at the end of Year 6 to St Paul's Catholic Comprehensive School, with others (24% in July 2010) transferring to local high schools in Year 5. A small number, (12 % September 2010) transfer into St John Fisher at the beginning of Year 6. The proportion of children who are baptised Catholics is 80%. A further 9% are other Christian, 8% other faith background and 3% have no religious affiliation. The majority of pupils are white British with a significant number (24%) from different ethnic groups. At the time of the inspection the school was undertaking major building work which when complete, will further enhance the impressive facilities which the school offers to its community.

INSPECTION SCHEDULE

B. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

St John Fisher Primary School is judged to be a good school with many outstanding features. Outcomes for pupils are generally good with some pupils exceeding expectations by the end of Key Stage 2. Trends indicate that standards of attainment in Religious Education are improving. Evidence from work scrutiny and lesson observations indicates there are no significant differences between the progress of different groups of learners.

Leaders and managers are outstanding in developing the Catholic life of the school. This is due in a large part to the highly committed leadership and vision of the Headteacher and Religious Education Coordinator.

Catholic Education is promoted to a good standard and ensures that pupils' interests and needs are met effectively. Children work with enthusiasm and enjoy the many opportunities provided by the school to develop spiritually, morally and ethically. St John Fisher is a welcoming, inclusive school that lives out its Catholic mission.

GRADE: 2

C. What does the school need to do to improve further?

At St. John Fisher School the strengths far outweigh the areas for development. However, all good schools recognise the need for further improvement. We recommend therefore, that :

- Pupils of all ages are suitably equipped to plan and lead Acts of Collective Worship
- Governors continue to develop their own rigorous monitoring systems to effectively challenge and support the school in its development.
- Systems are further developed to track various groups of pupils to ensure that progress is consistent throughout the school.

D. The school's capacity for sustained improvement

St John Fisher School has successfully addressed the issues raised in the last inspection.

Assessment for Learning (AfL) is now consistently embedded throughout the school. This is enabling teachers and children to make accurate judgements about attainment and progress in Religious Education. Marking has improved and consistently includes "next steps in learning" to inform pupils of where they are and what they have to do to improve.

Teachers are now confident in sharing good practice and have become more self-evaluative in the process.

Good systems are in place which accurately identify the strengths and challenges for the school and its areas for development. This has enabled the school to move forward at a good pace. Self-evaluation is rigorous and honest; it leads to issues being identified and tackled effectively, thus ensuring children receive a good quality Catholic Education.

The ambitious vision of the Headteacher and staff for the Catholic dimension of the school, impacts positively on pupils' standards and achievements. As a consequence the school's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

GRADE: 1

PUPILS

How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups

Children enter St John Fisher Catholic Primary School with little religious knowledge or experience of the subject. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage and soon acquire the necessary skills to retell Gospel stories and participate in prayer and acts of collective worship. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils reach a level which is consistent with national standards. A small proportion attain above expectations. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are producing good work in line with and often above age-related levels. Some pupils produce work at an outstanding level, which shows maturity and depth of thought. As a result, pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education are good and thanks to the school's commitment to track and evaluate attainment there is excellent scope for standards to improve further for all groups of pupils. Recent Continuing Professional Development (CPD,) including courses led by the Diocese has had a marked effect on enabling teachers to make accurate judgements as to how pupils are achieving. From their low starting point, the children make good progress by the time they leave the school in Year 6.

Upon entering any classroom, one is immediately struck by how the children are engaged by their teachers. This is made possible because excellent systems and routines are in place and are consistently implemented throughout the school. Planning in all of the lessons observed was of a good standard and incorporated differentiation for all ability groups. The teachers know their pupils well and provide work that absorbs them and meets their individual needs. The behaviour of the children is exemplary. The relationships between pupils, teachers and teacher assistants are excellent. The moral development of the children is reflected in this positive behaviour. As one child who had recently transferred into the school put it:

"I really like this school because the teachers keep control but are also friendly and fun."

There is very much a “can do” attitude in all classrooms. During discussions, all contributions are valued and this empowers pupils to take risks and explore ideas fully and creatively. This could be seen in one lesson where two children had been given the task of creating a PowerPoint presentation. Together they shared ideas enthusiastically and when faced with problems persevered until they had resolved them without resorting to asking for help.

The pupils clearly enjoy their learning and talk openly about their work. Group work is particularly strong with children able to take turns, listen to the ideas of others as well as confidently offering their own. Drama is used extensively to engage children in their learning. Each of the lessons observed incorporated an element of drama, such as role play, freeze frames and “conscience alleys.” ICT is also widely and effectively used to support learning. Creative use of interactive whiteboards, video clips, and “visualisers” all help the pupils to access their learning at a level which caters for individual learning styles.

Work in books is of a very good standard and reflects the prominence given to Religious Education as a core subject. The children take a pride in their work, which is neatly presented and comprehensively completed with teachers making sensitive, constructive comments which in the best practice, is responded to by the pupils.

Assessment for Learning (AfL) is consistently used to guide the children so that each knows where they are and what they have to do to improve their work. Religious Education targets are displayed in each classroom and pupils are able to refer to them. Each classroom has a dedicated area for Religious Education with work from the current topic prominently displayed.

Pupils with particular learning needs and/ or disabilities are well catered for, as are those from vulnerable groups. For example, pupils with English as an additional language are well supported by able teaching assistants who reinforce teachers’ instructions and enable pupils to focus on tasks alongside their peers. Formal tracking of these groups is an area for development, so that the school is able to ensure that no child or group of children falls behind.

Pupils clearly benefit from, and contribute to, the Catholic life of the school. They are proud of their school community and are keen to share their enjoyment of all aspects of school life. They are considerate to one another and show concern for those less fortunate, both locally and further afield. The school council is articulate and aware of the school’s place in both the local and the wider communities, telling proudly of fund raising activities and cooperation between local schools. They feel safe and secure that poor behaviour is effectively dealt with and that any form of prejudice is not tolerated.

Pupils constantly demonstrate high levels of capability and maturity. They are now ready to take control of planning and delivering liturgies and other acts of worship. When asked how they would feel about this, they expressed some trepidation but also voiced excitement at the challenge “...at St John Fisher we are good at challenges.”

The children respond with reverence to Collective Worship; they participate fully by listening, singing, praying and sitting quietly, as appropriate. In one Key Stage 2

assembly, activities were mostly teacher led. More opportunities could be made to actively involve the children in this area which is central to the life of the school. The children are able to express their feelings and turn to spontaneous prayer in a meaningful and moving manner. Plans to develop a liturgy group will further enhance good practice and will help develop the spiritual dimension and dynamics of the school.

GRADE: 2

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils

The Headteacher and senior leadership team are passionate about Catholic Education. They are striving for excellence at St. John Fisher School. This is communicated very effectively in a variety of ways : the continuing professional development programme for teaching and non teaching staff, school policies, reports to Governors, mentoring activities and staff induction to the school. This has led to the development of a very cohesive staff team which impacts very positively on the Catholic life of the school and on pupils' standards and achievements.

The school's self- evaluation process is successfully used to celebrate good practice and to develop the school still further. Through questionnaires, written evaluations, observations and reports, the Catholic life of the school is effectively monitored and actions to improve the school are actively pursued. Governors, staff, parents and pupils are given a voice in the school, which is listened to and acted upon. The School Improvement Plan tackles issues arising from monitoring and communication with all stakeholders. The school sets a challenging timescale for improvements and tackles areas for development with vigour. The School Evaluation form is not, however, a true reflection of the evaluative process taking place in the school. It needs to be further referenced to ensure it is an effective working document that can be used in the whole school improvement process.

Leadership at all levels promote Community Cohesion to a good level ensuring that there is a common sense of belonging in the school where all are welcome and diversity is celebrated and valued. Pupils from different backgrounds work well together within the school and as a result relationships are very positive and incidents of racial harassment and bullying are extremely rare.

Good links have been established with other local Catholic schools within the Leicestershire Partnership and the school also works well with other local authority schools. In this way, pupils are given opportunities to work with others from different backgrounds and beliefs. The Ghana project led by the local Catholic secondary school has not only provided opportunities for pupils at St. John Fisher to communicate with

children in another country but also to work with older pupils on this project. Strong links exist between the two schools ensuring transition across Key stage 2 and 3 is smooth and that the pupils feel confident to move onto the next stage in their education.

Leaders and managers facilitate the development of communication skills and a growing recognition of the pupils' faith background through active participation in parish and local activities. The school population is relatively diverse but the majority of the pupils are from Catholic and other Christian families. Some effort has been made to engage with people from other faiths through visits to other places of worship, sporting links with a Muslim girls' school and through visitors to the school. Plans to extend these further and to encourage pupils to fully engage and understand the rich cultural and religious diversity within the area would further enhance the schools community cohesion.

Leaders and managers at all levels monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement in outcome for pupils to an outstanding level. The systems for collecting data and analysing results have been refined over time and have resulted in well targeted planning and actions taken by the school. Staff development in particular, has been decisive in the development of assessment and in the levelling of pupils' work. Collaborative work with other Catholic schools has ensured there is consistency of approach and understanding. As a result teachers are confident, knowledgeable and have the skills to accurately assess progress and set challenging targets for pupil attainment; as a consequence outcomes for most pupils are good.

The Governors work well with the Headteacher and with the senior leadership team. They are extremely supportive of the school. There is an appropriate committee structure that effectively feeds back to the full Governing Body. In this way statutory and canonical responsibilities are fulfilled. Governor training has been well attended and has led to a better informed and knowledgeable Governing Body. The Headteacher in turn ensures that the Governing Body is kept well informed. This is achieved through detailed reports and by monitoring activities undertaken by staff and governors. However, systems for gathering information and making informed judgements tend to rely more heavily on the Headteacher and the senior leadership team. Governors now have the expertise to become more involved in a rigorous and formal approach to the monitoring of the school as a whole. This would provide a greater level of professional challenge to the leadership team.

GRADE: 1

PROVISION

How effective is the provision in promoting Catholic Education?

The quality of teaching is good with some outstanding practice. Where teaching is outstanding, lessons are well planned and differentiated, expectations of pupils achievement is high and learning takes place at a good pace throughout the lesson. Teachers generally are well motivated and are keen to evaluate their practice and make improvements. They have benefited greatly from well targeted professional development activities and have become knowledgeable and confident in the teaching of Religious Education. In the majority of classes the effective use of a range of teaching styles engages all the learners, builds pupils' motivation and concentration and makes lesson more enjoyable. In general, questioning styles are used well to extend pupils understanding and assess progress. In outstanding lessons these were used most effectively to challenge the most able pupils.

Good use is made of resources to maximise learning. All teachers are confident in the use of the interactive whiteboard to enhance lessons and engage the pupils. Cross curricular links and the use of drama in particular is used effectively to develop the interest of the children and to maximise learning. The curriculum is well designed and has been modified and enhanced to meet the needs and interests of all the children.

The support provided by other adults, is in the main, well deployed in the classrooms. They are generally well informed ,are included in the planning of the lessons and in outstanding lessons, are used well to challenge and support pupils throughout the lesson. However, in some classes adults could be used more effectively in the introductory sessions of lessons to ensure pupils have a good understanding of the objective of the lesson before moving on to the task required.

Relationships in the classroom are good and teachers provide good oral and written feedback to pupils. As a consequence pupils know how well they have done and can discuss what they need to do to improve.

The school has a good view of the achievement and progress of pupils in Religious Education. Assessment, monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress has been improved and refined since the last inspection. It is now used to inform planning and is becoming more effective in identifying and tackling underachievement. A further development of this, to track groups of pupils would enhance provision and would ensure that there is a continuing and equal opportunity for all groups to achieve at the highest level. Pupils are increasingly involved in their own assessment and are given opportunities to celebrate good progress and address misconceptions with their teachers.

The Religious Education curriculum is well differentiated in order to meet the needs of all pupils. It is enriched with the use of well-planned strategies and tasks to interest and engage the concentration of the children. Lessons build upon pupils' prior learning. In the most effective lessons a very good level of challenge is evident in the tasks provided by the teachers and outcomes are consistently good or better.

The school provides opportunities which enrich the curriculum and provide children with a broader view of Religious Education. The annual residential retreat to The Briars for example, is eagerly anticipated and is a source of much spiritual, social and moral development. Other extra curricular opportunities are well attended and enjoyed by the pupils.

The quality of liturgies provided by the school is good. They are given a high profile and are well resourced. Throughout the day there are opportunities both for formal and for informal prayer. The children participate enthusiastically. The Eucharist is central to the life of the school and is celebrated regularly. Good use is made of a range of prayer styles and the pupils are becoming skilled in the use of these. Plans to develop a trained pupil chaplaincy team to help plan and lead acts of collective worship would develop these skills still further. A range of different faiths and beliefs are included in prayer and worship. Opportunities for the children to practice their faith during key festivals are provided by the school. Parents, carers and parishioners are regularly invited and encouraged to join the school for acts of Collective Worship. The morality and spirituality of the children is well developed through prayer and worship. This in turn has a very positive impact on the whole school community.

GRADE: 2

Common grading scale for all inspection judgements

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

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective is the school in providing Catholic Education ?	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how good are the outcomes for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how effective is the provision in promoting Catholic education 	1

PUPILS

How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1) how well pupils progress and enjoy their learning in Religious Education 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2) <i>the pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education</i> 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3) <i>the quality of pupils' learning and their progress</i> 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4) <i>the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and / or disabilities and their progress</i> 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5) the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6) <i>how well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship</i> 	2

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1) how well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2) <i>how effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion</i> 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3) how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education for improvement to outcomes for pupils 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4) the extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so that areas for development are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities are met 	2

PROVISION

How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education	2
1) The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education	2
2) <i>the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious education</i>	2
3) the extent to which the religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
4) the quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2