



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and Inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
of the Education Act 2005

URN 101460

St John Fisher Primary School
Kale Road
Erith Kent
DA18 4BA

Inspection date: 10 February
2016

Chair of Governors: Patricia Osobase
Headteacher: Miss S Griffin
Inspectors: Damian Fox
Jan Mann

EDUCATION COMMISSION

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR

Tel 01689 829331 Fax 01689 829255

Director of Education: Dr Anne Bamford

SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School is situated in the Greenwich Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is in the Bexley Local Authority and is a member of the Corpus Christi Trust. The principal parish the school serves is St John Fisher, but pupils also come from St Benet's. A small number come for six other parishes. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 70%. Overall, the weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education across the school is 10%.

The school takes pupils from ages 4 to 11. Currently there are 238 pupils on roll.

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is below average. Around 10% of pupils receive Special Educational Needs (SEN) support including those with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The school receives Pupil Premium for 12% of pupils. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an Additional Language is above average. The vast majority of pupils are of Black African heritage.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school in providing Catholic Education

GRADE
1

The provision of Catholic education at St John Fisher is outstanding. Leaders, governors and managers are deeply committed to serving staff, pupils and their families. They have an excellent understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas for development.

St John Fisher is a warm, welcoming and prayerful school with a shared understanding of the value of an education built on Gospel values. The Catholic life of the school is reflected in the day-to-day experiences of pupils. The pupils attitudes to learning are very positive. There is great mutual respect and pupils feel secure and loved. The care staff give to the welfare of pupils contributes to the strong ethos of trust.

The school has a great awareness of the academic, pastoral and economic needs of pupils. The Parish Priest and Parish Sister frequently visit for spiritual and pastoral reasons to support the growth of the school and to support the more vulnerable pupils and families. There is an effective outreach programme in the immediate community. A governor said that there was a "seamless link between faith and practice." The vision of school leaders is clear about serving the needs of others. For example, local schools, including SEN school have been supported by sharing expertise and by experiencing the unique ethos of St John Fisher school. As a result, pupils know that there are always others in greater need.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive. One parent said, "The school has shaped my son in terms of academic and spiritual well-being."

The strong Catholic identity is evident in the religious displays throughout the school and in the excellent relationships between all members of the community. Each person is respected and cared for. The playground squad support younger pupils in the playground to help when they are upset or in difficulty.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- Ensure the self-evaluation process fully reflects the positive impact of Religious Education and the Catholic Life of the school on pupils and the local community.
- Give further opportunities to the Prayer Group to take responsibility for developing the prayer life of the school as a first step to involving all pupils in preparing and leading collective worship.

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

Pupils take full advantage of the many opportunities the school offers. They demonstrate their commitment to each other in the way they conduct themselves in school and in acts of worship. Pupils show great care for each other. As one pupil said, we “treat everyone like Jesus did.” The Faith Group and playground squad members have a very good understanding of their responsibilities in putting faith into practice for the good of other pupils. Consequently, there is a sense of harmony across the school. Relationships are excellent.

Pupils fulfil their responsibilities to those need by fundraising, for example, for CAFOD and in the way they respond to the needs of people in the local community where pupils take their faith with them. For example, at Harvest time the pupils collect food for the foodbank, Year 6 pupils carry it to the Parish Sisters’ house. Pupils know and live out the Mission Statement, as one stated “it is what we go by.” Pupils value and respect others as demonstrated in attitudes to work, their pride in the school and their commitment to the Catholic ethos. Prayers are an intrinsic part of the life of the school. There are books of prayers written by pupils over the year. The Headteacher and class teachers also contribute. The Faith Leaders are pupils who are increasingly involved in leading prayers. Sunday Masses are held in the school and pupils take responsibility for setting the hall up as a church for the parish’s Sunday Mass. It gives them an opportunity to serve the parishioners.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

Overall, standards achieved in Religious Education are very high. The standard of pupils’ work is in line with their attainment in literacy and often exceeds it. From low levels of attainment on entry, pupils make considerable progress. The Headteacher has ensured that developing differentiated activities extend more-able pupils to provide opportunities for them to achieve their full potential. The school’s monitoring shows high levels of pupil interest. This is evident in the way the pupils demonstrate enjoyment in their lessons and display positive attitudes to learning. They are very proud of their achievements. One pupil said, “I like RE because I can follow in Jesus’ footsteps.” The quality of learning for pupils with Special Educational Needs is excellent. They are well supported by the effective deployment of teaching assistants. Pupils’ behaviour throughout the school is exemplary. For them, behaving well is a way of life.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

Acts of Collective Worship engage pupils’ interests and inspire them at prayer and in acts of worship. In the school assembly, they participated joyfully, answering questions and singing with gusto. There was also silence for their individual reflection. The Parish Priest said he is very pleased with pupils’ high level of reverence and participation at Mass. Pupils are at ease when praying. It is a normal part of their school day. No one is expected

to act in a manner contrary to their beliefs. They acknowledge that reflection is a major part of prayer. They are confident in offering their own intentions and in composing prayers. Each class has their own prayer book which they take home to share with their families. It contains prayers that they write throughout their time in the school. The school is now in a position of strength and can continue to give more responsibility to pupils to prepare and lead Collective Worship, including Mass and assemblies.

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

Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in promoting and evaluating the Catholic life of the school. Governing body minutes and the School Development Plan put a strong emphasis on the Catholic life of the school and demonstrate their understanding of and commitment to their responsibilities to serve the pupils and families. Although the school's self-evaluation is honest and a reflection of what they have done, governors and leaders should review it to ensure more detail of the positive impact of the school's achievements.

The Headteacher and senior staff have a clear vision for the Catholic life of the school. As a result, there is a spiritual strength to the school which is lived throughout the community. Leaders articulate a shared vision of taking the faith into the community. School leaders work effectively with the Parish Priest and Parish Sisters to carry the message of the Gospel to others. For example, they have supported local schools and have used school and personal finances to support families. Consequently, pupils show a sense of responsibility to serving the wider world.

The Headteacher's faith and sense of vocation have a positive impact on the development of the Catholic life of the school. She is well supported by senior staff whose contributions ensure that there are regular opportunities for pupils to pray individually and as part of a group. The Religious Education Coordinator is a member of the senior team. The school has identified the need to develop the role of prayer leaders to lead prayer groups. The Religious Education policy explicitly states that "worship is an integral part of school life".

How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils

Governors are very committed to the promotion of Religious Education. They are a visible presence in the school and ensure they are informed of standards of teaching and learning with learning walks and participating in school acts of worship. Several Governors who are parents use their knowledge of the school to support and challenge school leaders as appropriate. School initiatives are impacting on levels of achievement in Religious Education, for example, the focus on marking, using next steps and questioning. Although there are rigorous and effective tracking and monitoring systems in place, the Headteacher is continually trying to improve standards of teaching and learning. She has a very good understanding of what the school needs to do to ensure sustained improvement.

The Religious Education Coordinator has an excellent grasp of standards in Religious Education through detailed monitoring and tracking of pupils' work. Lesson observations, book reviews and learning walks are rigorous and used to inform planning. She gives effective support to new staff with the curriculum and assessment. The impact is

improvements in teaching and learning and in the quality and use of prayer corners and reflection in lessons. The action plan for Religious Education prioritises the further development of assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress to inform appropriate guidance and challenge for pupils. Moderation of attainment takes place through the Corpus Christi trust to ensure accuracy of the school's assessment. Pupils keep a record of their progress throughout the school. This clearly identifies the rate of progress and gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The school could develop this to ensure that pupils' assessments are more explicitly incorporated into teachers' planning.

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The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

The quality of teaching is never less than good and is often outstanding. Teachers created a spiritual focal point for the start of the lessons. Music and candles on the prayer table create a prayerful place. There was time for prayer and private reflection. Teachers are engaging and effective in creating a positive learning environment which motivates pupils and enables them to make progress. Pupils are able to work independently or as part of a group. In one lesson, collaborative decision making was excellent and enabled pupils to learn. Pupils are effectively guided to assess their own work and that of their peers. In lessons that were good or better, the use of prior learning and the use of scripture were strengths. There are high levels of religious literacy. Overall, questioning was a strong feature in challenging pupils to think deeply. For example, in answer to "What is eternal life?" one pupil replied "When you go to heaven, you live there for ever. Life on earth is just the beginning." Marking of pupils' work is meaningful and clearly helps them understand how to improve. Pupils' responses showed progress in their understanding. Information and Communication Technology was used effectively to enhance learning.

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning

The school uses the 'Come and See' scheme for Religious Education which they extend and enhance in order to motivate pupils and meet their needs. The curriculum is effective in ensuring that pupils learn about other religions in lessons. There is the World Religion Day when Year 6 pupils visit other classes to explain what they have learnt about these religions. There have been visits from the local Imam to help pupils understand his role. Pupils are able to articulate their understanding that Islam is a faith that members of the local community follow. Pupils were given an opportunity to visit the local Hindu place of worship and to discover the wonder of the Temple.

In one lesson, pupils were able to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of other Christians and the shared values of all Christians. Throughout the school Catholic identity is evident. There are displays that celebrate pupils' learning in Religious Education and the pride pupils have in their school, the country and the world. The wider curriculum is outstanding and evident in the response pupils give to the needs of others. There are many fundraising charities, some of which pupils choose. Relationships are excellent and pupils' behaviour is exemplary at all times. The curriculum is responsive to local and national initiatives. The Black History day is a celebration of cultures and the faith. Parents join in and pupils wear their national costumes and share food from around the world.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

Prayer and Collective Worship are an integral part of the school's daily life. Each week pupils have many opportunities to pray in class or privately. There are daily prayers in the classroom and assemblies. There are regular Masses in school and all feast days are celebrated. Assemblies have a clear focus and direction. For example, in the school assembly, the Headteacher skilfully led pupils to an understanding of the value of love in

the school, their families and throughout the world. Pupils reflected, prayed and sang, contributing enthusiastically and knowledgeably to a spiritual and learning experience. The high quality of Collective Worship is acknowledged by the Parish Priest who is a regular visitor. He assists in organising the detailed list of liturgies. Pupils are proud of their prayer group. It is open to all pupils. It is led by the Religious Education Coordinator and Faith Leaders from Year 6. Drama and music are used effectively to enrich worship. Every pupil has an opportunity to take part in liturgical dance during acts of worship. Reconciliation is available every term. The quality of the provision for Collective Worship is evaluated every year to ensure it meets the needs of pupils and helps them acquire skills and abilities in organising and leading worship. Opportunities should now be given to the Prayer Group to take more responsibility for planning, leading and evaluating collective worship to enhance the quality for the whole school.

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