



DIOCESE OF  
**SHREWSBURY**

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DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT:

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL  
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

School: St John's Catholic Infant School  
Address: Old Chester Road  
Bebington  
Wirral  
CH63 7LH

Tel No: 0151 645 5291

URN: 105082

Headteacher: Mrs M Bulmer

Chair of Governors: Mrs E McArdle

Date of Inspection: 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Inspectors: Mrs R Moores  
Mrs K O'Hare

# *“Loving, Learning and Laughter Together with God”*

St John’s Catholic Infant School  
is a welcoming, caring community  
and an extension of the  
home and parish.

The children experience the Gospel  
message of God’s loving care through the  
worship, relationships and teaching of the  
Catholic Church.

The curriculum is rich, broad and  
balanced reflecting the distinctively  
Catholic nature of the school.

We will offer *every* child - whatever their  
individual characteristics -  
the chance to achieve their  
full potential, feel secure and  
enjoy growing up.

## **OUR SCHOOL VALUES**

***“The fruits of the Holy Spirit are: Love, Peace, Faithfulness, Joy,  
Goodness, Gentleness, Patience,  
Self-Control and Kindness” (Galatians 5, 22-23)***

**SCHOOL: ST JOHN'S CATHOLIC INFANT SCHOOL, BEBINGTON**

**DATE OF LAST INSPECTION: 2<sup>ND</sup> JULY 2014**

**JUDGEMENT FROM PREVIOUS INSPECTION: OUTSTANDING**

**AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT FROM PREVIOUS INSPECTION**

- There were no areas for improvement from the last monitoring inspection report on 02.07.14.

**PROGRESS MADE WITH AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT FROM THE PREVIOUS INSPECTION**

The school has made further improvements as part of its own self-evaluation since the last inspection including:

- Development of staff knowledge and understanding in using 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' scheme of work.
- Standards of achievement in place for Religious Education, which shows tracking for progress and attainment for all vulnerable groups, in line with other subjects.
- Training to support creativity in assessment, in line with diocesan requirements.
- Development of Jigsaw Personal, Social and Health Education scheme of work linked closely to Relationships and Sex Education Curriculum.
- Introduction of Mission Days to support the mission in school and the liturgical year.
- New school values, based on the Fruits of the Holy Spirit from St Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, have been developed to support the school's Mission statement.

**OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:** how effective is the school in providing Catholic Education.

1

**This is an outstanding Catholic School.**

*The above judgement on overall effectiveness is based on all the available evidence following the evaluation of:*

**CATHOLIC LIFE**

1

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

1

**COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

1

**Summary of key findings:**

- St John's is an outstanding Catholic Infant School where pupils fully appreciate, value and actively participate in the Catholic life and mission of the school.
- All members of the community speak highly of the school and its outstanding provision and feel supported in their Catholic faith.
- Relationships are a real strength of the school and the sense of family and community is tangible.
- The school works in close partnership with the Parishes of St John's and St Luke's and is well supported by both members of the local clergy.
- The school's leaders and governors are deeply committed to, and passionate about, the Church's mission in education and are rigorous in all their school improvement procedures.
- The dedicated Head Teacher, ably supported by the Religious Education Coordinators and Senior Leadership Team, provides outstanding leadership.
- Pupils are supported to be their very best and they make at least good progress from their starting points with many making outstanding progress – attainment is high.
- Collective Worship is central to the life of the school and Acts of Collective Worship are inspiring and heartfelt.
- School has developed an excellent set of resources to support and enhance the delivery of Collective Worship which should be used as an exemplar for other schools.

### **What the school needs to do to improve further:**

St John's has clearly identified what it needs to do to improve further through its very rigorous School Development Plan and the drive to achieve a consistently outstanding approach to Religious Education.

- In addition it should consider how best to involve pupils in further evaluating their work and to understand their next steps in improving their work

### **Information about the Inspection**

The Inspection of St John's Catholic Infant School was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Shrewsbury Diocesan Framework and Schedule for Denominational Inspections approved by the Bishop of Shrewsbury. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule follows the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA 2017).

The inspector reviewed in detail the following aspects:

- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school
- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education
- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship
- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education, Collective Worship and the Catholic Life of the school

The inspection was carried out by two inspectors over one day:

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in six classes.
- A whole school example of Collective Worship, led by a group of Foundation Stage 2 pupils and three other acts of Collective Worship, including the Angelus, were observed.
- Discussions were held with the Headteacher, one of the Religious Education Coordinators, the Assistant Headteacher, the Parish Priest, four governors and pupils.
- A sample of pupils' Religious Education workbooks, Faith Journey Books and Class Prayer Scrap Books was scrutinised from every class, along with the Religious Education Coordinator's file, Gospel Assembly File and files for the Catholic Life of the school, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The school's website was checked for further evidence.
- A full range of documents was made available and scrutinised including the Diocesan Self Evaluation Form (DSEF), Assessment, Monitoring and Moderation files, class timetables, Professional Development Records, the School Development Plan and Religious Education Action Plan, attainment and progress data, school policies and Minutes of governing body meetings.
- Displays around the school and in classrooms were also noted.

### **Information about this school**

- St John's is a two form entry Voluntary Aided Catholic Infant School, catering for 4-7 year olds. It also has its own Pre-School on site, providing full-time wrap-around care or sessional care as well as 30 hours' provision. Additionally St John's provides before and after school facilities on site.
- The school has an annual admission number of 60 and it is regularly over-subscribed - there are currently 222 pupils on roll with 40 pupils being in the Pre-School. 213 pupils are baptised Catholics.
- St John's Infant School is in the highest 40% quintile (0.3) for deprivation and is higher than the National Average.
- The school serves the Parishes of St John's, Bebington and St Luke's, Spital, however 29% of pupils come from outside the parish catchment area, with a significant number of pupils coming from the parish of St Anne's, Rock Ferry.
- Most pupils transfer to St John's Catholic Junior School at the end of Key Stage 1.
- The Headteacher has been in post for 17 years and was in post at the time of the last inspection.
- Religious Education is led by two Coordinators, with the Deputy Headteacher now leading and supported by the more experienced previous Lead.
- Staffing includes a full time equivalent of 7.2 teachers, with 5.2 being Catholic; there are eight support staff. Seven teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS) and the remaining teacher is currently studying for CCRS.
- St John's has achieved a number of nationally accredited awards including: Healthy Schools, Sports Active Mark, Silver UNICEF Rights Respecting Award and most recently, the School of Sanctuary Award.
- St John's provides a full range of extra-curricular activities for pupils including a Well-Being Club.

## Full report – inspection judgments

### CATHOLIC LIFE

**The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.**

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school	1

- The whole community of St John's Catholic Infant School fully lives out its Mission Statement: 'Loving, Learning and Laughter Together with God'.
- The recently introduced School Values of Love, Peace, Faithfulness, Joy, Goodness, Gentleness, Patience, Self-Control and Kindness (Galatians 5:22-23) underpin the everyday life of the school and help pupils to understand how best to be a follower of Jesus.
- Relationships and the sense of community are a real strength of the school, as one parent commented: 'St John's is like a home away from home for the children'.
- All members of the school community are supported in their faith and prayer life, as evidenced by a member of staff: 'There are opportunities for staff and children to grow in their Catholic faith'.
- Staff, parents and pupils speak highly of St John's and its warm, nurturing and caring environment.
- The school environment appropriately supports the Catholic Life of the school, with priority given to high quality Prayer Focus areas within the classrooms and around the school.
- Leaders and governors are deeply committed to and passionate about the Church's mission in education and are rigorous in their drive for excellence – they provide challenge and support in equal measure.
- Leaders and governors prioritise Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for all staff and are to be commended for their commitment to ensuring all teachers gain their Catholic Teachers' Certificate (CCRS).
- All pupils, including those at Pre-School, fully appreciate, value and joyfully participate in the Catholic Life and mission of the school.
- Pupils are appropriately involved in aspects of the school's evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school – they are given voice through meetings with Governors and through the work of the School Council and their views are always considered.
- All pupils are supported to take a lead in planning Acts of Collective Worship and they plan liturgy enthusiastically and with growing independence and confidence.
- Pupils are given opportunities to evaluate Acts of Collective Worship, for instance, they asked for the inclusion of drama within the Monday morning Gospel Assembly and this is now a regular feature.

- Pupils show reverence and respect during prayer and Collective Worship and engage fully.
- Pupils always show a deep respect for themselves and others and are helped to grow in empathy and generosity in responding to those in need.
- Pupils' sense of social justice is being developed very effectively through the school's commitment to becoming a 'School of Sanctuary'.
- Pupils have a growing understanding of their Catholic tradition, they are proud of their faith and recognise that Baptism means being a member of God's family.
- Pupils are helped and supported to take on leading roles to develop the Catholic Life of the school and the wider community; they actively participate in monthly Parish Masses and in the recently introduced Mission Days which take place two or three times a term.
- Parents are warmly welcomed into school and are kept fully informed of the Catholic Life of the school through the school's excellent website and its use of social media.
- Pupils are happy and confident and love attending school – as one pupil wrote: 'I love St John's because when I am stuck, there is always a teacher there by my side to help'.
- The behaviour of all pupils is exemplary and they show great maturity in their ability to listen, to give thanks and to show forgiveness – as one pupil said, 'We should follow Jesus' footsteps, be like Jesus and help others like Jesus did'.
- Pupils are helped to have an excellent understanding of loving relationships and sexual development by the very carefully planned policy and provision for education in personal relationships (RSE).
- School works very effectively within its cluster of Catholic Schools and is very proactive in its response to Diocesan policies and initiatives.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

**Religious Education is outstanding.**

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	1
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education	1

- Pupils thoroughly enjoy their Religious Education lessons and are challenged to think spiritually and reflect ethically on a range of issues – one pupil commented: ‘I love learning about Jesus and God’. Another pupil added: ‘Religious Education lessons help our brains to get more information about Jesus’.
- Pupils are supported to become religiously literate, from the very youngest pupils in Pre-School who were discussing the meaning of the red sanctuary lamp in Church: ‘Jesus is there, we can’t see him but He’s all around us’ to the older pupils who spoke confidently about the ‘Wonder Points’ in the story of Peter’s escape from prison and how they too could be Gospel writers.
- All staff have high expectations of their pupils and encourage them to consistently achieve high standards in all their work.
- Almost all pupils make good progress whatever their starting points and many make outstanding progress as seen in current workbooks and all data scrutinised.
- Pupils develop well in their journey through school and emerge as religiously literate and engaged learners who are aware of the commitments of being a follower of Jesus.
- Staff are confident in delivering creative lessons which engage, inspire and enthuse pupils; for instance Foundation Stage 2 pupils enacted a Baptism in a play house that was set up as a Church with one of the pupils leading prayers, whilst in a Year 2 lesson a piece of heavy chain was passed around so that pupils could consider how Peter must have felt when the Angel freed him from chains.
- Teaching Assistants work very effectively in partnership with the teaching staff to ensure pupils have full access to the curriculum.
- Parents feel confident in the school’s delivery of Religious Education and are kept very well-informed about its content through regular newsletters and Headteacher briefings; they are also further informed by their children’s recounts of assemblies – as one parent commented: ‘My daughter loves Religious Education and even acts out Gospel Assemblies at home’.
- Pupils behave well in lessons; they are well-motivated, show sustained concentration when challenged and their achievements are celebrated appropriately.
- Teachers’ subject knowledge is very good and the provision of good quality resources and regular professional development ensures that they feel well supported in teaching Religious Education.
- Religious Education displays and Prayer Focal Points are used very effectively to enhance learning.

- Teachers take full account of prior learning when planning and delivering lessons and most lessons observed were pacy and teachers used very good questioning skills to move pupils' learning on.
- Marking and feedback is generally effective within books but could be further developed to ensure pupils understand what they can do to make their work better.
- Leaders and governors are rigorous in their planning and monitoring of Religious Education as indicated very clearly in the School's very thorough Diocesan Self-Evaluation form.
- Leaders and Governors ensure that the Religious Education curriculum fully meets the Bishops' Conference requirements, and that 10% of teaching time is given to Religious Education in both key Stages.
- Religious Education is well led and much thought is given to ensuring that the curriculum is imaginative, creative and challenging and that it meets the needs of all pupils.

## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

**Collective Worship is outstanding.**

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1
The quality of provision for Collective Worship	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship	1

- Collective Worship is at the heart of everyday life in St John's Catholic Infant School and the wide range of high quality Acts of Collective Worship have a significant impact on all members of this very welcoming community.
- All pupils, from the very youngest in Pre-School to the oldest in Year 2, are involved appropriately in planning and leading Collective Worship and a range was observed on the day of inspection, including the observation of a group of Year 2 pupils independently planning and preparing an Act of Collective Worship that took place later in the day.
- Pupils respond very reverently in all Acts of Collective Worship and a variety of traditional and contemporary approaches, including a range of scripture, religious artefacts and music engages pupils and prompts them to be responsive, reflective and also to sing joyfully.
- A wide range of evidence was provided showing the variety of Acts of Collective Worship that routinely take place in school, and parents are kept well informed of Collective Worship through take home information sheets and information on the school's website and social media.
- High quality resources are available for every class and the Prayer Focus areas, Religious Education displays and 'Sacred Spaces' around school enhance pupils' understanding of the Church's Liturgical Year and particular seasons and feast days.
- The introduction of Mission Days, the use of Prayer Trails and the recent Blessed Sacrament Prayer Day has supported all members of the community in their understanding of their Catholic faith.
- Leaders provide exemplary guidance for planning and leading Collective Worship and the highest priority is given to the professional development of all staff, including the setting of an annual faith related Performance Management Objective.
- All Acts of Collective Worship have a clear purpose and message and pupils are very familiar with the important elements of such occasions: Gather, Listen, Respond, Go Forth.
- Pupils are encouraged to evaluate Acts of Collective Worship and their views shape actions taken to improve the quality of Collective Worship.
- Parents and parishioners are provided with many opportunities to participate in a range of liturgies and they respond very enthusiastically.
- School is well supported by two members of the clergy who regularly visit school and work alongside staff in making liturgy as accessible as possible.

- Leaders are excellent role models of outstanding practice for staff and pupils, as one parent commented: 'The Headteacher is a shining example of a Headteacher' and a member of staff commented: 'The leadership team is proactive in nature, challenging in action and loving in deed'.
- Leaders and governors are highly skilled in their direction of the school and plan thoroughly, provide appropriate resources and evaluate honestly in their strategic leadership of St John's Catholic Infant School.