



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## Section 48 Inspection

### ST JOHN FISHER CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Alvechurch Road

West Heath

Birmingham

B31 3PN

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Inspection date 31<sup>st</sup> October & 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016

Reporting Inspector Deborah Huxtable  
Assistant inspector Bernadette Corbett

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 – 11 years
Number on roll	209
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Tracey Robinson
Telephone number	0121 475 3489
E-mail address	enquiry@stjonfsh.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 <sup>th</sup> & 15 <sup>th</sup> November 2011
DFE School Number	330 3360
Unique Reference Number	103452

**Headteacher** **Anna Murphy**

Previous inspection: 2

This inspection: 3

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## Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors.
- The focus of the inspection was on the quality, leadership, and impact of the school's provision of Catholic life, collective worship, and religious education (RE).
- The inspectors observed teaching across 3 RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Some of these lessons were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic life, worship, and the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- A meeting was held with the parish priest who is a governor and the recently appointed RE governor.
- Meetings were also held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the RE subject leader.
- The inspectors attended a whole school Mass, classroom liturgies and an assembly.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held both formal and informal discussions with pupils and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in RE, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, development planning, data and monitoring reports and Catholic life journal.

## Information about the school

- St. John Fisher is a one form entry primary school serving the parish of St. John Fisher in the Kings Norton Ward of Birmingham.
- The proportion of ethnic minority pupils and pupils with English as an additional language are both below the national average.
- The number of Catholic pupils is currently very high at 90%
- The number of disadvantage pupils vary each year but the total for the whole school is below the national average.
- There are 10% of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- Attainment on entry is slightly below age related expectations overall.

## Main Findings

- St. John Fisher's School has many strengths but the lack of systematic and robust systems and procedures for Catholic Life, Collective Worship and Leadership means that the school currently requires improvement to be good.
- St. John Fisher's has a high percentage of Catholic staff who are committed and dedicated to the provision of religious education in their school. Teaching and learning is good, standards are good and children make good progress within the RE curriculum.
- The school is a welcoming friendly school where governors, staff and parents are proud of the Catholic ethos. Children at the school care for each other, are well behaved and respectful.
- Although inspectors did see some good examples of class based liturgies, collective worship overall lacks a cohesive, whole school plan ensuring consistency, balance of

coverage, progression of prayer and opportunities for participation in the planning and celebration of the Eucharist.

- School self evaluation does not present an accurate analysis of the impact of the school's provision for Catholic life because it is not securely based upon evidence gathered through a consistent, informative system that is contributed to by all stakeholders.
- All areas would benefit from a clearer understanding of the cyclical relationship between self-evaluation and improvement planning. Evaluation of monitoring must focus on the quality of provision and its impact and identify clear areas for improvement. Improvement planning must enable the measurement of the progress and impact of actions.

## **THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Catholic life, collective worship and spiritual, moral and vocational development: provision and outcomes**

- A process of systematic, formal and rigorous reviews and evaluation of the Catholic life of the school by all stakeholders does not at present take place. Some informal evaluation has taken place but the evidence base lacks rigour and this means there is a lack of focus and purpose in the development of Catholic life and opportunities for improvement are missed. The school therefore requires improvement to be good in this area.
- The Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile has a high priority in school and have been developed in line with diocesan guidance through a half termly focused programme of assemblies, lessons and displays. Pupils could talk confidently about the virtues they have studied so far and some composed and displayed prayers relating to them.
- The school has a welcoming entrance and leadership has invested time and finance in making the Catholicity of the school evident on entry. This is coupled with a welcoming staff and pupils who are well behaved, polite and friendly.
- Governors, staff and parishioners are proud of the school and it is regularly oversubscribed with a good reputation in the local community.
- Catechists from the parish work with school staff to provide a programme of sacramental preparation for the sacraments for both pupils and parents. Some parishioners also lead a rosary prayer group in the school which strengthens links between school and parish.
- Staff are committed to participating and supporting the life of the parish and as the parish priest has expressed his desire for the school to have a higher profile in the parish, there is a clear opportunity through effective action planning, to further develop the relationship between the parish and the school community.
- The RE subject lead provides effective liaison with the parish and is highly respected for her dedication by the parish priest and parishioners. She recognises that links to the parish, particularly with reference to the sacramental preparation and celebration of the Eucharist, could be reviewed in order to provide greater participation in meaningful liturgy.
- Pupils are keen to participate in school activities and they willingly take on responsibilities such as being a member of the liturgy team, serving on the altar, providing a buddy system for younger children and funding raising for a variety of charities. During discussions with pupils they were able to express some ways in which the school works to develop its Catholic life but could not fully articulate the

relationship between these responsibilities and the Catholic life and mission of the school.

- Various forms of collective worship were observed during the inspection and children were engaged and focused in the class based prayer times much more than in the whole school assembly and Mass. Although pupils were compliant and well behaved during Mass and assembly, there was a lack of participation by many pupils and a lack of reverence by some pupils.
- Prayer times planned and led by teachers, enable pupils to participate through meditation and reflection. Prayer boxes that are evident in each classroom, which have recently been introduced, are being effective in providing pupils with opportunities to pray. Pupils enjoyed these prayer times and expressed a wish that they could be more regular rather than saying the same routine prayers each day. Although the school has a schedule for the teaching of formal prayers many pupils are unable to recall the appropriate prayers for their year group.
- Communication with parents is a strength of the school and links are made through prayers and information on the school website, workshops and the use of prayer bags. Pupils were particularly enthusiastic about their use of the prayer bags and enjoyed taking them home to use with their families.
- Pupils enjoy singing and have a school choir that takes part in concerts with other parishes and is very well supported by families and parishioners.
- Pupils' understanding of Catholic life and the meaning of vocation is very limited. Vocation is seen only as a religious vocation and pupils are unable to articulate the meaning and purpose of our lives within the mission of the Church.
- Artefacts, statues and crucifix are evident and used during prayers in the hall and all classrooms. Prayer tables follow the liturgical seasons and the school liturgy team are responsible for changing the coloured cloths. Children's work and prayers composed by them are also displayed around the school. The RE subject lead and governors ensure these are of good quality through a learning walk that was completed in the first half of the autumn term and fed back to staff and governors.

## **LEADERSHIP**

### **Leadership of Catholic life and Collective Worship**

- Monitoring, review and development of the Catholic life of the school and collective worship are not consistent or embedded into the life of the school. This means that the school currently requires improvement to be good in this area.
- Leaders do not have clear systems or processes established to evaluate the effectiveness of provision or outcomes for pupils and therefore there is a lack of clear focus for improvements. The RE development plan is detailed but does not focus on new areas for improvement. Many actions are annual events, such as the Reception baseline, and it is difficult for staff to identify key areas that are being focused on this year to move the school forward and measure impact.
- School self-evaluation does not present an accurate picture of the quality and impact of Catholic Life and collective worship, there is too little documentary evidence to show planned, organised and regular use of secure processes and procedures.
- The school provides opportunities for professional development in house during training time and induction of new staff ensures they are well informed and supported.

RE targets are part of the appraisal cycle for all staff including the headteacher and teaching assistants. This is reviewed each half term and reported to governors.

- Governors receive termly headteacher reports which include a section on RE and Catholic Life as well as an annual report from the RE subject lead. The School Self evaluation document and RE development plan were shared at a governors' meeting. Governors have begun to take part in and plan to develop further some opportunities to validate and gather evidence of the reports and data provided to them. However, they now need to be more robust in challenging the head and school leaders in order to validate the information given to them.
- The school has successfully developed good relationships with three other local Catholic schools [the Quad] and they are working together to ensure consistency and the sharing of good practice. A strong example of this was during Lent when children from the four schools got together to plan liturgies for Holy Week which were then delivered in their own schools. Pupils and staff benefitted spiritually from this activity and there are plans in place for it to be repeated during the season of Advent.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

### **Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education**

- Evidence seen during inspection through lessons observations, scrutiny of work and assessment data shows that the teaching of RE is good.
- The RE subject lead is committed and dedicated to raising standards and has appropriate systems of assessment and moderation in place that are fed back to governors through an annual report and to the headteacher and other senior leaders on a regular basis.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are committed to their professional development. Most hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies qualification for teaching RE and this is evident in their planning, enthusiasm for the subject and quality of teaching. Less experienced or non-Catholic staff feel happy and confident that they are well supported and are able to gain advice and help from the RE subject lead and other members of staff. All staff are encouraged to take advantage of the courses and opportunities the diocese and the Birmingham Catholic Primary Partnership offers as well as networking opportunities through the local Quad of schools.
- RE is seen by senior leaders as a core subject and evidence in pupils' books and from lessons observations shows that expectations are in line with other core subjects. This was also seen in lesson observations during the inspection where staff regularly reminded pupils to transfer skills from English to their RE work.
- Pupils enjoy their RE lessons and are able to relate previous learning to new or extension tasks. Observations and interviews show they are keen to do well and are able to work collaboratively in groups or independently. They are still developing their understanding of how their learning can be applied to their daily lives.
- Marking and feedback in RE books follows the school marking policy and is comparable to other subjects and pupils know how to make improvements through consistent and high quality feedback. Teachers regularly provide pupils with questions during lessons as well as in their RE books to encourage deeper learning or develop their next steps.

- Support staff are skilled and well deployed to support teachers and pupils. They demonstrate good subject knowledge and questioning skills that extend and clarify pupils' learning.
- The quality of teaching and learning is monitored by the RE subject lead and headteacher through lesson observations and work scrutiny. Governors also take part in learning walks and this is fed back at staff meetings and governors meetings. However, opportunities to identify key areas for improvement are not always acted upon.
- Processes for assessment of attainment and data collection are in place and all staff complete end of unit assessments providing evidence for judgements on pupils' learning. Data shows that pupils make progress within and between key stages as they develop knowledge, skills and understanding in RE.
- The school has recently moved to a computer based assessment system which they feel will help them better analyse data across school as well as track and support vulnerable groups.
- Staff moderate and level a piece of RE work each half term and this is added to an ongoing portfolio of levelled work which is then used to ensure a consistency of judgements across all classes.
- This moderation would benefit from a larger evidence base being used for each child rather than the current system of one piece of work.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development through a programme of values assemblies, weekly lessons and displays around school. Younger pupils are able to talk about what this means to them at a simple level but older pupils are not able to apply them at the greater depth expected for their age.
- The school plans and delivers a multi-faith focus week when all pupils engage in a cross curricular approach to learning about other cultures and faiths, including visits to places of worship and visiting speakers. A year planner is in place to ensure that pupils learn about the main faith groups and make progress in their knowledge and understanding of other faiths.
- The curriculum, based on the diocesan scheme of Learning and Growing as People of God, effectively promotes pupils learning about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the Church but would benefit from some diversity to develop pupils' further knowledge of the saints and appropriate bible stories.
- Baseline assessments in reception class show children arrive with little or no prior learning in RE. However, later assessments demonstrate good progress so that by the end of KS1 a significant number of pupils are achieving above the expected level for their year group.

## **Recommendations**

### **In order to improve the school should:**

- To introduce robust, systematic processes and procedures, to thoroughly monitor and evaluate all aspects of Catholic life and collective worship that identify clear annual priorities for improvement and to which all stakeholders contribute.
- To develop a whole school policy and plan for collective worship that ensures pupils lead, prepare and experience high quality and varied forms of liturgies that provide balance, coverage and progression. This should include detailed expectations of

times, frequency and themes and should be monitored and evaluated in line with other areas of the curriculum.

- To strengthen relationships with the parish community by raising the profile of the school in the parish through pupils' involvement in shared activities and liturgies.