



St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

URN: 139480

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

04–05 March 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

2

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

Compliance statement

- This school fully complies with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- This school is compliant with the additional requirements of His Grace.
- This school has fully addressed all previous areas for improvement.

What the school does well

- The school's mission statement is a well-known and lived reality, underpinning daily life in school; staff model this consistently well and pupils reflect it in faith-filled actions.
- Outreach and partnership work provides exemplary practical support for pupils and families experiencing need, reflecting the school's commitment to Catholic social teaching in action.
- Service to the parishes St John Fisher serves is strong; the school contributes actively to parish life.
- The headteacher's leadership is highly regarded and it supports the school's Catholic life and mission.
- Reflective and evaluative leadership of religious education sustains improvement and secures teaching that is never less than consistently good.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure pupils can articulate the theology underpinning Catholic social teaching and their subsequent social outreach actions.
- Routinely provide opportunities for pupils, particularly those with higher prior attainment, to demonstrate depth of understanding through high-quality written responses in religious education.
- Establish a consistent standard of prayer in classrooms that matches the quality of whole-school worship.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

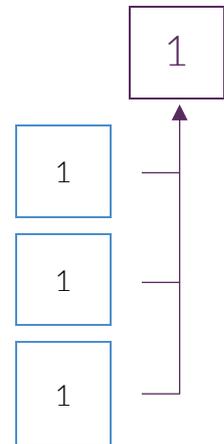
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



Pupils understand the mission statement, 'Let all that you do, be done in love'; it is present in all aspects of the school's life and work. It is known, lived, and enacted by pupils and other community members; it is the golden thread that weaves its way through all aspects of school life. Pupils and adults recognise the school's commitment to building the Kingdom of God, and pupils respond positively within a richly diverse community. Relationships in the school are warm, welcoming, and supportive, and pupils describe the school as a place where they feel valued. Behaviour is exemplary; pupils feel safe and loved, and they flourish in the development of their faith which nurtures them to grow morally and spiritually. Pupils undertake chaplaincy roles enthusiastically, especially as faith leaders; however, their understanding of Catholic social teaching and its scriptural foundations underpinning this work is developing and is not yet fully embedded in practice. The culture of welcome is exemplary, and parents and pupils typically describe the school as 'one big family', rooted in faith, and 'wrapped in love.'

The school's mission is widely known and valued across the community, who are inspired by it. It informs practical action to support families, particularly those experiencing need. Outreach and partnership work enriches the pupils' experiences of Catholic life and mission and provides additional support and opportunities, making St John Fisher a fully inclusive school. A wide range of external partnerships supports pupils to thrive. Pupils speak positively about these opportunities and they engage readily with them. The community is united in God's love, and parents and parish partners speak highly of the opportunities and witness to the Gospel the school provides. Staff are deeply committed to their pupils and work effectively to provide experiences that support pupils' learning and growth in the Catholic faith, and their respectful study of other faiths and religions including Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism further reinforces the

school's welcoming and inclusive culture. Staff are excellent role models to pupils, seen in day-to-day relationships and in the consistent support that teaching assistants provide for vulnerable pupils in lessons and around school. Pupils value highly the provision of relationship and health education (RHE), and they understand with confidence how this reflects the Church's teachings on human dignity.

The headteacher's leadership is widely acknowledged and highly regarded by parents, staff, governors, and pupils, and it contributes significantly to the school's Catholic life and mission. Parents typically describe his impact as 'transformational'. He sets a clear tone for the school through high expectations and focus on pupils' spiritual and moral development, which energises the school community. Parents, staff, and governors describe clear improvement in the school's Catholic life and mission. Parents, staff, governors, and pupils support the school's leadership, and work together effectively to promote a shared Catholic vision. Parish links are a strength in the school. The school plays an active part in parish life, including contributing to sacramental preparation to ensure pupils flourish. The school's commitment to Catholic social teaching, including a preferential option for the poor, is reflected in practical action and is recognised through the Cafod 'LiveSimply' award, demonstrating how the school embraces diocesan protocols. Partnerships with parents is strong, and communication supports their engagement in the school's Catholic life. Work to embed the Catholic curriculum across all curriculum areas is still developing. Provision for ongoing staff formation and support for new teachers is strong and leaders evaluate the school's strengths and areas for improvement accurately.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

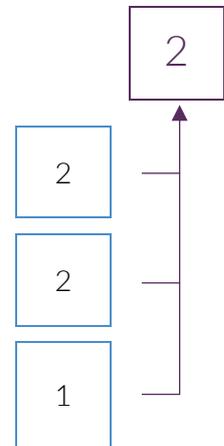
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons and readily engage in them, making enthusiastic and purposeful contributions. Pupils respond well to questioning that seeks to deepen their understanding of the topics studied. While pupils’ oral religious literacy is strong, written responses do not yet consistently show the same depth, particularly for those with higher prior attainment. In the best lessons pupils achieve a deeper understanding of their learning, producing high-quality written work in their books; however, this is not yet consistent across school. Pupils attain well and make good progress in religious education from their starting points. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils make very good and sustained progress in religious education over time. Pupils are proud of the work in their religious education books, and they set the standard for other subjects in school. Pupils listen attentively in lessons and they respond well to strategies that seek to develop their understanding; as a result, there are high levels of concentration and engagement. For example, when a teacher invites pupils to respond as a ‘theologian’, many pupils volunteer confidently to contribute. Pupils learn about their class ‘saint’ in lessons that widen their knowledge of Catholic heritage.

Teachers plan and use a range of strategies to support learning, including multi-sensory approaches, and ‘deepening learning’ mats, which help pupils to engage and make progress. Teachers’ subject knowledge is secure, demonstrated in the confident way they pose searching questions that seek to enhance pupils’ learning. Classroom routines are well established across the school and this supports very good behaviour for learning. Regular provision of spiritual and moral development in religious education lessons set a reflective tone for learning and teachers use scripture skilfully to deepen pupils’ understanding of Christ’s teaching. Teachers consistently pose questions in marking and feedback aimed at deepening learning; however, pupils’

responses to feedback are sometimes superficial and often lack depth, meaning they do not always practise the skills they need to develop to deepen their understanding. Additional adults are deployed effectively to enhance learning for pupils, especially to those with SEND, helping them to participate confidently in lessons. The highest quality learning experiences are not yet provided consistently across the school, which limits the capacity for the best possible outcomes to be achieved by all pupil groups.

The leader for religious education provides highly effective leadership that is valued by staff and supports good provision within the subject. Her forensic analysis of carefully planned monitoring, evaluation, and review processes has led to teaching and learning that is now at least consistently good. She is a model of good practice and subject leadership; this is recognised locally by the Pope Francis Multi-Academy Company (MAC) and at a wider diocesan level. Planned opportunities for ongoing staff development, including for early career teachers and those new to Catholic education, strengthens teachers' confidence in lesson planning and delivery. Staff value leaders' contributions to religious education, including enrichment opportunities like the planned pilgrimage to Lourdes for some staff and pupils. Governors participate in monitoring religious education; however, they do not yet provide sufficiently rigorous challenge to leaders. Religious education has a high profile at St John Fisher and leaders allocate resources effectively, which supports securely good provision and outcomes. Leaders evaluate religious education effectively against national standards and this informs action which contributes to the school's provision.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1

2

Pupils readily engage in the planning and ministry of prayer and liturgy as faith leaders; these roles are well-established and pupils are proud to undertake these chaplaincy duties. 'Gather and pray' groups are used routinely to facilitate worship; these are pupil prepared, with adults providing less support as pupils become more confident. Pupils who prepare prayer and liturgy, supported by peer faith leaders and adults, evaluate previous prayer experiences as they prepare the next one. As a result, pupils make thoughtful improvements that enhance their experience of prayer. For example, older pupils requested that the meditation section of prayer should be held in silence instead of listening to reflective music. Pupils engage and participate in prayer and liturgy settings with respect and reverence; they join their hands in prayer and process in silence or with prayerful song. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils happily engage in prayer, thoughtful reflection and meditation, listening attentively to prayer leaders who proclaim the Word of God very clearly. Pupils sing readily and prayerfully. Pupils do not yet consistently use their own language to explain, confidently and in detail, how prayer and liturgy influence their life choices.

There is a well-established daily pattern of prayer in place across the whole school. The provision of worship creates a very prayerful experience for the school community. Well established routines mean that even the youngest pupils in school know what is expected in terms of their active engagement and participation in prayer and liturgy; for example, pupils make the Sign of the Cross prayerfully and join in with both formal and informal ways of praying with reverence; the use of silence and stillness enhances further the experience of prayer for pupils. Provision uses the school's mission statement and the intercession of St John Fisher as a matter of routine in prayer. Staff are excellent spiritual role models for pupils. Parents are invited to join celebration assemblies, seasonally appropriate prayer, and Mass in school. Whole-school prayer

is focused on the Gospel reading from Sunday, so it always reflects the liturgical season of the Church. Scripture is central to celebrations and its profile raised to the community at every opportunity; for example, on World Book Day, the headteacher introduced the Bible as the greatest and most widely read book ever, before proclaiming the gospel reading to pupils. Creativity is used well to enhance pupils' experience of prayer and liturgy. Class-based celebrations of the word are not yet fully embedded, meaning pupils do not consistently experience both class-based and whole-school worship.

Highly effective leadership of prayer has led to very well-established and purposeful routines in school. Leaders and governors place a high priority on evaluating provision; consequently, 'gather and pray' groups now meet in the hall where mood, setting, and participation are planned carefully. As a result of leaders' evaluations, faith leaders in each class now lead and support their peers in planning prayer and liturgy confidently, and pupil led evaluation is improving the school's provision of prayer. This is monitored half-termly by the prayer and liturgy governor, showing that pupils' views are a valued part of self-evaluation. The school's prayer policy provides a clear framework for planning worship, and a structured approach is subsequently securely in place. Guidance for progression in participation skills is clear and includes planning so that pupils undertake leadership roles at an age and stage appropriate level. Leaders prepare an annual plan of provision (APOP) ensuring that the holy days of obligation are prioritised alongside regular opportunities to attend Mass and access other sacraments, including Reconciliation. Leaders plan frequent, dynamic opportunities for ongoing spiritual formation for staff, including by external providers and retreats. Resourcing for prayer and liturgy is always prioritised, enhancing greatly the experience of pupils.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St John Fisher Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	139480
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	931 3839
Full postal address of the school	Sandy Lane West, Littlemore, Oxford, OX4 6LD
School phone number	01865 779676
Headteacher	Paul Higgins
Chair of governing board	Paul Concannon
School Website	www.st-john-fisher.oxon.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Pope Francis Catholic Multi Academy Company
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	October 2022
Previous denominational inspection grade	3

The inspection team

John Hutchinson
Jane McNally

Lead
Team

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement