



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## Section 48 Inspection

### **ST JOHN FISHER CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **Part of the Dominic Barberi Multi-Academy Company**

Sandy Lane West, Oxford, OX4 6LD

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| Inspection date     | 15 <sup>th</sup> - 16 <sup>th</sup> June 2016 |
| Reporting Inspector | Dominic Collins                               |

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Type of School              | Academy                   |
| Age range of pupils         | 3 – 11 years              |
| Number on roll              | 253                       |
| Appropriate authority       | Board of Directors        |
| Chair of Governors          | Rev Father John Hancock   |
| Telephone number            | 01865 779676              |
| E-mail address              | stjohnfisher@dbmac.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | May 2011                  |
| DFE School Number           | 931/3839                  |
| Unique Reference Number     | 139480                    |

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|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Headteacher</b> | <b>Ms Dianne Carbon</b> |
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| Previous inspection: | 2 |
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| This inspection: | 2 |
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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



## Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector.
- 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 inspector observed teaching across 3 full and 1 part RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lessons were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspector 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.
- Meetings were held with a MAC director, the parish priest who is also chair of governors, the RE link governor, the headteacher, RE leader and a group of parents.
- The inspector attended a Key Stage 2 prayer assembly and observed class collective worship, undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of teaching and learning in RE, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents including the school's self evaluation, data about pupils' achievement and progress, RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, learning journals and minutes of relevant meetings.

## Information about the school

- St John Fisher is an average sized Catholic primary school serving the parishes of Blessed Dominic Barberi in Littlemore and Sacred Heart in Blackbird Leys, these are areas of mainly high social and economic need.
- 114 pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- The school currently has 257 pupils on roll of whom 67% are baptised Catholics.
- 52 pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding.
- 31 pupils require SEND support.
- Attainment on entry is below the national average.
- Since the last inspection the school has become part of the Dominic Barberi MAC of schools in April 2013. The current principal joined the school in 2014.

## Main Findings

- St John Fisher is a welcoming and inclusive school and its excellent Catholic ethos ensures that every pupil is valued and fully integrated into the school community.
- Provision for collective worship is central to the Catholic life of the school, makes a powerful contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils and reflects its strong Catholic character.
- Overall, pupils make sustained progress in RE due to the consistently effective teaching they receive. Strong committed leadership is a strength of the school,

ensuring positive outcomes in progress and attainment for all pupils. Under this clear directional guidance, the school now moves to a new tier in its continuing development, with a fresh vision and a shared opportunity within the new academy.

- Development planning is characterised by monitoring and evaluating outcomes that inform clear priorities to drive the school forward.

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

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

- Pupils' contribution and participation in the Catholic life of the school is excellent. The children themselves are fine ambassadors for the school. Courteous and welcoming, their conduct is very positive, showing genuine friendship, care and respect for one another.
- Pupils know they are valued as individuals and realise that they too have a duty of awareness and consideration for all members of the school community and the importance of their contribution towards creating a harmonious and happy environment.
- The staff are a cheerful, committed and effective team who know the children well. They demonstrate a strong commitment to the Catholic ethos of the school and recognise their responsibility to monitor and guide pupils throughout the day, thus ensuring they aspire to the high expectations made of them. The 'every child matters' agenda is integral to the Catholic life of the school.
- Pupil behaviour and attitudes are very positive because the school places high priority on reconciliation and forgiveness when appraising pupil responses to Catholic life.
- A culture of mutual respect underpins the excellent relationships that are evident throughout the school at every level. As a consequence the children demonstrate a growing understanding of the values of the school mission 'Let all you do be done in love' and are eager to express their Catholic identity in the way they embrace it. A child friendly reminder depicting the Gospel values in the form of a mural, created by pupils in Key Stage 2, is displayed as a central focus within the school.
- Pupils are immensely proud of their school and when questioned, readily declared how much they enjoy coming because, 'there are lots of people to help us... they ask our opinions... interesting lessons... lots to do here.'
- The school offers many opportunities for pupils to engage in a variety of responsibilities and they take full advantage of these opportunities the school provides for their personal, moral and spiritual development. The children respond enthusiastically to these challenges and perform their duties with pride. For example Year 6 pupils act as peer mediators and play an active role in the school 'buddy' scheme to help younger members of the school.
- The school pupil council is a very effective group who meet regularly with staff and represent the views of others. They contribute well to the evaluation of the Catholic life. Suggestions made by them are carefully considered by staff and governors and are actioned where appropriate.

- It is evident that the nourishment of pupil empowerment, relating to the Catholicity of the school, gives a broad insight into the development of their faith journey and has a very positive impact in promoting and strengthening relationships as maturing Christians.
- The children understand that through prayer and alms giving, their efforts can make a real difference to those less fortunate. Charity work is a key feature of the school calendar and they are eager to become involved in these initiatives, older pupils taking on relevant responsibilities where required.
- Prayer and worship underpin the Catholic life of the school and there are many opportunities for staff and pupils to pray and reflect together. Pupils respond with enthusiasm and reverence and understand the importance that prayer has in our daily lives. They are encouraged by caring staff who ensure that times of prayer are conducted in a calm, reflective atmosphere.
- Pupils' knowledge of a variety of prayer styles is well developed. They understand that prayer can be silent and thoughtful as well as sung or actioned. Sensory and symbolic forms of prayer are used very effectively.
- In addition to learning traditional prayers, pupils clearly enjoy composing their own prayers and petitions, which they are confident to share publicly. Beautiful and heartfelt examples of pupils' independent prayers are widely displayed around the school.
- Through their role as readers and altar servers, pupils demonstrate their enjoyment and willingness to participate fully in the school and parish Masses. In order to deepen and broaden the quality of their participation, pupils now need guidance to develop skills in planning and leading prayer and worship.
- Pupils are encouraged to become involved in organising and leading worship and through self evaluation, school leaders plan to develop this further.
- Each classroom has a prominent, high quality prayer focus. Attractive religious displays and quiet prayer stations around the school offer further stimulation for thoughtful reflection. The 'Doors of Mercy' area is a particularly beautiful example.
- St John Fisher is an inclusive school where all pupils are valued and fully integrated into the school community.
- The school also works hard to foster a close relationship with parents, who are regularly invited to join the children in the celebration of Mass. Children are encouraged to use the school 'prayer bags' in order to promote family prayer at home.
- Each pupil is gently nurtured to embrace the Gospel values. This is developed through a 'Wednesday Word' assembly, conducted by the school principal, with each key stage, where the Sunday Gospel is explored and discussed. In this way children are able to relate our own lives to the way Jesus lived, showing love, trust and forgiveness.
- The school successfully creates opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding and celebrate the religious life of others. Children of all cultural backgrounds are invited to read and write bidding prayers for Mass and daily worship in school.

- The parish priests visit the school regularly and have established a very effective liaison with the principal and subject leader for RE. Their support as key partners in planning collective worship, sacramental preparation and the continuing development of the Catholic life of the school is much valued by all the staff.
- Children enjoy celebrating a variety of religious feasts and prayer services throughout the year, including Marian Mass and their class patron saint. An annual retreat is organised for Year 3 and Year 6 pupils.
- The impact of school provision of collective worship makes a powerful contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils and reflects the strong Catholic character of the school.
- As prayer and worship are at the core of the school the pupils are exposed to a variety of opportunities to reflect on how they apply the Gospel values to their own daily lives.
- Through a shared understanding of the school mission, pupils understand the importance of making good choices, being aware of the consequences of their actions and sensitive to the needs of others.
- The school provides a good range of extra curricular activities for the children to enjoy and inspire a sense of achievement through teamwork and sustained effort.
- Pupils respond well to the excellent school ethos, driven by the Gospel message, that love and respect for one another and the importance of reconciliation and compassion form the foundation of Catholic community.
- The extremely effective whole school approach to monitoring and evaluating the 'every child matters' agenda, characterises the commitment of the school to addressing the principles of its mission in action.
- Pupils feel safe, loved and valued as individuals. They are listened to and their opinions sought. This does much to build their self esteem.
- Pupils celebrate the cultural diversity within the school; in assemblies, liturgy and through the annual 'International Week' activities. As a consequence, pupils develop friendship bonds that cross all social, cultural and economic boundaries.

## **Leadership**

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

- Leaders and governors share a strong commitment to the Catholicity of the school and place the spiritual and moral development of the pupils as their highest priority. They are passionate about providing the best possible outcomes for all pupils, a vision shared by a dedicated staff team, who are constantly seeking ways to improve provision.
- Central to all areas of Catholic life at St John Fisher School is the guidance given through its mission that is shared, practised and understood by the school community and serves as a reference for self evaluation and quality assurance.
- The accuracy of self evaluation is perceived by the school as an essential foundation to support its drive towards continuous improvement.

- Since the last inspection it is evident that the comprehensive audit of provision for the Catholic life of the school, refinements that have been made to existing practice, and new systems which have been introduced are having a very positive impact.
- The headteacher sets high standards and expectations for all members of the school community. The collegiate approach to leadership is very successful and inspires a staff team who are supportive of each other and are able to project their professional view confidently. For example, records of RE focussed staff meetings, contain discussions of evaluation outcomes relating to; What distinguishes St. John Fisher from other schools... What we do well... What we need to do more of... As a consequence the monitoring of Catholic life as a shared responsibility is very effective.
- All staff attend the Catholic Schools Cluster Inset and as a result the school has implemented annual retreats for Years 3 and 6. A staff retreat is planned for September 2016.
- Governors are successful in promoting the Catholic life of the school and make significant contribution to the evaluation process. In addition to their frequent visits to the school they receive regular reports from senior leaders and through the effective liaison of the RE link governor who meets with the school leadership in order to discuss Catholic life and related areas of curricular enrichment. Governors have recently established a 'leadership and catholicity committee' that will broaden their knowledge and insight of the school.
- All teachers have a performance management objective relating to the Catholic life of the school.
- Although the monitoring and evaluation of Catholic life is an ongoing practice and is fully integrated with development planning, in order to improve further the school should develop a cycle of formal, more focussed monitoring systems.
- The informative school website has an 'Our Faith' section with links to its parishes as well as information of school celebrations.
- The school leadership liaises closely with the parish priests who are a frequent presence in school. They have a thorough knowledge of its Catholic life and provide excellent support and guidance, particularly with the planning of school Masses and sacramental preparation.
- Assemblies and collective worship follow a timetable that is planned by the RE leader, headteacher and chair of governors.
- The provision of and pupil response to collective worship is monitored by the headteacher, RE leader and all staff, formally and informally, through observation, review and pupil voice.
- At the heart of the school mission is daily prayer and collective worship. Pupils are encouraged to lead through readings, composition of bidding prayers and through songs and hymns. Evaluation made through observation of the response and engagement of pupils and discussions relating to different forms of prayer reveal a positive impact and benefit for groups and individuals.

- Monitoring the quality of collective worship is good because it derives from shared expectations of what constitutes good practice and how it develops for pupils through the school.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

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

- Overall pupils make excellent progress in RE from their initial starting points indicated by baseline data. Assessment data and the high quality of work recorded in pupils' books demonstrates consistent progress in their knowledge and understanding of the faith.
- Pupils are given a positive start in their faith journey in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A rapid momentum of improvement continues and pupil tracking data shows that levels of attainment at the end of each key stage are in line with or above diocesan expectations. Progress throughout Key Stage 2 is broadly consistent and pupils' work shows their knowledge and understanding developing well in its maturity, quality and presentation.
- Pupils enjoy their RE lessons, demonstrate an excellent work ethic, are eager to achieve and perceive their RE books as 'special'.
- RE is very well led and managed by the subject leader. Pupil assessment data is efficiently collated, analysed and shared in order to determine the next steps in learning.
- Class discussions are characteristic of RE lessons and are also used to evaluate teaching and learning.
- Leaders contribute to pupil achievement through regular monitoring and the appropriate actions taken on evaluation outcomes.
- The quality of teaching in RE is consistently effective, evidenced by records of lesson observations, confirming good and outstanding teaching.
- An annual cycle of formal lesson observations in addition to intermittent class visits and learning walks is established in order to provide quality assurance and maintain the high standards expected.
- Lesson planning is thorough and developmental because it is built upon prior learning.
- Positive relationships are clearly evident between teachers and pupils. This, combined with their eagerness to achieve, creates a purposeful setting for teaching and learning.
- Teachers communicate their faith through their enthusiasm and subject knowledge. Teachers who are not Catholics receive excellent support from the headteacher and RE leader.
- In the lessons observed teachers employ an effective range of teaching styles and innovative activities that fully engaged the children, making their lessons interesting and enjoyable.
- Evaluation of pupils' work linked to the quality of marking is good, because of the guidance they are given on how to improve further.

- The broad and varied RE curriculum follows the Diocesan Curriculum Strategy and is carefully planned and adapted so that all pupils can engage fully.
- Those pupils with learning needs receive excellent support and achieve well, following a structured programme, while more able pupils are encouraged to tackle higher level challenges and work more independently.
- The RE curriculum is enriched by opportunities for pupils to benefit from and contribute to a variety of high quality religious experiences such as the annual retreats and helping with the organisations of charity fund raising. They are also encouraged to use their gifts and talents to serve the wider community.

### **Recommendations**

- In order to enhance evaluation outcomes, formalise a focussed monitoring cycle that involves governors and school leaders.
- Build upon existing good practice through developing pupil skills in planning and leading prayer and collective worship.