



# DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on  
behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

URN 118908

St John Fisher Catholic Comprehensive School

Ordnance St

Chatham

Kent

ME4 6SG

Inspection date: 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Chair of Governors: Mr Clive Mailing

Headteacher: Mrs Dympna Lennon

Inspectors: Mr Damian Fox

Mrs Patricia Horsman

## EDUCATION COMMISSION

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR  
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Director of Education: Dr Simon Hughes



### Key for inspection grades

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

## FULL REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is voluntary aided in the Medway Unitary Authority of. It is situated in the Chatham Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. The principal parish that the school serves is St Michael the Archangel, Chatham. Remaining pupils come from Our Lady of Gillingham, and St John Fisher, Rochester. The vast majority of pupils live in the local ward, which is one of the most deprived in the South East (Chatham Central). The school is located in the poorest ward in a category 5 area of deprivation. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 25%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 8.5% in Key Stage 3, 12.5% in Key Stage 4 and 5% in Key Stage 5.

The school provides education for pupils between the ages of 11 and 18. The number of pupils currently on roll is 967. The attainment of pupils on entering is below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average at 36%. Around 19% of pupils receive extra support in class. This is above average. Approximately 38% of pupils are of White British heritage and 16% are of Black African heritage, with another 5% coming from Black Caribbean or other Black backgrounds. 26% of pupils speak English as an additional language.

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## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St John Fisher Catholic Comprehensive School is a Grade 1 Catholic school because:

- The partnership between governors and the headteacher is extremely strong. It is the driving force behind the sustained improvement in all aspects of school life. They are ably supported by a dedicated and expert senior leadership team.
- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. The high level of inclusion ensures that no pupil is forgotten. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds benefit from the care and support from staff in this safe, spiritual learning environment.
- Pastoral care is a significant strength of the school. It ensures all pupils know they are part of the St John Fisher family. They respond respectfully and willingly to the needs of others. The school offers unstinting support for families.
- Collective worship is recognised as fundamental to deepening the spiritual development of pupils. It is central to the daily life of the school. Pupils have many opportunities to pray together and individually.

## WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Ensure the time allocated to Religious Education across all key stages meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- Ensure that teachers of Religious Education are helped to improve their teaching with particular emphasis on improving outcomes through greater challenge and support for different groups of learners.
- Continue to develop the opportunities for retreats for all pupils.



## Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.	1
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### Catholic Life

1

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

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	2
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The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	2
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How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.	1
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### Collective Worship

1

How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship.	1
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The quality of provision for Collective Worship.	1
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How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	1
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## CATHOLIC LIFE

1

### **The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.**

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic Life of the school and derive huge benefit from St John Fisher Catholic Comprehensive School. They articulate great pride in their community and appreciate the praise and encouragement they receive. They acknowledge it is a school which respects the dignity of each individual.

The inclusion of all members of the community, including families, reflects values that transcend the daily life and work of the school. Pupils with different strengths and challenges value the unstinting, and often unspoken, support they and their families receive.

Pupils' understanding of their role in the Catholic Life of the school is evident in the way they treat each other. Pupils commented on the mutual respect teachers and pupils have for each other. The combination of Year 7 and sixth form pupils on one site works very effectively as demonstrated by the easy mix of pupils during breaktime. Older pupils serve as excellent role models.

Fundraising is a significant strength of the school. Through the student voice and Faith in Action Group, a wide range of activities are organised to support the needs of others in the local and wider community. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of Catholic social teaching and the call to 'love your neighbour'.

The Faith in Action Group plays a fundamental role in strengthening the relationship between pupils and with teachers. By being involved in chaplaincy, for example, they make a highly effective contribution to Catholic Life.

### **The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.**

The school's mission is a clear expression of mutual love and service. The school's desire to form the lives and souls of the pupils through faith ensures that they are provided with every support necessary to grow. All staff are committed to its implementation. Pupils speak warmly of the tangible sense of care that results in a community in which nobody is left behind.

A range of teachers from across the curriculum articulate a deep understanding of their role in a Catholic school. They play a significant role in strengthening the Catholic life of the school as a result of the way they are welcomed as members of a Christian community.

A significant strength of the school is the transition process to guide primary pupils into a secondary community. A parent described it as 'second to none'. Effective liaison with primary schools ensures that all pupils, particularly the vulnerable and those with severe needs, understand the values the school holds. Pupils added that they are made welcome.



The school's concern for all pupils is further evidenced in the work of the St Teresa room. Pupils facing daily challenges are looked after and offered a quiet space to think and share their worries.

Behaviour is exemplary at all times as a result of policies that are clearly communicated. Pupils confirmed that good behaviour is the norm because they all respect and want the best for each other.

The curriculum reflects a commitment to Catholic social teaching. The PSHE and RSE programmes are carefully designed and planned to reflect Catholic teaching and principles. The impact is demonstrated in the way pupils across the school behave and the obvious calm, harmonious environment in which pupils live.

**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.**

Leaders and governors demonstrate a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education. They articulate their understanding of the role they play in providing a Catholic community of faith in action. As a result, it is a school in which Gospel values are the foundation of every aspect of school life. The school's self-evaluation is a coherent and honest reflection of rigorous analysis and well-informed planning.

The headteacher is an inspirational presence. She is ably supported by senior leaders as they continuously develop the Catholic character of the school and the quality of life of pupils and their families. Governors are very knowledgeable and experienced. They have used finance wisely to provide a chapel on each site and a budget for chaplaincy.

Through regular visits and the Christian Mission and Ethos Committee, Governors ensure they are well informed of the successes of the school and areas for further development. The improvements in the school over the last five years are a result of their dedication to the common good and the preferential option for the poor. They form a highly effective partnership with the headteacher.

Leaders and governors have provided an honest appraisal of what needs to be done to sustain the excellent progress the school has made. They have sought and welcomed guidance from the Diocese and experienced colleagues. Consequently, they have established a school that is increasingly popular with Catholic families in the local and wider area. The links with Catholic primary schools and the parishes are very strong.



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

### **How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is Good**

Pupils join the school with a wide range of levels of knowledge and understanding in Religious Education. From their starting points, their progress over time is good and school outcomes in Religious Education have been steadily and consistently rising.

Outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is an area for further development.

Standards in Religious Education are on a par with other core subjects. They reflect the interesting ways the curriculum is delivered in the classroom. Outcomes at the end of all key stages are similarly improving. Pupils are quickly identified as needing support or extra challenge, hence the gradual improvement in outcomes year on year. Most pupils display a good level of religious literacy.

In lessons and in discussions, pupils said they were all happy with the Religious Education lessons. They respond well to the way teachers respect them and pay attention to them when they do not understand. As a result, pupils are always engaged in learning. Pupils' behaviour is always good. They were engaged and showed their commitment to learning.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good.**

Learning observed at the time of the inspection and a review of pupils' work confirms the school's judgement that teaching is generally never less than good.

Teachers use assessments to identify and target pupils who need support or extra challenge. As a result, most pupils make at least good progress. Pupils benefit from teachers who continually seek to find more effective ways to support pupils' learning. A range of strategies within a lesson are employed to ensure all pupils are able to access the curriculum, including pace and appropriate resources.

Teachers demonstrate confidence in using time effectively and varying the structure of the lesson to ensure all pupils remain engaged and show progress. Questioning in lessons was good but not always consistently targeted at higher ability pupils. Teachers demonstrate an openness to being guided on how they might improve.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is always good. They quickly settle to work as a result of established routines and expectations. They respond enthusiastically when challenged to think or share a thought.

Teachers use good quality resources and ensure other adults are fully engaged, supporting pupils as appropriate.



## **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding**

Leaders and governors have increased the time given to Religious Education to more than 10% at Key Stage 4. Plans are in place to increase it at Key Stages 3 and 5 in September 2022.

The self-evaluation of Religious Education is an honest and perceptive analysis of the current quality of provision and outcomes. Through their regular visits and searching analysis, leaders at all levels know what needs to be done and how to do it. Governors are well informed of outcomes through the School Improvement Monitoring Committee.

Leaders and governors form a strong relationship and work in partnership highly effectively. They have a great depth of knowledge and understanding of areas of concern and how to deliver even further improvements in all aspects of school life. Governors are well versed in asking the right strategic questions at the right time, offering appropriate support and challenge to school leaders.

The headteacher and her senior team demonstrate strong and inspirational leadership. As a consequence, teachers of Religious Education are motivated to learn and develop their skills. They willingly support each other. They are led and encouraged by an outstanding Curriculum leader. She has built up a cohesive and reflective team of teachers who are delivering improving outcomes in Religious Education.

A process of assessment and tracking is in place. Consequently, teachers know the level of progress of each pupil and ensure each one is appropriately challenged and supported.

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## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

**How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.**

Prayer and worship are central to the daily life of the school. There are many opportunities for pupils to pray and experience moments of reflection and celebration. Visiting Clergy affirmed inspectors' findings that pupils are actively involved in leading and participating in acts of worship.

Pupils are at the heart of this community of prayer. They confirmed they pray every day in their form rooms and before all lessons. They respond with great reverence as evidenced in the assembly and the Celebration of the Word service observed during the inspection.

Prayer complements the spiritual and caring ethos of the school. Pupils' experience has a visibly profound effect on them irrespective of their faith background. There is a deep sense of respect for other faith traditions. Pupils of other faiths confirmed the inclusivity of collective worship. They are at ease when participating in liturgical opportunities.

**The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.**

Prayer and worship are an integral part of school life. Pupils confirmed the range of religious experiences that form the heart of school celebrations. As a result, the school is a prayerful and spiritual community where individual and school worship is part of the daily rhythm of school life.

The range of assemblies and daily prayer serve to offer good provision. The parish priest, who is a Foundation Governor, is a regular visitor. His written reports and the witness of a visiting priest acknowledge that a variety of opportunities to pray was an integral part of the pupils' education.

There is a programme of retreats that include pupils in Years 7, 8 and the sixth form. The school is aware of the value of these retreats and have plans to include other year groups next year.

The school is on two sites. Each site has a chapel that is physically and spiritually at the heart of the school. The Chaplain supports form time and worship, offering support to staff and students to ensure it is always of a high standard.



**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.**

The provision for Collective Worship is a high priority for leaders and governors. Their understanding of the value of prayer and worship is evident in the reports from the Link governor and the Catholic Mission and Ethos Committee. There is a clear understanding of the intrinsic value of prayer for each person and the community.

Leaders plan and deliver high quality Collective Worship and have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts. They ensure that effective continuing professional development (CPD) is delivered to staff. The headteacher and senior leaders act as models of good practice for staff and pupils by ensuring that they are regularly on the rota for assemblies. It is the headteacher's vision for the spiritual development of the community that drives the progress made in Collective Worship.

The promotion of formation goes beyond the school community, as seen in the Deanery Retreat Day. School leaders organise all-staff CPD which focuses on how to lead and encourage prayer with students. Staff feedback reflected that this CPD was well received. Staff appreciate the guidance of the chaplain.

All new staff spend induction time with both the Head of Religious Education and the Chaplain to ensure they are supported in understanding the significance of their role in the Catholic life of the school and the importance of Collective Worship.

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