

DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

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

URN 103009

The John Fisher School

Peaks Hill Purley

Surrey

CR8 3YP

Inspection date: 21st & 22nd May 2019

Chair of Governors: Mr Emerson Samuels

Headteacher: Mr Philip McCullagh

Inspectors: Mr Tom Cahill

Mrs Catherine Burnett

EDUCATION COMMISSION

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Key for inspection grades

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

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The John Fisher School is a popular and oversubscribed voluntary aided Catholic comprehensive school for boys, situated in the Croydon Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It was founded in 1929 and was the first school to be named after St. John Fisher. The school has been providing high quality Catholic education for boys for 90 years. The school is funded by Sutton Local Authority, which operates a selective system. The principal parishes the school serves include: St Elphege's, Wallington; St John the Baptist, Purley; St Mary's, Croydon, Holy Cross, Carshalton and St Chads, Croydon. Data provided by the school indicates that the catchment area of the school has reduced considerably in recent years, with the majority of pupils joining Year 7 coming from 5 local Catholic primary schools.

The school is fully subscribed with baptized Catholics and, at the time of the inspection, there were 1113 pupils on roll, including 240 students in the Sixth Form. The ability of the students on entry to the school is above the national average and the school attracts a fully comprehensive intake. The percentage of pupils with a statement of educational need and/or education health care plan is below the national average.

The majority of pupils at the school are White British and the percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the local and national averages. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is also below the national and local averages.

Since the last inspection in 2013, the school has increased its capacity at the request of Sutton LA and pupil numbers will continue to expand over the next few years. The LA has provided significant funding for much needed classroom accommodation and the school has skillfully managed the increase in pupil numbers without affecting the school's ethos.

The school has responded to the key recommendations made in the previous report but has not made sufficient progress in ensuring the curriculum time for Religious Education meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

The John Fisher School is a good Catholic school with many outstanding features because:

- The school provides outstanding pastoral care to all pupils so they are able to thrive in a safe, happy and nurturing learning environment.
- Teaching in Religious Education lessons is good and teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Prayer and worship are at the heart of school and outstanding collective worship contributes significantly to the spiritual development of the pupils.
- Strong and effective leadership from the headteacher, senior leaders and governors will ensure the school has the capacity to improve further.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- The Religious Education department needs to focus on delivering more outstanding teaching to help pupils to make better progress and raise further their attainment in the subject.
- Increase the curriculum time allocated to Religious Education at key stage 3 and key stage 4 to meet the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. This was a recommendation in the previous report and must now be fully addressed to help reduce underachievement of students in the subject.
- Pupil attainment and progress in GCSE Religious Education requires improvement taking into account their prior attainment when they enter the school. More able pupils do not obtain the higher grades they are capable of achieving yet.



Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

2

Catholic Life

1

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 for the Catholic Life of the school.

1

Religious Education

3

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

3

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

2

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

3

Collective Worship

1

How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship.

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

2

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

1

CATHOLIC LIFE

1

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

- The John Fisher School is a good Catholic school with many outstanding features. Pupils thrive in the nurturing and caring Catholic ethos provided by hard working and committed teachers who provide a strong moral compass for the pupils in their care. As a result, pastoral care and safeguarding is outstanding and the welfare of pupils is always a top priority.
- Pupils are excellent ambassadors for their school and they respond very positively to the many Christian values promoted by the staff including those of respect, tolerance and service to others.
- Behaviour in class and around the school as well as in the local community is excellent and this contributes to pupils' positive attitudes to their learning and the strong and positive relationships they have with their teachers.
- The school's mission statement 'Nurturing young Catholic gentlemen, aspiring for academic, cultural and sporting excellence', is well known by the pupils and can be seen in action every day. The school places a strong emphasis on equality for all and pupils of other faiths are welcomed into this highly inclusive community.
- The wellbeing of students including their mental health is also a strong focus and the school has established a 'Talk Easy Trust', a peer to peer mentoring programme involving Key Stage 3 and Sixth Form students. One student told inspectors that he was greatly helped by the school and now takes a lead in helping others at the school through this activity. The school also runs various awareness weeks for the pupils which include; Cancer Talk Week, Mental Health Awareness week, volunteering week, Safer internet week and International Women's week. Pupils are also supported through programmes such as Rising Futures, Fit2Learn, Mighty Men of Valour and Sport4Thought. The school also works with the Youth Empowerment Service.
- There is also a strong focus by school leaders on developing leadership qualities of the pupils and they take on a range of leadership roles in many aspects of daily school life. These roles include acting as prefects and mentors to younger students. Pupils are also able to represent their forms at the School Council, become Chaplaincy or House Charity ambassadors and all are encouraged to become altar servers.
- Another strength of the school is its encouragement of pupils to support others in need. Pupils and staff raise significant amounts of money each year for local, national and international charities. Charities nominated by students to be supported include CAFOD, Teenage Cancer Trust, First Give, LEPR, the annual poppy appeal, Age Concern, Aid to the Church in Need and Blind Veterans UK.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and this was reflected in the very large numbers of questionnaires returned to the inspection team. Many took the opportunity to provide a written response, almost all of which highly praised the school for the care and support provided to their sons. Inspectors fully support their views.



- As one parent wrote 'Our son is nearing the end of his seven years at The John Fisher School. He has grown into a mature young man with a strong moral compass and a tremendous sense of what is right and wrong. He is fully aware of the importance of service within his immediate and wider community'. Another parent wrote 'The distinctive ethos and strong pastoral care means the boys really do feel part of the John Fisher family even when they have left the school'.
- The school has a very active PTA and alumni who raise significant funding to enhance the learning environment for all students as well as the Catholic life of the school. A new and beautiful stone memorial to those who gave their life in the Second World War was funded by such donations as well as the development of the new memorial garden at the back of the school.
- Parents are kept well informed of what is happening at the school through impressive termly newsletters. The school's website is a helpful additional source of information, although some aspects of the school website require updating as the new school website comes on stream. Parents are warmly invited to a range of liturgical and school celebrations and are kept informed about student retreats and events throughout the liturgical year.
- The impact over time on pupils of the Catholic life of the school is evidenced by the fact that over 54 pupils have trained for the priesthood since the school opened in 1929. Few Catholic schools can claim such an achievement.

The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding

- The long serving but part time school chaplain is well known to the pupils and contributes significantly to developing the Catholic life of the school.
- The chaplain takes a leading role in providing pupils with the opportunities for retreats. In Year 7, all pupils have a day in London where they 'follow the footsteps of the English Martyrs', starting at the Tower of London where St John Fisher was executed and includes a visit to Westminster Cathedral where students pray at the tomb of Bishop Richard Challoner. Pupils in Year 10 also have the opportunity to benefit from a retreat at St John's Seminary at Wonersh as well as a visit to Rochester Cathedral Education Centre. Sixth Formers also have an opportunity to attend a retreat at Our Lady's Shrine at Walsingham in Norfolk.
- Pupils have many opportunities to attend weekly Benediction as well as services of reconciliation.
- The chaplain also provides a popular 'Faith Club' and youth group on a Friday after school. Pupils told inspectors how much they valued this support.
- At the heart of the school is a chapel which is used for Year assemblies as well as a range of liturgical services throughout the year.
- Some pupils also benefit significantly from the annual pilgrimage to Rome.
- Leaders ensure that personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is very well planned and effectively delivered so that pupils are fully prepared for life when they leave the school. The school's Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) policy has been reviewed and is in line with Diocesan guidelines.
- The school is very aware of the dignity and value of every pupil and member of staff and as a result is constantly changing to adapt to the needs of the modern world.

There is a diversity week each year to celebrate inclusiveness and for pupils and staff to discuss issues of equality and justice.

- As the school continues to expand, leaders should consider increasing its chaplaincy provision so the provision is available every day.

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

- The headteacher, who took up the post after the previous inspection, provides strong and effective leadership to the school community. He has a clear vision for moving the school forward and the staff, pupils, parents and governors support this.
- Leaders and governors ensure that Christ is always at the centre of school life and they make explicit, the mission statement of the school so it is known and lived by all.
- The experienced and skilled governing body provides a powerful blend of challenge and support. It is not afraid to seek external validation and advice and has recently undergone a restructuring exercise to further increase its own effectiveness.
- It has also funded regular external reviews through a highly experienced consultant so the work of the school can be fully evaluated and challenged where necessary. Leaders have also developed effective systems for obtaining feedback from pupils and parents regarding all aspects of school life.
- Governors are rightly proud of the school and are determined to support the school in its future development.
- In 2015, an additional school House was created as the school expanded. Pupils, staff and governors chose to name the new House 'Theresa' after Saint Theresa of Calcutta. This represented the school's first woman saint as a House Patron. Leaders are ensuring that pupil voice plays an ever increasing role in the life of the school.
- Leaders ensure that transition arrangements for pupils joining the school are effective and all pupils are carefully inducted into the distinctive Catholic ethos and family which is the John Fisher school. New staff are also well supported and inducted into the Catholic life of the school so they can play their full part in delivering a very distinctive Catholic education.
- The school works closely with other local schools and is a member of the Emmaus Partnership and teaching alliance. The school also actively promotes community cohesion, supporting disadvantaged Catholic schools as well as local special needs schools through the Para-Ability Challenge and Panathlon Games.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education requires improvement.

- Pupils generally respond positively to their Religious Education lessons and build very positive relationships with their teachers. Since the last inspection there has been recruitment difficulties, which has had a negative impact on standards. In the past three years, staffing has become more settled and pupils are now benefitting from this greater stability.
- Although pupils have an increasingly positive attitude to the subject, both national performance information and school data show that pupil progress and attainment in Religious Education at GCSE has declined since the last inspection. As a result, the outcomes of pupils at GCSE require improvement. Analysis of the data highlights that more-able pupils do not make the progress expected of them when taking into account their prior ability and attainment. The school is aware of the issue and leaders are reviewing what further support the Religious Education department requires to address the issue. Action taken so far is reflected in the grades predicted to be achieved at GCSE in summer 2019 but the pace of improvement needs to continue to increase.
- Pupil outcomes at A Level are consistently good although numbers opting for the subject at A level remain low, taking into account the overall numbers in each Year group.

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

- Teachers of Religious Education are hard working and committed and have very good subject knowledge. They have created a safe and positive learning environment where relationships between pupils and their teachers are strong. Lessons are well planned and pupils engage in their learning. Lessons usually have a good pace.
- Lessons are not challenging enough for more-able pupils, so they do not deepen their own understanding. This means they are not able to achieve the higher grades expected of them. There are too few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Assessment and marking is good but the quality of both is not consistent across all members of the department.
- While there are some good examples of assessment and marking in the department, there remains too much variability. This has a negative effect on the overall standards of attainment.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education requires improvement

- At Key Stage 3 (Years 7 and 8), pupils follow a course based on 'The Way, The Truth and the Life'. At Key Stage 4, (Years 9,10 & 11) pupils follow the Eduqas Syllabus B including the study of Judaism. At A Level, students follow the course



offered by the OCR exam board covering Philosophy, Ethics and Christian Theology . Students also have the opportunity to take the extended project qualification (EPQ) and many do so, researching a range of topics of a religious nature. General Religious Education is offered through a series of 'Drop down days' throughout the academic year and through enrichment week activities, which take place in the summer term.

- The subject leader has attempted to ensure that all aspects of the curriculum delivered by the department are in line with the Catholic Education Curriculum Directory.
- The school welcomes and values the support and guidance provided by the Diocesan Religious Education Adviser.
- Leaders ensure that a number of outside speakers are invited into the school throughout the year. Speakers include the Gideon Society who present a Gideon Bible to each new Year 7 student to instil a love of Scripture and to inspire the students to be people for others. Opportunities are also provided through the school's link with the Catenians.
- The leadership of the Religious Education department has changed since the last inspection and staffing is now stable. However, unlike other core subjects such as English and Maths, the subject leader has whole school responsibilities and school leaders need to keep this situation under review so Religious Education is not adversely affected.
- Although the school has managed to increase curriculum time for Religious Education at key stage 4, it still does not meet the requirements of the Bishops' Conference at key stage 3 or key stage 4. As this was a recommendation in the previous inspection report, the school needs to address this issue as a matter of urgency especially as the lack of curriculum time is impacting on the progress and achievement of students.
- The governors monitor the work of the Religious Education Department through their link governor. They are aware of the issues of underperformance of students in the subject but they have not been as robust in tackling the issue compared to other core subjects.
- Governors have shown their commitment to the department by allocating it a suite of classrooms and staff work area in the new building recently opened. Classrooms are bright and spacious but the display of pupils' work as well as other display material is limited in some classrooms.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

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

- Pupils have many opportunities to participate in collective worship both on a daily basis as well as for major liturgical celebrations. They have the opportunity to shape the format of collective worship. For example, in this year's Lenten Service art, drama and music were used to great effect. A large number of pupils mentioned the service to inspectors. The beautiful school chapel, which has recently undergone a major refurbishment, is at the heart of the school. It is the heart of collective worship and makes a significant contribution to the spiritual development of the pupils. Adults in the school community, as well as those from the local community, also regularly attend Masses which take place on a weekly basis.
- Art, Drama and high quality liturgical music and singing also make a very significant contribution to the impact of collective worship on the pupils. The school choir is exceptional and enjoys a well-deserved national and international reputation. They perform at Year assemblies, Masses and other school celebrations. The school should consider using the talents and skills of the music department to encourage all pupils to sing on a more regular basis to further increase their participation in collective worship.
- Weekly assemblies are often related to one of the key values promoted by the school. In an outstanding Year assembly seen during the inspection, the pupils entered the chapel and all, without prompting, genuflected in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, which is reserved in the Chapel. Pupils were very respectful as well as reverential as a school leader and pupils delivered a thought provoking assembly on the theme of 'Fortitude'. It also reinforced many of the values promoted by the school such as selflessness, care and service to others.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good with many outstanding features.

- Prayer and worship are at the heart of school life and pupils have many opportunities to participate in high quality collective worship which is well planned taking into account the needs of all the students. Local priests visit the school at key times throughout the year and generously support the school in providing the pupils with opportunities to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation.
- The beautiful chapel contributes to the distinctively Catholic nature of collective worship at the school, where assemblies, Mass, benediction and services of reconciliation take place. The chapel also has a number of side chapels for private prayer including one where past pupils and staff who are now deceased are remembered through a Book of Remembrance and photographs.
- The chapel also has the Stations of the Cross as well as paintings by pupils of the House Saints.



- The annual Remembrance Day service takes place in the sports hall where the whole school can be accommodated and many pupils spoke about the impact of this service of remembrance on them.
- The staff choir sing each week and the school choir performs once a month on a Thursday after school in a service known as 'Epilogue'. A newly formed staff reflection group also meets weekly.
- To ensure all students benefit from high quality collective worship, no matter who is delivering it, the school should ensure all teachers receive professional development in delivering collective worship and sharing good practice both within the school and other nearby Catholic schools as well as support from the Diocesan advisory team.

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

- Leaders and governors have an excellent understanding of the provision and quality of collective worship and its impact on the spiritual development of the students. School leaders regularly attend Year assemblies and all major liturgical celebrations, as do many governors.
- The Spiritual Life and Ethos committee which reports to the governing body includes governors, staff and pupils and ensures the views of all parts of the school community are represented when it comes to the planning and evaluation of collective worship.
- Leaders have recently reviewed the leadership of collective worship at the school. They have appointed a new person to be responsible who has only recently taken up the position.

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