



# Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St John Houghton Catholic Voluntary Academy

URN: 137908

Carried out on behalf of the **Right Rev. Patrick McKinney, Bishop of Nottingham** on:

Date: 20-21 April 2023

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The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

## Summary of key findings

### What the school does well

- The integrity and passion of all leaders, including governors, are tangible at St John Houghton. This is a popular school which holds Christ at its heart.
- The exceptional Catholic ethos permeates all areas of school life.
- The religious education department is at the forefront of the current progress and developments in teaching and learning at the school.
- Chaplaincy provision is a shining beacon within the school. The approach to collective worship reflects the passion and engagement of the lay chaplain and school leaders and ensures that prayer remains a key focus of daily life for all students, staff and parents.

- Engagement with the community, through 'Faith in Action', parish work, the development of the eco garden and regular coffee mornings, is a strength which is to be commended and celebrated.

#### What the school needs to improve:

- Increase the progress in religious education for all students, particularly the most able, by further developing the quality and range of questioning in lessons
- Improve the accuracy of self-evaluation in religious education to ensure that it is robust and challenging, so that well targeted, planned and identified improvements occur at pace
- Revisit the enriched curriculum in religious education to further promote pupil engagement and deepen students' understanding

## 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

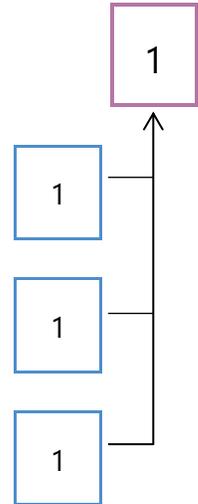
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school .....

### 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 .....



The St John Houghton school community is rightly proud of the Catholic nature of the school and this sense permeates every aspect of school life. All students feel valued and play an integral part within the school family. Students display deep respect both for their peers and staff in lessons and around the school. The language used by students consistently reflects a recognition of the dignity of others. There is a real sense of inclusivity encompassing all faiths, religions, and those without faith. The school routinely supports many initiatives locally, nationally, and internationally. Each year group has a different charity and the school supports Cafod through non-uniform days. Further to this, the school supports families by providing Christmas hampers, with staff sourcing and providing donations. All charitable acts are seen as an 'opportunity to grow in virtue' and support the view that Catholic life and mission at this school is outstanding. Students relish the opportunity to be part of the chaplaincy team, as well as volunteering as active members of the pupil leadership of the school by, for example, joining the 'Oasis team' or Cafod club and becoming prefects.

All staff, students and governors contributed to the creation of the school virtues – CARED FOR. Students understand the importance of these and articulate them clearly: 'Virtues are lived out values'. Furthermore, staff say, 'The school virtues are fantastic – they frame all our interactions with students'. The school has a programme of parish ambassadors (students, staff, parents and parishioners) who act as the vehicle for celebrating the school in the parish, ensuring that messages are shared and received. Coffee mornings in the school, invitations to school Masses, Faith in Action and charitable activities all serve to strengthen this partnership in the community. The addition of pupil representatives on the local parish council further witnesses to the increased engagement with the local parish and priest. The school has a welcoming environment with clear displays reflecting the Catholicity of the school. There is an understanding that the whole of the school is a prayer space. Relationship, sex, and health education is

well led, resourced, and delivered not only in religious education but through subjects in the wider curriculum, meeting all diocesan requirements.

Leaders and governors are deeply committed to ensuring that the school's distinctive Catholic character is upheld and developed. They exercise their duty as guardians of the Catholic life and mission of the school extremely well, ensuring that Christ is always at the heart of everything undertaken. St John Houghton is deeply rooted in the local community, supporting strong links with parents, the parish and beyond. Parents and carers come into school regularly to participate in prayer and liturgy. Leaders and governors are dedicated to shaping and supporting the development of the school's Catholic life and mission. Staff speak positively about the school community: they feel highly supported and valued. Leaders ensure that new staff are well versed in the expectations of working in a Catholic school, providing invaluable induction. Parent questionnaires show that the work that the school does is greatly appreciated and has a profound impact. The school's lay chaplain witnesses her faith and parents say that she 'goes over and beyond with her support of the Catholic ethos and children', acting as a central figure alongside the headteacher for staff, students and parents.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

**Religious education key judgement grade:**.....

### Pupil outcomes

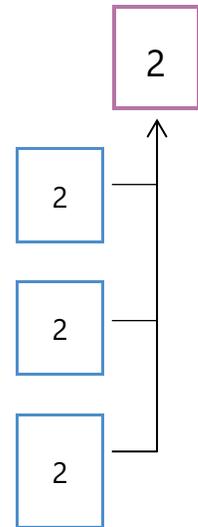
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

### 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.....



Religious education at St John Houghton is good. The leadership of the religious education department is well established and is fully engaged in school-wide teaching and learning initiatives. The department works hard to ensure that all students, arriving from both Catholic and non-Catholic primary schools, make equitable progress. This results in the Key Stage 3 data being comparable; at Key Stage 4, the data is in line with national averages. Students clearly enjoy their religious education lessons and value the subject and their teachers. Students speak fluently about what they are learning, and are clear as to why they are learning the material provided. Students' work is well-presented, further demonstrating the value they give to this subject.

Religious education is clearly the prioritised core subject in this school and is treated as such in terms of: the classrooms being housed in the newest building; all lessons being taught by specialists; the department being fully engaged and at the forefront of driving the new, whole-school teaching and learning strategy; having equitable standing with all other core subjects in terms of timetabling and resourcing. Because all teachers of religious education are subject specialists, there is a positive impact on the learning, progress and enjoyment of the subject by students. The delivery of the content of religious education is structured to ensure progression and development of content at a deeper level as the students progress through the key stages. In the best lessons, teaching is creative, inspiring and actively engages students in their learning. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, where students were learning about Judaism and the importance of the 'Shema', delivery was clear and related to prior learning; exploring how Christians make a statement of faith, students then developed a statement of faith for Judaism. At times, there is a lack of challenge and pace: students do not consistently benefit from the stretch and challenge they need to undertake deeper learning. Year 11 lessons are focused and clear for the upcoming GCSE exams, with opportunities provided to look at exam questions and consider the structure

needed to answer them comprehensively. There is clear consistency in the effective use of feedback which enables learners to make good progress. Students respond to teachers' written feedback, through established systems such as the use of yellow sheets and green pens. The whole-school focus of using a 'cold-calling' method in lessons is used effectively leading to positive pupil responses and attention in lessons.

The subject leader has a clear vision of religious education within the curriculum and understands the role that effective teaching and learning has in developing understanding as well as fostering the value of faith. She shares her expertise across the St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, leading on the development of the Key Stage 4 curriculum, and ensuring a collaborative approach to developing resources and reducing workload within and beyond the school. It is clear that there is a mutual respect between teachers and students, reflecting a positive rapport and professional approach by staff. Local governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement within the religious education department through monitoring. Time is set aside for 'governor weeks' three times per annum, where local governors undertake their duties efficiently and effectively, producing reports which celebrate the positive aspects and highlight areas for development.

## Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

### Pupil outcomes

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

1

### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school  
.....

1

### Leadership

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

1

There is a shared understanding by staff and students of the importance and centrality of prayer and worship in the everyday lived experience at St John Houghton. Students' spiritual development is enriched through the regular opportunities they have for prayer, quiet reflection, sharing and discussion, which they fully embrace. The celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation demonstrate the school's understanding of itself as a worshipping Catholic community. Students express that prayer and times of worship provide a space in which to be calm. Liturgical prayer, 'grounds you for the day', supporting positive relationships and helping to, 'make you more respectful of other people'. Students engage, participate and show reverence throughout worship opportunities, whether these are within whole year groups, tutor groups or in a voluntary setting. Students clearly understand why they pray and they are able to articulate how prayer leads to action, embracing all opportunities offered. Prayer and liturgical prayer is thoughtfully prepared and delivered by the students, culminating in thoughtful responses which enable all present to engage and participate.

The experience that students receive through the school's collective worship is outstanding. Provision demonstrates that worship and prayer are central to the life of the school. The lay chaplain is passionate about ensuring that all students are able to engage in the spiritual life of the school. As a consequence, all students and staff are incredibly respectful of the Catholic ethos of the school. The work of all school leaders in inducting new staff into the school's commitment to prayer and liturgy is a strength of the school. All gatherings of students and staff begin with a prayer where both joy and sorrow are recognised, including staff briefings and meetings. The school environment provides many opportunities for members of the community to pray. The 'upper room', with its distinctive scriptural murals and numerous displays, and prayer places around the building, enable all to understand that this is a place of prayer. The school's website advocates the centrality of prayer and worship in the school, which is confirmed when visiting the school in person.

In recent years, leaders, including governors, have developed clear strategies to successfully strengthen the prayer life of the school. The school's policy on prayer and liturgy captures the all-inclusive vision that leaders have for collective worship. The planning of this aspect of the school is well thought-out and reflects the liturgical calendar. Staff, under the expert guidance of the headteacher, lay chaplain and school leaders, model excellent practice when planning and leading prayer and liturgical prayer. Leaders, staff and students all evaluate the provision of prayer and liturgical prayer and this feedback is used to further strengthen and improve the already impressive display of opportunities on offer at St John Houghton.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St John Houghton Catholic Voluntary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	137908
Full postal address of the school	Abbot Road, Kirk Hallam, DE7 4HX
School phone number	0115 932 2896
Name of head teacher or principal	Steve Brogan
Chair of governing board	Cathy Gabriel
School Website	<a href="http://www.stjohnhoughtonilkeston.srscmat.co.uk">www.stjohnhoughtonilkeston.srscmat.co.uk</a>
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	11-16
Trustees	Nottingham Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustees
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	22 March 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Requires Improvement

## The inspection team

Andrew Bull	Lead inspector
Marianne Wilkinson	Team inspector
Catherine Danaher	Team inspector
Name of inspector	Lead/team

## Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
<b>1</b>	Outstanding	Excellent
<b>2</b>	Good	Good
<b>3</b>	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement

4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement
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