



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## Section 48 Inspection Report

### ST FRANCIS XAVIER CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Part of the St Catherine of Sienna Multi Academy Company  
McKean Road, Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 4BA

Inspection dates:

9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> July 2018

Lead Inspector:

Maureen O'Leary

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#### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:

**Outstanding**

Catholic Life:

Outstanding

Religious Education:

Outstanding

Collective Worship:

Outstanding

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*Overall effectiveness at previous inspection:*

*Outstanding*

#### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

- This is an Outstanding Catholic school because the entire school community wholeheartedly and actively lives out its Catholic mission. The pupils' have a profound understanding of their school motto, 'Jesus holds you in the palm of his hand.' They see it as their duty to tell others about this joyful message.
- Pupils of all ages are enthusiastically engaged in leading a wide variety of the Catholic Life of the school.
- Religious Education is very well planned and taught with great sincerity and skill by teachers.
- Pupils' learning from religion and about how it impacts on their daily lives is excellent. This aspect of Religious Education is an important feature of every lesson from Nursery upwards.
- Collective Worship is the foundation on which the school exists. Daily prayer, in a variety of forms, underpins every school day. All members of the school community enter times of prayer with both great joy and reverence.
- The school's leaders take care to provide the necessary time and resources to enable the highest quality experiences of worship for pupils.
- Pupils of all ages are confident to both plan and lead prayer. The pupils' experiences of prayer, especially in smaller settings, are heartfelt and spiritual.
- Leaders carefully monitor all aspects of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship. Consequently, governors are very well informed about the school's strengths and the areas in which improvements are needed.

## FULL REPORT

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- School leaders and governors should annually review the number of Catholic pupils who transfer to Catholic secondary schools.
- Increase the opportunities for all pupils, but especially the most able, to achieve greater depth in Religious Education.
- Ensure that the presentation of pupils' work is a consistently high standard throughout the school.
- To increase the opportunities for adults associated with the pupils to take part in Collective Worship.

## THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| The quality of the Catholic Life of the school.  | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.                     | Outstanding        |
| The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.  | Outstanding        |
| How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school. | Outstanding        |

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

#### The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

- The whole school community is deeply committed to and proudly promotes its Catholic mission.
- The pupils' have a profound understanding of their school motto, 'Jesus holds you in the palm of his hand.' They want to share this message with others beyond their school, so that people will know that they are loved and cared for by Christ.
- Pupils are actively and enthusiastically engaged in leading aspects of the Catholic Life of the school. Pupils, from Year 1 up to Year 6, have the opportunity to be part of the school council, healthy heroes, Fair Trade team, playground buddies, Mini Vinnies and the liturgy team. They take these roles very seriously and constantly suggest ways in which to develop their impact.
- The school council asks the opinions of pupils about Catholic Life, through a pupil questionnaire. Findings from this monitoring are used by leaders to introduce new initiatives and improvements. For example, the relaunch of prayer bags to take home and the introduction of a prayer tree in the school hall.
- The behaviour of pupils is consistently shaped by their effort to live by the Gospel values. Inspired by the Catholic Schools' Pupil Profile (CSPP) and the example of the adults in school, the pupils are generous, loving and faith filled. As a result, their behaviour is excellent.
- On entering any classroom, visitors are greeted warmly by pupils saying, "Good morning and God bless you." This small gesture enables pupils to regularly live out their school motto.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 6 have responded well to retreat experiences, which have involved them in joyful worship and silent spiritual reflection. Praise music from these retreats has also enhanced Collective Worship and the celebration of Mass for the whole school.

- Through class work, a whole school focus week and visiting local places of worship, pupils in each class are able to find out about other world religions. As a result, they are very respectful of people of other faiths or none.
- Great care has been taken to ensure that pupils have a very good understanding of the lives of a variety of saints. Pupils' knowledge of their class patron saint and school patron saint is especially strong. They appreciate how these saints' lives can act as role models for them. Pupils know the names of their House patron saints, but their knowledge of their lives is less well developed.
- The extensive, vibrant and well cared for school environment proudly celebrates and promotes its Catholic Life. Displays of the highest quality can be found in every area of the school. Among other things, these celebrate the sacramental preparation of pupils, their leadership of the Catholic Life of the school, other world faiths and the CSPP.
- A very beautiful prayer garden has been set up in the school grounds. This sacred area has been thoughtfully created and maintained by staff and pupils. The whole school community values this area and is keen to develop its use even further.
- The school is very attentive to the pastoral care of both staff and pupils. The school partly funds a local charity, single point counselling, which offers support to pupils and staff. Priority has been given to providing morning and after school clubs for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and free after school clubs for all pupils (including a choir and prayer club). Consequently, pupils, families and staff feel supported by the school, especially in times of difficulty.
- The school has a very good relationship with the parish, which has developed well over the years. The parish priest celebrates the sacrament of reconciliation for pupils during Advent and Lent, weekly Mass for the school community and monthly Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for key stage 2 pupils. Parishioners, at the weekly school Mass attended by the inspector, expressed how the school and the parish were one and how they worked together.
- The parish priest has instructed all Year 3 pupils in how to act as an altar server. Consequently, a good number of pupils regularly act as altar servers at parish Masses.
- The parish priest is a frequent visitor to the school and can often be seen greeting parents outside school. Pupils are very fond of him and enjoy his visits to their classrooms. During the inspection, pupils in Year 1 reacted with great enthusiasm when they saw a video message from him, while he was away from school.
- In close partnership with the parish priest, the school prepares pupils very well for the sacraments. Together they have established a comprehensive and thoughtful sacramental programme. This involves parents and carers, the school and the parish. It takes place in school and in the parish church.
- The school is attentive to events in the diocese and has actively promoted and celebrated the year of the priest. This has contributed to pupils' strong understanding of vocation.
- This understanding of vocations is embedded across the whole school. Pupils in Year 1 were able to express not only that 'it is your calling from God,' but that to know it, 'you have to listen to your heart and listen to your talents.' Year 4 pupils were eloquently taught by their teacher how we all have a vocation to be holy.
- Relationships and Sex Education is taught in accordance with the teachings of the Church. The school has recently purchased new resources to supplement the current diocesan materials.

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

- The acting headteacher, supported by governors and building on the excellent example of the recently promoted headteacher, is dedicated to upholding the Catholic Life of the school. He sees this as a core function of his role as the faith leader of the school.
- Catholic Life is given the highest priority in all school planning and improvement processes. Consequently, it is regularly part of whole school monitoring. The termly and robust evaluation of this monitoring directly informs ongoing improvement planning.
- Governors are provided with evaluative information about the Catholic Life of the school on a termly basis through the headteacher's report and reports from the link governor.
- The link governor, through her formal monitoring visits, attendance at training and her participation in the daily life of the school, has a thorough and highly accurate knowledge of the school. Her dedication to this role supports the school in carrying out and regularly reviewing actions for development.
- The governors' completion of a skills audit, from the Catholic Education Service, clearly identified their ability to robustly evaluate the Catholic Life of the school. However, leaders and governors are never complacent about their role. As a result of this audit, some governors have received targeted support about the requirements of the Bishops' conference, to develop their skills further.
- All staff have a specific Catholic Life target as part of their performance management. Consequently, all staff see the development of Catholic Life as a priority in whole school improvement.
- In partnership with the parish priest, the school annually reviews its sacramental preparation programme for pupils. As a result of this review, the programme has been improved to include more meaningful and regular involvement of parents.
- School leaders inform governors of the number of Catholic pupils who transfer to Catholic secondary schools. However, this information needs to be part of a formal annual review. This could then lead to planned strategies to increase this number.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| The quality of Religious Education.   | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.                            | Outstanding        |
| The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.                            | Outstanding        |
| How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education. | Outstanding        |

### **How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.**

- Religious Education at the school is outstanding.
- Pupils enter the school with little or no knowledge in Religious Education. The excellent teaching in the Nursery class prepares children well for their learning in Reception class. The children in these classes are eager and confident to share their

strong knowledge of Religious Education, not only from current learning but also from past learning.

- Pupils continue to make very good progress throughout the school. Any lower performing groups of pupils, even if the difference in performance is marginal, are identified early. Subsequently, targeted teaching and support is put in place to improve learning for these pupils.
- The school has accurately identified that the progress of pupils with English as an additional language is lower in early years and key stage 1. However, due to strong teaching throughout key stage 1 & 2, this accelerates in line with their language acquisition in key stage 2.
- Religious Education is thoughtfully and carefully planned by class teachers. Teachers ensure that they use a wide variety of tasks. As a result, pupils are highly engaged and interested in lessons.
- Pupils particularly enjoy the use of art and drama. The school should consider increasing the use of religious art and pupils' own artwork in lessons.
- In the vast majority of lessons observed during the inspection, the pace of lessons was excellent. This allowed for continuous learning and challenge.
- Teachers are skilful in their use of questioning during lessons. They not only use questioning to assess pupils' knowledge but also to deepen pupils' understanding of how their learning impacts on their lives.
- Although standards in the school are high, teachers are not complacent about developing Religious Education further. The school has rightly identified the need to continue with strategies that allow more able pupils to learn at a greater depth.
- Teachers are very conscientious and sincere about preparing their teaching in Religious Education. Their subject knowledge and the way in which they share this with pupils is excellent. Consequently, the pupils' knowledge of Religious Education is very strong.
- Pupils' recall and understanding of Bible stories is excellent. Their understanding of these stories progresses well throughout the school. The youngest pupils can retell the story of Noah with accuracy, while older pupils reflect maturely on how this event teaches them to trust in God.
- Pupils' learning from religion is exemplary. The school clearly identified this as an area for development at the beginning of the school year. Well targeted training for staff has led to this being a successful feature of every lesson from Nursery upwards.
- The very youngest children in the school are acutely aware of how their learning in lessons teaches them to follow in Jesus' footsteps, as they work and play together. As one child in Reception class told the inspector, after learning about Jesus feeding the five thousand, "When I share my purple crayon, I am like Jesus."
- The practice of written pupil reflections, at the end of each lesson in key stage 2, has also greatly enhanced their learning from religion. For example, a Year 3 pupil, after learning about how Jesus prayed alone on a mountain, reflected that, "Prayer helps me to be faith-filled and loving."
- Teachers ensure that there is a culture of self-challenge and improvement in Religious Education lessons.
- The behaviour of pupils in lessons is exemplary; they are attentive, questioning and reflective. The vast majority of pupils not only strive to do their best but also want to support other pupils to do their best too.
- The vast majority of class teachers use additional adults to very good effect in lessons. They not only support less able pupils but challenge more able pupils to deepen their learning. Their creative use in a Year 2 lesson, observed during the inspection, enabled pupils with significant different abilities to be highly engaged in learning.

- Pupils value their Religious Education books and generally present their work well. However, the quality and care of work in some pupils' books would benefit from further improvement. This would ensure that it is consistently of a high standard throughout the school.

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

- The acting headteacher and Religious Education subject leader are highly effective in developing Religious Education in the school. They both view it as a core subject and ensure that it is given the necessary priority in school development planning and the monitoring cycle.
- Leaders and governors ensure that Religious Education taught in the school meets all the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- Through regular attendance at training and cluster meetings, any recommendations from the diocese are known and quickly acted upon. For example, end of unit markers are being embedded and their use and impact has been reviewed.
- The current Religious Subject leader, building on excellent prior practice, has a clear and effective vision for developing teaching and learning. Her accurate identification of areas that require improvement is a strength of the school. This is the result of well informed monitoring and evaluation.
- Staff have received excellent support and training to enable them to confidently deliver teaching that is mainly outstanding and never less than good. Staff training is very regular and specifically addresses issues identified during the monitoring process.
- The induction of new staff, especially those new to teaching in a Catholic school, is thorough and effective. As a result, staff are confident and skilled in teaching Religious Education.
- Governors have a very robust and accurate knowledge of standards in Religious Education. The Religious Education link governor regularly meets with the subject leader. At these meetings she has taken part in learning walks and book scrutinies. Assessment data and evaluation of monitoring is regularly shared with the full governing body. This enables them to identify areas for development and to ensure that pupil progress is outstanding.

### **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

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| The quality of Collective Worship.   | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.                     | Outstanding        |
| The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.  | Outstanding        |
| How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship. | Outstanding        |

### **How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.**

#### **The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.**

- Collective Worship is at the heart of the school day, week and year. It is very well planned into each school day, in class, phase and whole school experiences.
- The themes contained in all these liturgies and worship profoundly develops pupils morally and spiritually.

- The pupils' response during times of worship is extremely reverent, joyful and sincere. Their heartfelt response was clearly seen by the inspector during Mass, the acting headteacher's welcome assembly, a lunchtime liturgy and in lessons.
- The use of communal sacred singing and music is a real strength of the school. Pupils' sincere and joyful singing is both prayerful and enthusiastic.
- All pupils are very comfortable praying together. This too is a great strength of the school. During the inspection, as part of Mass and whole school assembly, they naturally joined hands with those around them as they prayed 'The Our Father.'
- Staff provide many opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship. Their guidance of pupils has helped them to be confident and skilful. As a result, Reception pupils are keen and knowledgeable about preparing the prayer space for class worship. They are not only able to choose the right liturgical coloured cloth but also the appropriate artefacts to reflect the theme of the prayer.
- Prayers partners meet together to pray every half term. Each class from Year 1 to Year 6 are paired with another class. This provides opportunities for pupils to plan and lead prayer for younger pupils. They take this role very seriously.
- Older pupils have the opportunity to plan and lead class prayer services every two weeks. This is now firmly embedded in Years 5 & 6 and is developing in Years 3 & 4. Each year group appoints prayer leaders, who lead all daily prayers in class. Again, these roles are valued and respected by pupils.
- Some older pupils regularly volunteer to lead lunchtime liturgies. These pupils are highly skilled in providing meaningful worship experiences. During the inspection, the pupils' use of a child friendly liturgy planner resulted in creative worship that was reverent and which visibly uplifted the pupils (and inspector) who attended it.
- Through good planning and teaching, pupils have an excellent understanding of traditional prayers. Pupils not only know but also value these prayers. Nursery children were very thorough in teaching the inspector how to make the sign of the cross correctly.
- The use of class prayer journey books records various pupil prayer experiences. These reflective journals help pupils and staff to continually celebrate, review and develop Collective Worship.
- The school actively encourages other adults to attend worship at school or Mass in the parish church. Attendance at pupil planned services for parents has increased due to a change in their timing. Parents have responded very positively to these sessions, which they find inspirational.
- The school takes an active part in parish worship and attend nine school parish Sunday Masses throughout the year. The school and parish priest are eager to encourage an even greater participation of parents at the celebration of school and parish worship.

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

- Collective Worship is carefully planned by school leaders and the Religious Education subject leader, to reflect the liturgical year and the virtues promoted through the CSPP. As a result, pupils are able to experience a wide range of liturgies and worship. Among other things, these include weekly Mass, monthly Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, a May Procession to honour Our Lady, Holy Week liturgies and daily worship in class, key stages or with the whole school.
- School leaders are sincere, confident and skilled in delivering Collective Worship. They constantly remind pupils that meeting God in prayer is a core purpose of the school's mission.

- Staff are given appropriate training and support to lead Collective Worship. As a result, teachers take great care to plan Collective Worship that engages and challenges pupils to develop spiritually and morally.
- Class teachers are given regular opportunities to lead Collective Worship beyond their own classes. They are confident in leading this worship, where they can act as faith models for pupils.
- The termly and systematic monitoring and evaluation of Collective Worship, and aspects of Catholic Life that support worship, has helped to maintain consistently high-quality experiences of worship. For example, analysis of monitoring resulted in a renewed focus on traditional prayers and the reorganisation of parent prayer services.
- Governors are not only aware but also challenge the evaluation of any monitoring. After being informed about the excellent prayer areas around school, governors wanted to know how the impact of these areas could be maintained.
- Parents and carers greatly value the Collective Worship provided by the school. 100% of parents and carers, who responded to a survey, felt that Collective Worship was high quality and an integral part of the school.

## SCHOOL DETAILS

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| Unique reference number   | 141922   |
| Local authority   | Sandwell   |
| <i>This inspection was carried out under canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the 2005 Education Act.</i> |  |
| Type of school  | Primary  |
| School category   | Academy  |
| Age range   | 3-11 years old   |
| Gender of pupils  | Mixed  |
| Number of pupils on roll  | 261  |
| Appropriate authority   | The board of directors   |
| Chair   | Joyce Gardner  |
| Acting Headteacher  | David Simmons  |
| Telephone number  | 0121 552 1485  |
| Website address   | <a href="http://www.st-francisxavier.sandwell.sch.uk">www.st-francisxavier.sandwell.sch.uk</a>       |
| Email address   | <a href="mailto:office@st-francisxavier.sandwell.sch.uk">office@st-francisxavier.sandwell.sch.uk</a> |
| Date of previous inspection   | 23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2013  |

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL**

- The school serves the parishes of St Francis Xavier and The English Martyrs in Oldbury, West Midlands.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 84%.
- The percentage of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is broadly in line with the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is above the national average.
- Attainment on entry is below age-related expectations.
- The previous headteacher left the school at Easter 2018. The deputy headteacher is currently acting headteacher. A new headteacher has been appointed for September 2018. Since the last inspection, the school was designated as a National Teaching School and a lead school for initial teacher training.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION**

- The inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality and leadership of the school's provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspector observed teaching across seven Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspector completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.
- Meetings were held with a group of three governors, including the Catholic Life link governor, the acting headteacher, the Religious Education subject leader and the parish priest. The inspectors also met parents and parishioners at the school gates and at Mass.
- The inspector attended a whole school Mass, whole school Collective Worship, a pupil led lunchtime voluntary prayer service and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in Religious Education, 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' attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, the Catholic Life action plan, teachers' planning and learning journals.