



Archdiocese of
Liverpool



Diocese of Liverpool

Report on the Denominational Inspection
carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act of 2005

THE ACADEMY OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI
A JOINT CATHOLIC AND ANGLICAN ACADEMY

Gardners Drive
Liverpool
L6 7UR

Inspection date: Thursday/Friday 30 April and 1 May 2026

Date of previous inspection: Tuesday/Wednesday 6 and 7 March 2018

URN 144493

Inspectors: Deacon Paul Mannings
Mrs Fiona Ashton

Type of School: Academy (Non-maintained)

Age range of pupils: 11 – 16 (mixed)

Number on roll: 900

Chief Executive Officer: Miss Heather Duggan

Chair of Governors: Mr James Kilburn

Headteacher: Ms Teresa Bleasdale

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The report of the inspection is produced for the Anglican Diocese and the Archdiocese of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

Description of the school

The Academy of St Francis of Assisi is a joint Catholic and Church of England 11-16 mixed school, which is part of the All Saints Multi-Academy Trust, serving the Archdiocese and Diocese of Liverpool. Baptised Catholics account for 18.1% of the roll. Those who are baptised Anglicans/Church of England account for 4.6% of the roll with 31.6% from other Christian denominations and 26.2% from other world faiths and religions. The Academy receives students from eight primary schools across local neighbourhoods that rank high amongst national percentages of social deprivation. English is an additional language for 50.3% of the students. The proportion of students eligible for the Pupil Premium stands at 58.9%. The proportion of students who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is 34.2%. The headteacher and eight other members of senior leadership have been appointed since the last inspection. The Religious Education Department has six qualified members of staff.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

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The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Christian Life at the Academy is outstanding.

The Academy of St Francis of Assisi has continued over time to establish what is now a whole generation of membership and connection within the local community and wider neighbourhoods. This is because its mission and values serve in maintaining a school ethos that is wholly Catholic and wholly Church of England. This is upheld by the Trust, headteacher, chaplain, and leaders, including governors through an inclusive programme for monitoring and evaluation.

Grade: 1

The effectiveness of Collective Worship is outstanding.

Collective Worship is at the foundation of the school's Christian life. Prayer and worship are well led, inclusive and speaks to the community of participants in terms of how its meaning can be lived in everyday life.

Grade: 1

The effectiveness of Religious Education is good with outstanding features.

This subject continues to maintain meaning, purpose and commitment from staff and students. This is a highly organised department that continues to move forward in raising attainment and achievement amongst its students.

Grade: 2

Improvement in Religious Education since the last inspection

Rates of student performance have continued to rise since the last inspection and is wholly inclusive of the increased percentage of SEND students.

Grade: 2

Capacity to improve

The capacity to improve is outstanding because of the direction provided by the school's self-evaluation document in its actioning of areas for development.

Grade: 1

Focus for development

In both key stages, extend and strengthen existing strategies within Religious Education to promote student outcomes.

The development of the school's distinctive Christian nature is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners.

Students and staff know they are valued as made in the image and likeness of God. St Francis of Assisi is a school in which they can "Let their light shine" through pastoral care and programmes of study that combine to motivate personal connection and aspiration within this community. This ensures the pursuit of high levels of progress and attainment that are at least good. Students say that their school is inclusive and just, a place in which everyone is equal and valued. Consequently, their personal confidence, maturity and levels of independence are enriched. Adults and students speak about how the school's Christian values strengthen this community and encourage their positive interactions between their homes, neighbourhoods and where appropriate their church and other faith communities.

Adults and students explain how Christian values underpin their spiritual development, which in turn reinforces their confidence in pursuing what is morally right through mutual respect, behaviour and restorative practice that corrects any wrongdoing and promotes forgiveness as well as the desire to move on from negativity. Cultural awareness ensures correct understanding of each other and works to cultivate personal identity and eliminate any barriers caused by perceptions. The whole environment of the school encourages spiritual development through its well-used chapel, religious objects, inscriptions and displays around the school. St Francis of Assisi as the patron of ecology is well promoted through the school's environmental focus upon the landscape and its gardens.

The quality of Religious Education has continued to improve over time from a basis that was good to significant areas that are now outstanding. The content is taught in a way that makes it relevant to the wider community. Consequently, students take this subject seriously and link it well to the Christian life of the school. They highly appreciate the care and guidance of the school chaplain who shows abundant care for them and facilitates their participation and collaboration with adults in promoting faith through action in an exemplary range of projects and fundraising events for the needs of others. Students value both the Hive and wider combined works of the staff in supporting their wellbeing. Staff and Student Voice underpin all that continues to be achieved through its ongoing development of Christian life.

Grade 1

The effectiveness of the provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

Members of the school community value Collective Worship which is at the foundation of its Christian character. The practical policy document provides clear guidelines for the efficient systems in place for quality planning, monitoring and evaluation involving the Trust, governors, staff and students. This ensures the identification of best practice and how this can support any areas identified for continued development. Formal and informal spaces within the chapel provide scope for varying styles of private and public acts of worship. Here and in the developed assembly hall and in classrooms, careful presentations, times for prayer and personal reflection all encourage a sense of personal and spiritual space. The chaplain efficiently coordinates prayer and worship, supported by his two teams of adults and

students. Together they are well prepared and confident in their use of weekly prayer themes and selected scripture.

Members of the school community appreciate Collective Worship because it encourages them to gather, listen, reflect and respond in their own ways. Those who lead worship are well prepared and supported. The school is served by a significantly large Christian community of staff involved in provision and presentation. Students are encouraged to train as leaders. They show good and better levels of participation and involvement. They understand that acts of worship are times for prayer and personal space rather than performances. Students know that worship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are at the heart of the school's prayer life. They can recognise and discuss the school's values revealed within Collective Worship. Their confident discussion during worship is considered and meaningful, therefore indicating a community that takes its prayer life seriously and with reverence. There is effective distinction between assemblies and dedicated times of prayer.

Collective Worship is Christian and clearly upholds the Anglican and Catholic traditions of the school whilst remaining inclusive of all worshipping communities. This is reflected in the provision of prayer, music and singing, together with the scope and variety of its resources. The Church Year is upheld to include Advent, Lent, Easter and ordinary time. There are well established links with the local churches, clergy and ministers together with contributions from the local community. Beyond school, the community actively participates in the prayer and liturgy seasonal events at both cathedrals. Governors, parents and visitors are frequently invited to be part of Collective Worship at school.

Grade: 1

The effectiveness of Religious Education is good with outstanding features.

There is a significantly improving trend in students' performance in Religious Education. They are motivated to aim for challenging targets. Most teaching groups achieve well and make good progress in relation to their starting points, which include a high proportion on the SEND register. There is prioritised focus on students gaining good acquisition of knowledge, understanding, skills and concepts. They readily and confidently discuss their progress routes.

Teaching is at least good and in areas outstanding. This is because there are high expectations of students from teachers who know their subject and how to apply the curriculum. Planning, differentiation and assessment are clear and used consistently well, with students involved in the identification of their strengths and how to use prior and current learning to make good progress. There are well designed strategies for supporting students in their understanding of Anglican and Catholic responses to faith. Their learning is effective because they understand the value of Religious Education in their personal lives and through interaction with home and school communities. Students readily link belief to everyday situations. All year groups receive the required curriculum time for Religious Education. The content is clearly focused on the needs of students and there are clear routes of progress. Throughout the programmes of study there is an abundance of clear links between faith and practice. In Key Stage 4 students are entered for GCSE and performance rates continue to rise.

There is outstanding leadership of Religious Education at all levels. Leadership and governors are committed to its place at the core of the whole curriculum. The subject leader is highly skilled and motivates his team to give of their best and to share good practice. The self-evaluation of Religious Education is meticulous in its practical organisation. Rigorous monitoring by leadership, including governors impacts upon rigorous action planning supported by challenging yet realistic targets. There is ongoing need-specific continued professional development that includes provision from both dioceses.

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the Leadership and Management is outstanding

The Christian vision of the headteacher is rooted in the care of this Christian community and in ensuring its living of the mission to 'Live, love and learn together in the light of Christ', supported by its core values of pride (in each other), respect and ambition. Indeed, this vision is at the heart of everything that is undertaken at St Francis of Assisi. It is shared by the Trust, chaplain, leaders and governors. Adults and students join in conversation about the school's Anglican and Catholic mission. They relate it clearly to their values. Furthermore, the mission and values are expressed in all school policies. Adults at this school are committed singularly to help students achieve their holistic maximum potentials.

The Trust, leadership and management, including the chaplain and governors undertake strategic monitoring and evaluation of Christian life that includes a shared community approach. All outcomes are expressed in the quality self-evaluation document and by planned improvement. Adults and students are challenged to give of their best. Significant improvement has taken place in the quality of provision in Religious Education and Collective Worship.

This school is as much about its place in the wider local community, which is expressed by the sharing of its mission and values with parents, carers and by the consistent chaplaincy team support from local churches and enterprises. Returns from questionnaires make clear the high levels and support from the school and the wider community for the extent to which Christian life is owned, shared and connected between all who are involved.

Grade: 1

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in developing its distinctive Christian nature	1
The effectiveness of Collective Worship	1
The effectiveness of Religious Education	2
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	1

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

How good are outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils?	
How well pupils achieve and make progress in Religious Education	2
How well pupils attain in Religious Education	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Christian life of the school	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1

PROVISION

How effective is the Religious Education?	
The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	1
The effectiveness of assessment in Religious Education	1
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	1
How effective is the provision for Collective Worship?	
How well Collective Worship supports spiritual and moral development	1

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective is the leadership and management of the Christian life of the school?	
How well leaders and managers use the Mission Statement to promote, a distinctive Christian vision for the school.	1
The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for all aspects of its distinctive Christian nature so areas needing development are tackled decisively and responsibilities met.	1
How effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion	1

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory and grade 4 inadequate	Grades
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