

St John Fisher Catholic High School

URN: 148855

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Leeds

10 June 2026 – 11 June 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education RE

Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

2

1

2

1

Yes

Yes

Fully

What the school does well

- Leaders, governors and staff demonstrate a deep commitment to the Catholic life and mission of the school based on a clear, shared vision.
- Chaplaincy is a strength of the school. The lay chaplain, expertly supported by senior leaders, is inspirational in his work.
- Pastoral care is outstanding, the pastoral team know the vulnerabilities of every child and work to provide a safe environment where students flourish.
- The subject leader for religious education has a strong commitment to improvement and, with support from senior leaders, uses her expertise well to drive new initiatives in teaching and learning.
- Student participation during prayer and liturgy is outstanding, they show reverence and respect at these times and value the opportunities given to them by the chaplaincy team.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all students are clear about the school's mission statement, knowing how this relates to their spiritual and moral development.
- Develop questioning techniques that foster higher level thinking and a desire for deeper learning.
- Ensure greater consistency in assessment and feedback in religious education so that all students know how to develop their disciplinary skills.

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

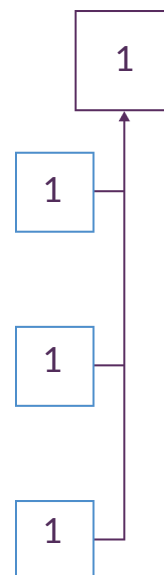
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



At St John Fisher, students articulate a clear understanding of what makes the school distinctively Catholic. They identify prayer, shared values and opportunities for service as key elements of their school day, participating in a wide range of activities that strengthen the school's Catholic identity. They also describe the concrete ways in which they live out the school's virtues, commenting on their works with charities such as volunteering in the soup kitchen at St Pio's Friary and fundraising for the Diocesan Good Shepherd Appeal. Relationships between students and staff are excellent and students frequently mention the school's focus on the uniqueness of the individual, speaking eloquently about 'imago dei'. Consequently, they are happy in school and feel safe. Sixth form students cite high expectations and a strong sense of Catholic community as key factors in choosing the school for their studies. They engage well with the school's Stella Maris Award, which gives them an opportunity to demonstrate the school's virtues and strengthen their commitment to Catholic social teaching principles. Chaplaincy opportunities are highly valued by students, who speak enthusiastically about their contributions to their peers and those in the wider community.

A recent review of the school's mission statement has given all stakeholders an opportunity to refocus on the school's purpose but some students struggle to make the connection between the school's mission statement and their role as members of a Catholic community. However, the school's virtues are known and lived out by students who can describe how these shape their attitudes and actions, commenting that the school actively builds their confidence, leadership and service through chaplaincy roles and community activities. The introduction of the Key Stage 3 Baccalaureate enables students to engage with real-world issues and

contribute to the common good. This is a recent initiative and has yet to be embedded but students are keen to be involved and speak positively about it. The numerous opportunities available for enrichment are made possible through the unstinting commitment of staff, who are excellent role models. They are keen participants in providing a rich Catholic life experience for all. Pastoral care is a strength of the school, with students commenting on the unfailing support they receive from the pastoral team. Chaplaincy provision is outstanding; it is thoughtful, well-planned and has impact. The lay chaplain, expertly supported by the leadership team, offers high quality and creative opportunities that are welcomed by students and enrich Catholic life.

Governors and leaders are ambitious for their school and speak with clarity about their rationale for provision, having the seven pillars of Catholic social teaching at the forefront of their thinking. They work to ensure that Christ is at the centre of all they do and, as a result, Catholic life and mission have the highest priority. This rationale drives all policy and practice and ensures that students always have the opportunity to encounter Christ during their school day. Leaders have ensured that links with the wider community have strengthened over recent years, and parents and carers confirm this. Monitoring and evaluation processes are robust and students value having a voice in these. They know they are listened to, stating that their views have an impact on leaders' deliberations and help to shape provision. The school is part of the Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust and works well with the family of schools to strengthen Catholic life through a collaborative approach. Engagement with Diocesan training is strong and the school benefits from the comprehensive programme in place.

Religious education

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

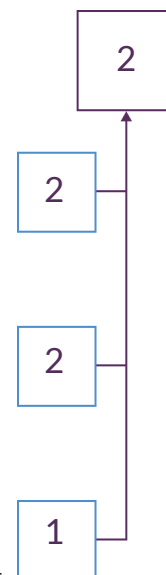
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Students enjoy religious education, speaking enthusiastically about their work and commenting on the strong relationships that they have with staff. A good number of students choose to study courses beyond GCSE related to religious education and achieve strong results. They know that the work they do in religious education gives them an understanding of other faiths and prepares them for life in a multicultural society. Behaviour in lessons is good and students concentrate well when completing tasks. There is good evidence of independent learning in books and students can clearly explain how they are developing knowledge and understanding in their learning. However, students in Key Stage 3 struggle to articulate how they develop their skills in the subject. 'Learn Now' activities help students to remember prior learning and they demonstrate this well. They appreciate the range and variety of teaching styles that are adopted by the department during lessons and their focus in lessons reflects this. Religious literacy is good, being evident during recall and questioning sessions. Student books are well presented and there is clear evidence that the vast majority are making good progress in religious education. Consequently, academic outcomes are strong, being in line with other core subjects within the school; with more able students performing particularly well.

All members of the religious education department are subject specialists. This ensures strong subject knowledge and staff confidence when teaching. Staff have high expectations and students are aware of this. Planning is formed by ongoing assessment and adaptive teaching styles are deployed to suit the learner. Teaching is typically good and students' work

gives examples of the different learning styles that are deployed in lessons. Questioning is used to good effect, but this could be extended beyond retrieval questions to offer opportunities for reflection and a focus on evaluative and analytical skills. Student assessment and feedback highlights areas for improvement, but there are inconsistencies in informing students of what they need to do to develop their skills at Key Stage 3, this is embedded with older students. The continued focus on adaptive teaching, which is used to good effect within the department, maintains high expectations and ensures that all learners access the same ambitious curriculum through real-time adjustments and responsive scaffolding, thus fostering engagement and helping students to become independent learners. The use of praise in the classroom is a strength with students responding well to warm words of encouragement from staff.

Governors know their community well and are able to offer considered and thoughtful strategic direction. Working closely with leaders they have developed a good understanding of their school and its areas for development. They view religious education as 'the core of the core' and prioritise training for the department, taking up the extensive offer available through the Trust and the Diocese. The *Religious Education Directory* has been fully embraced and implemented, with the school continually looking for ways to refine content. Work has started on the introduction of 'the ways of knowing' to pupils but is not yet embedded. Senior leaders are good at communicating their intentions and are thoughtful in their approach to change, staff feedback highlights this. The head of religious education has a passion for her subject. She is ably supported by her line manager and they work effectively together, being held in high regard by the department. They have put plans in place to address areas for development but these plans are newly introduced and not yet embedded. Leaders and governors have ensured that there are robust monitoring and evaluation processes for religious education and this work, which involves all stakeholders, has improved provision.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

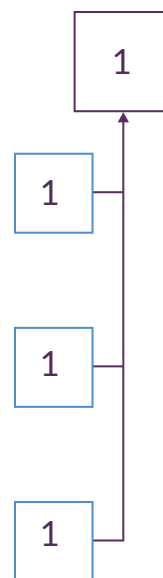
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

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



A wide variety of opportunities for prayer and liturgy are on offer at St John Fisher and students value this. They appreciate the active and participatory nature of the prayer life of the school. Students describe extensive and inclusive opportunities to participate in prayer and liturgy; these include form prayer, lectio divina, Masses and chaplaincy leadership. They comment that prayer is accessible and well supported, enabling confidence when reading, singing, playing music and leading in assemblies. Communal singing during liturgies is excellent, with all students participating. Older students describe a culture in which worship is inclusive and meaningful, students of other faiths and none comment positively on this too. Reflection during liturgical celebrations is valued by all and contributes to a deeper understanding of scripture and spiritual growth. They comment that this allows them to consider daily scripture and they can confidently articulate how their reflections impact on their actions during the school day and in the wider community. The programme for prayer and liturgy is aligned with the liturgical year and students are aware of this, understanding that their prayer life is formed by the liturgical seasons.

Staff are united in affirming the centrality of prayer for all members of the school community. This is supported by strong partnerships with local clergy who further enrich these times of worship. The familiar pattern of high-quality, daily prayer provides a reflective and purposeful pause, reminding students that the school's virtues are their focus. Key staff are adept at collaborating with students to upskill them in their preparation, fostering a strong sense of ownership and reverence. This is a consequence of the robust staff induction process in place, and outstanding continuing professional development. The lay chaplain provides

thought-provoking guidance that enables staff to deliver prayer and liturgy which matches the needs of students, who comment that he is always keen to nurture and develop the gifts of others. All members of the school community benefit from his open-door approach, which fosters discussion and learning regarding liturgical matters. The chapel, in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, is a respected space that is open at all times. Students understand the importance of this and behave accordingly. The school works well with families to include them in their prayer and liturgy and there are numerous opportunities for them to do so. Families comment that this has improved over recent years.

Leaders and governors have worked closely with their Trust partner schools to develop a well-considered Prayer and Liturgy policy that has been tailored to suit the needs of the individual schools within the Trust. This has ensured that the policy in practice maintains the ethos of the school. Ample time and resourcing are dedicated to appropriate prayer and liturgy, and leaders take time to ensure that planned events motivate and engage students, inspiring them to action. The local parish priests offer weekly Mass in school and the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. The school also prioritises holy days of obligation and patron days, with Mass being celebrated to mark these. Leaders ensure that there are regular formation opportunities within their training and development programme and staff value this. Governors and leaders know their school well and the evaluation of prayer and liturgy by leaders, staff and students has high priority, informing future planning and refining the provision for prayer and liturgy. The mutually beneficial relationship between the Trust and the Diocese has enabled senior leaders to focus on strengthening the school offer and this is evident in a richer experience for all.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St John Fisher Catholic High School
School unique reference number (URN)	148855
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8154609
Full postal address of the school	St John Fisher Catholic High School, Hookstone Drive, Harrogate, HG2 8PT
School phone number	01423 887254
Headteacher or Head of School	Mr Steve Mort
Chair of Governors	Dr Stephen Gregson
School Website	www.sjfchs.org.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	11 - 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	06 June 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The Inspection Team

Mark Taylor Lead

Marianne Wilkinson

Kathleen Bailey

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement