

INSPECTION REPORT

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**Inspection carried out Under Canon 806
and in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

Name of School **St John Fisher RC Primary School, Manor Road, Haughton Green, Denton, Manchester, M34 7SW**

Inspection date 24th June 2019

Reporting Inspectors Julie Frazer, Pam Macro and Donna McNicoll

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| Type of school | Primary |
| URN | 106255 |
| Age range of pupils | 3 – 11 |
| Number on roll | 248 |
| Appropriate authority | The Governing Board |
| Chair of Governors | Donal Townson |
| Headteacher | Mandy Harris |
| Religious Education Subject Leader | Robert Tanti |
| Date of previous inspection | 5 th December 2013 |

| The Inspection judgements are: | Grade | Explanation of the Grades |
|---|--------------|---|
| Overall effectiveness of the school | 2 | 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate |
| Catholic Leadership | 2 | |
| The Catholic Life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness) | 2 | |
| Religious Education (incorporating Word) | 2 | |
| Collective Worship | 2 | |
| The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements | | |

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St John Fisher RC Primary School serves the parishes of St Mary's and St John Fisher and there are 248 pupils on roll, including 12 pupils who attend the ASD Base. There is also part-time Nursery provision for 26 pupils. There are 195 (79%) Baptised Catholic pupils. Attainment on entry is broadly average. 15% of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and 4% have English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils who have been entitled to free school meals over the last six years is 12.6% which is below the national average. The school is situated in a largely urban area where there is mainly social housing but there is some privately owned accommodation. The school has a stable intake of pupils and there are no issues around mobility. The school has 13% of pupils with special education and disabilities (SEND), which is slightly above average and includes those pupils who attend the ASD Base. 8% of pupils have a statement/EHC Plan. 20 members of staff are Roman Catholic, which includes 9 teachers and 7 teachers hold the CCRS. The head teacher has been at the school since September 2018 and the deputy head teacher has been at the school since September 2017 when he assumed the role of Religious Education subject leader. The parish priest has been in post for five and a half years and is responsible for two parishes.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- **The amount of work and commitment, by the whole school community, on developing the school's Mission Statement. It is alive and vibrant; it is lived by everyone connected to St. John Fisher School.**
- **The dedication and commitment of the head teacher and deputy headteacher to lead the school out of a period of turbulence. Their clear vision and mission has had a positive impact on the whole school community.**
- **The head teacher is strongly supported by a dedicated and knowledgeable group of governors who fully recognise and embrace the school's Catholic mission. They are extremely committed to their work. Governors know the school's strengths and areas for development and are constantly seeking to improve the Catholic life of the school. They recognise the hard work of the newly appointed head teacher and deputy head teacher and that the mission is in place so that 'the vine and fruits are continually growing'.**

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS GOOD

The school has addressed all agreed areas for development from their last Section 48 Inspection. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and is supported effectively by the deputy headteacher, parish priest and governing board. They place the Church's mission in education at the heart of everything that they do and this has had a significantly positive impact on the Catholic life of the school and raising standards in Religious Education. The children in St John Fisher School are extremely well cared for; parents are confident in the school and value its Catholic ethos. The school welcomes visitors alongside members of the wider community whilst providing a safe environment for the children to learn and grow. The children understand Sacred Scripture and are happy to talk about its relevance in their lives. They bear witness to their faith and are living examples of how to care for one another and those less fortunate than themselves. The school environment is full of displays and reflections of the 5Ws in action; emphasising the importance of the Catholic life of the school. The children enjoy their Religious Education lessons and are happy and confident in learning about and from Sacred Scripture. The work in their books demonstrates creativity in learning about their own and other faiths. The work of the GIFT chaplaincy team has been recently developed further and they are now playing a significant role in the Catholic life of the school. Adults and children across the whole school are becoming increasingly confident in planning for and leading prayer and acts of worship. One parent commented that she was impressed with how her 5 year old child prayed so reverently at such a young age. The school is now well placed to move forward with strong leadership to develop further some aspects of Religious Education alongside the Catholic life of the school.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS GOOD

The deputy headteacher, who is also the Religious Education subject leader has been in post for two years and the headteacher has been in post for the whole of the current academic year. There have also been a number of new governors appointed to the governing board. These changes to the leadership of St. John Fisher have had a significantly positive impact on both Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school. Parents went out of their way to tell inspectors about the impact that the recent changes have had on their children's education. The school's senior leadership and governors have a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and she is dedicated to ensuring that those members of the school community who are marginalized or have additional needs are extremely well supported and cared for. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have supported staff in developing effective learning and teaching in Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school including the GIFT chaplaincy team. The governors have a clear understanding of their role in taking the school forward in its mission. They know the school's strengths and areas for development and provide support and challenge to ensure that the school continues to grow. The parish priest, supported by governors, is committed to the ethos that if people are reluctant to come to church, then the Church must come to the people. To that end there is great commitment by governors to place the school at the heart of the wider community.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL IS GOOD (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)

On the day of the inspection the children came into school extremely calmly; being welcomed by members of staff over a fifteen minute period. Parents chatted readily to staff about any minor issues and the children were happy to come into school. Parents were keen to talk to inspectors to say how happy they were with the school; they say that they feel overwhelmingly welcome and that if any problems do arise they are dealt with quickly, sensitively and effectively. Some children who attend the ASD Base have been excluded from other schools but they are now settled and part of the school community at St. John Fisher. The school has shown a huge commitment to support a pupil going through a particularly difficult time; the parent of the child says that the pupil would not have got through this without the help and support that the school has provided. As well as supporting a number of other charities, the school runs a scheme known as 'Food Bank Friday', where children engage with the local community by bringing food in to school each Friday and then donate the food to the local food bank. The relationships in school are good. Adults and children demonstrate high levels of respect and compassion for one another and the children play happily with one another in the playground which is a stimulating and vibrant place to play. The parish priest feels that the relationships within school are going from strength to strength as are the relationships between the school and parish. The children were happy and confident in talking about their faith and the Catholic life of the school. The school's GIFT chaplaincy team is now playing a key part in school life which is having a significant impact on the whole school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IS GOOD (incorporating Word)

The school's Mission statement has recently been rigorously reviewed by all members of the school community and is known, understood and lived by everyone. Visible evidence of this is in every classroom and around the school. The Religious Education of the children is at the core of the curriculum and at least 10% of the curriculum time is given to Religious Education. The school has recently provided high level resources for Religious Education and the wider Catholic life of the school. Children's work in their Religious Education books is creative and of the same standard as the work in their English books. Some lessons that were observed on the day of the inspection showed imaginative and creative learning and the children were enthusiastic in their work. The Religious Education subject leader has introduced 'Come and See' to support learning and teaching in line with the Curriculum Directory. Following its implementation he has led training for staff and undertaken supportive monitoring of learning and teaching within this subject area. Big question books are in every classroom and are used effectively for children to deepen their understanding of more complex issues. The marking of children's books provided opportunities for children to develop their understanding further. Sacred Scripture is frequently referenced in lessons and teachers are skilled in making their messages relevant to children's lives today. Parents say that they are kept well informed about how well their children are doing in Religious Education and they feel that they are making good progress. They say that they choose to send their children to St John Fisher due to its Catholic ethos, nature and supportive environment. The school is working extremely hard to ensure that it reaches out to the wider parish community. Some of the children have visited the food bank and so they are able to see for themselves the impact that their generosity is having on the wider community.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IS GOOD

The deputy headteacher, who is also the Religious Education subject leader, has dedicated a great deal of time in helping staff and pupils to become more confident in planning for and leading prayer and worship, which is at the heart of the school community. The GIFT chaplaincy team has been significantly developed over last two years and along with staff and other children has grown in confidence in planning for and delivering meaningful acts of worship. During the day of the inspection the GIFT chaplaincy team led the whole school in an act of worship. This was based around Gospel readings as well as prayers; the entire worship was relevant to the whole school community, adults and children alike. Other acts of worship were seen and pupils participated with reverence. The school places significant importance on its prayer life and has 'quiet' areas around the school for children to reflect peacefully. The school has also developed a beautiful outside area, originally for Easter, which includes three crosses and semi-circular seating for members of the school community to sit in quiet reflection. Throughout the year the headteacher and deputy headteacher have shown great commitment to including parents, governors and members of the wider community in sharing celebrations relating to the liturgical calendar. These have included a Nativity play by the younger children as well as a beautiful Easter celebration involving the whole school community and even a real donkey which was brought on to school grounds by staff from a local donkey sanctuary. Children have their own prayer books in every classroom. Parents say that the prayer life of the school is very strong and that the younger children love bringing 'prayer bear' home. Pupils are now well placed to develop further their relationship with God through planning and delivering their own meaningful acts of worship and prayers.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- **Further increase teachers knowledge and expertise in Religious Education in order to ensure that there are consistently high levels of learning and teaching throughout the school, leading to outstanding outcomes for the children.**
- **Further develop middle leaders in school so that they have a direct impact on improving standards and outcomes for all children across the school.**
- **Further develop rigorous monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education in order to ensure that all pupils make rapid and exceptional progress.**
- **To continue the hard work begun by the head teacher and governors in developing the school's central role in bringing the whole community together for the good of everyone.**