

St Francis Xavier's Catholic Academy

URN: 150713

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Liverpool

05–06 February 2025

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

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

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Fully

Compliance statement

- 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 laid down by Archbishop of Liverpool.
- The school has responded fully to the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection.

What the school does well

- Efforts to refurbish the chapel have ensured that Christ is at the centre of the school. This underlines improvements seen elsewhere.
- The unique charism provided by the school patron, Saint Francis Xavier, perpetuates and strongly resonates with stakeholders and the community.
- Staff and students recognise the impact made by the spiritual leadership of the headteacher. His desire to do the best for this community is tangible.
- The subject leadership of religious education is now characterised by energy, high classroom skill and a drive for improvement. This has brought confidence in the path forward for the subject.

What the school needs to improve

- Catholic social teaching is underdeveloped. The school should complete curriculum strands, engage students practically and weave understanding through Catholic life, and prayer and liturgy.
- Outcomes in religious education are not yet good. The school should ensure that religious education attainment and progress is at least in line with core subjects in school.
- Chaplaincy provision is not sufficient to meet the needs of this community. The school must urgently consider the appointment of a full-time lay chaplain who can accelerate the progress of the school mission.

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

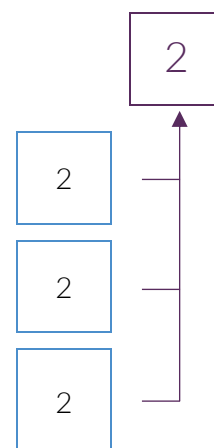
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 school mission statement 'Jesus came so that you may have life in all its fullness.' (John 10:10) is proclaimed with confidence by students. They are proud of the badges they earn based around the Xaverian values of Faith, Ambition, Integrity, and Respect and can explain why these are important to their formation. Students express their positive wellbeing and the trust they have in staff and each other. One Year 9 student said, "I'm new to the school and have several anxiety issues. I overcame these through my involvement in chaplaincy which gave me more confidence." Xaverian standards underpin an explicit moral framework linked to the school's charism. These are referred to frequently and understood by the students. Many students engage in acts of charity and work for the greater good. For example, £6,000 was raised for Alfie's Squad, a mental health charity. Despite this, they find difficulty in relating experiences to the principles of Catholic social teaching. Overwhelmingly, students form good relationships with each other, and the staff, and they understand that positive behaviour contributes to the school ethos. Many students contribute to chaplaincy and the refurbishment of the school chapel has provided a focal point for some. Opportunities to move this further are abundant.

The school mission is central to Catholic life, celebrated in display and evident in discussions with stakeholders. Staff attach themselves to the Xaverian charism showing unity with the school's foundation. Staff feel together, particularly at times of need, and this was captured by the description of a school, "wrapping its arms around the families of bereaved colleagues and students." Students of other faiths are fulsome in their praise for the way that the school accommodates their needs. This is one way in which the school demonstrates its inclusivity. Students speak positively about staff and the spiritual guidance provided by the headteacher is commended strongly by both. His and his staff's dedication to delivering effective pastoral care

is clear and comprehensive. The project to restore the chapel puts Christ at the centre, and the identity of the school is enhanced by the development of classroom prayer spaces. Despite good support from a wider team, the impact of chaplaincy has limitations due to the teaching commitments of the nominated lead. Relationships, sex and health education has improved and there has been external verification of this. The school has targeted further change including adjustments to the delivery model and the planned use of a published programme of study that has archdiocesan approval.

Plans to ensure whole school policy statements reflect the school's Catholic identity and charism are not fully evident. A strong commitment to the guidance provided by the archdiocese exists and leaders and staff engage positively. Leaders have created fertile ground for parish links and there is a clear path to ensure benefits for the school and its parishes. The positive intent to model equity and fairness underpins support for vulnerable students. Progress in clarifying how Catholic social teaching can be embedded into the curriculum has been made but there is inconsistency across subject teams in delivery. The well-being of staff is recognised as important and staff show confidence that leaders reflect on the needs of individuals in the search for improvement. It is clear that the improvement of Catholic life and mission is at the top of the school's priorities and leaders show a determination for speedy change. Systems for quality assurance in the school are generally secure but targeted improvement of aspects should be more precise. Students' opinions are sought and feedback from sixth formers suggests they could be used to support student mentoring schemes in key stage three. In conjunction with the Trust, the school uses training effectively and has systems for induction which includes the development of formation resources.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

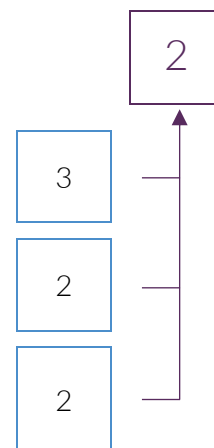
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Even though student learning reflects what is required in the *Religious Education Directory*, outcomes for both achievement and progress are not yet good. The sixth form core programme is well thought out and builds on the key stage three and four curriculums. Religious literacy is a focus in lessons but more time is needed for students to reflect and respond. Students approach learning with a positive curiosity and because of this, more opportunities to work independently, think for themselves and work collaboratively in creative ways should be provided. Work in books is inconsistent in quality, but there is some evidence of emerging individuality and a stronger ability to reflect on learning. Students engage well in lessons, listening and showing respect. There has been an increase in student enjoyment of religious education in more recent times and they speak about the subject with enthusiasm. One pupil commented that religious education is “a happy subject and the learning is interesting”. Behaviour is good and it is evident that expectations are high. There are signs of better current progress in key stage three supported by robust internal assessment that is in line with the plan for improving attainment.

Teachers deliver good lessons characterised by secure subject knowledge that is relevant to the phase they are in. Across school, staff spoke strongly about the high value of religious education. Schemes of learning are ambitious, well sequenced and include structured assessment across all year groups. This is supportive to teachers in the planning of lessons. It is evident that team members support the changes brought about by the recently appointed associate leader for religious education who works with energy and enterprise. His goal is to improve attainment and the team is committed to implementing developmental change. Questioning across the department is mostly good. When done well, teachers draw out deeper knowledge which supports formative assessment. There was good evidence of targeted questioning to ensure students from specific groups could achieve. Teachers provide opportunities for students to act

on feedback to support progression through dedicated reflection time but, since approaches to this are inconsistent, it needs further development. The use of visualisers may support this and create greater variety in lessons thus inspiring students to better progress.

Together, the director of Catholic life and the new subject leader have re-invigorated religious education with a transformational vision for every student to achieve. Staff outside of the department commented that “there has been a huge cultural shift” in the status of religious education. The curriculum is a faithful expression of the Directory. The subject has parity with other core subjects; the team consists of subject specialists, abundant time given to quality training and there is an investment in quality resources. There is a demonstrable sense of inclusion within the department and high ambition for all students. The subject leader has a clear insight into planned improvements needed in the medium and longer terms. The curriculum is skilfully designed to ensure knowledge is built upon over time and across all key stages including sixth form core religious education. It is common in all lessons for students to be reminded of the sequence of their learning and how it fits together. Although leaders have invested time ensuring quality planning, in some cases, lesson plans are not adapted to meet the needs of key groups, particularly the highest and lowest prior attainers. At present there are limited opportunities for enrichment activities within religious education.

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

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

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

2

2

Students respect and are protective of the prayer life of the school. Student chaplains believe they have an important role to perform within their form groups and are eager to fulfil their responsibilities. Students recognise the patterns of Catholic prayer and the use of liturgical colour in prayer spaces helps in a visual way. A Year 12 form group were presented with the scripture as a video and voice over of the gospel. The follow-up activity presented discussion questions with students demonstrating their interpretation and analysis, resulting in a deeper understanding. Students are keen to do more, but current limitations to the amount of collaborative planning time are a consequence of the lay chaplain's significant teaching commitments. When the quality of worship is good, students value the opportunity to pray and reflect. However, their ability to link the school curriculum to acts of prayer and worship is not fully developed. The historical focus on Remembrance Day, using an outdoor space to celebrate this, is supportive in improvement. Students comprehend the school's mission and often thoughtfully connect it to their behaviour, charitable actions, and prayer. Their ability to fully articulate this connection is likely to improve further when there are more opportunities via Faith in Action and retreats.

Prayer has a central place for all staff and students at the beginning of every day. 'Sacred Time' is signalled and there is a consistency in the way that students and staff engage in these designated moments. Scripture is used extensively and every week readings are linked to the gospel of the preceding Sunday. Staff receive training on delivery of prayer and liturgy resources and the school has high expectations for their delivery. The headteacher, members of senior staff and the religious education department are skilled and knowledgeable regarding prayer, liturgy and worship. They present good sources of reference for staff seeking guidance or support. There is a tried and tested structure to prayer and liturgy that meets reasonable

evaluation criteria. Despite this, there are missed opportunities for students to demonstrate their talents in music, art, and drama and for worship to become interactive. The renovation of the chapel as an iconic central point for the school has galvanised improvement. Areas for prayer in addition to the chapel can be found in sacred spaces in each classroom and students from other faiths feel comfortable with the alternative provision available. The Year 7 Mass proves popular with a significant number of parents and there is an opportunity to foster continued links based on this solid starting point.

The prayer and liturgy policy is fit for purpose and actively played out across school. The lay chaplain understands the different levels and skills of participation reflective of the capacity of students, and there is a strategy for building skills of participation as they progress through school. Although limited in scope, a calendar offers a programme of opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist, particularly at key times in the liturgical year and the life of the school. Opportunities for ongoing formation and training are provided to staff, and leaders show confidence in preparation and delivery. For example, leaders articulate a good understanding of the need to make prayer accessible to all students and are familiar with the Church's liturgical year and supporting resources. The school is on an ambitious journey to secure regular rich and vibrant spiritual experiences and is building solid foundations by doing selected events well. The speedy provision of a full-time lay chaplain is a major resource development need. Despite this gap, governors and the Trust ensure a good budget commitment is made to the development of quality resources. During the inspection, examples of how prayer and liturgy is monitored were seen. There is scope to develop this so that student experiences are improved.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Francis Xavier's Catholic Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	150713
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3414017
Full postal address of the school	St Francis Xavier's Catholic Academy, Woolton Hill Road, Woolton, Liverpool, L25 6EG
School phone number	01512881000
Headteacher	David Hayes
Chair of governors	Andrew Keeley
School Website	www.sfx1842.org
Trusteeship	Brothers of Christian Instruction (De La Mennais Brothers)
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Joseph Catholic Multi Academy Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Date of last denominational inspection	7 th June 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Phillip Mooney	Lead
Stuart Holland	Team
Angela Corless	Team

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

