



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## Section 48 Inspection Report

### ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST CATHOLIC ACADEMY

Part of the Newman Catholic Collegiate  
The Avenue, Kidsgrove, Stoke on Trent, ST7 1SA

Inspection dates: 24-25 March 2022  
Lead Inspector: Paul Madia

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**OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:** **Good**

Catholic Life: Outstanding

Religious Education: Good

Collective Worship: Good

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*Overall effectiveness at previous inspection:* *Requires Improvement*

### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

This is a Good Catholic school because:

- The principal is a deeply committed and highly motivated leader, supported by a strong leadership team and governors, resulting in rapid improvements across the school during the short time she has been in post.
- The clear vision and support structures of the Newman Collegiate have enabled the school to grow during a period of instability.
- Teachers consistently use higher-order questioning skills in the pupils' books to extend and improve their learning.
- The school provides daily opportunities for Collective Worship. Pupils are engaged in various prayerful opportunities throughout the year, where they participate with reverence.
- Staff have a nurturing and caring manner in approaching all pupils and visitors.

It is not yet Outstanding because:

- There are limited creative teaching strategies that enhance learning opportunities in some classes.
- Pupils do not routinely instigate, plan, or deliver Collective Worship.
- Pupils' knowledge of vocations is not yet fully developed across the school.
- Monitoring and evaluation processes are not yet embedded to show long-term impact.
- Pupils do not have a well-developed understanding of those of other faiths.

**FULL REPORT****What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Develop a range of strategies to enhance learning opportunities through dance, art, drama and thinking skills to form the foundation to develop higher-order learning outcomes.
- Provide regular opportunities for pupils to instigate, plan, and deliver Collective Worship, using a wide variety of styles.
- Improve pupil knowledge of vocation as a calling from God and mission to spread the Good News.
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation processes are embedded to show long-term impact.
- Deepen pupils' understanding of those of other faiths.

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>The quality of the Catholic Life of the school</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	Good
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

**CL1 The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school****CL2 The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school**

- Pupils have a good understanding of the school's mission, 'Growing and learning together in Christ', and can talk confidently about it and how it relates to their lives. Their understanding of the school's motto, 'Lord be thy Word, my rule', is less clear and needs to be developed.
- Pupils are incredibly respectful of each other, evidenced in the excellent behaviour seen around the school. They are very supportive of each other and other adults across the school. The behaviours for learning are strong across all classes, and the pupils' manners are impeccable.
- There is a strong involvement of the pupils in caring for others, as seen by the work of the mini vinnies who attend regular meetings and fundraise for many charities, such as Caritas and CAFOD. Consequently, pupils are confident in demonstrating how the Catholic faith helps make a difference in the local community.
- The parish priest is an active member of the school community, building a strong liaison between school and parish. Pupils, staff, and governors hold him in high regard.
- There is a strong link with the parish through gardening. The parishioners develop and nurture the garden and prayer areas as well as the children's faith. The stewardship of our world is a prominent feature of school life, with all pupils actively involved.

- The school nurtures the pupils in its care and puts the children's needs first. All staff take time to listen to the pupils, ensuring that they are happy, confident, and secure in their spiritual, physical, and emotional growth.
- Pupils acknowledge St John the Evangelist; however, they need to embed and develop their understanding of the life of their patron.
- Class saints are displayed across the school; however, pupils are unclear about their class saint, their mission, and how it affects their own lives.
- Vocation has been introduced to various classes, and pupils' understanding of this is developing. Covid has not allowed visitors to the school to promote vocational development, but this will be addressed soon through a vocation week.
- There has been excellent continuing professional development (CPD) offered to new teachers from the archdiocese and the collegiate, which has enabled rapid improvement in teaching and learning.
- The staff work together to improve outcomes for all pupils, and the leadership team is motivational in enabling rapid improvement.
- The excellent practice in Year 4 and Year 3 now needs to be shared amongst all staff so that all year groups can develop creative thinking skills and arts.
- The school is a prayerful community, with prayer forming a central part of the school day through briefings, mission, traditional prayers, and reflections. Pupils need to be exposed to the full range of different traditional prayers of the Church.
- The school environment reflects its mission and identity through obvious signs of Catholic character. Each classroom has attractive and informative displays, and prayer focuses, reflecting the times and seasons of the liturgical calendar.
- There is a strong sense of community and support for all staff, pupils, and governors working for the common good.
- Behaviour in school is outstanding. Pupils move around the school with respect and care for others, demonstrating kindness, politeness, and care.
- Staff are good role models to the pupils, which is reflected in the classroom.
- Catholic social teaching (CST) is influential within the school, and pupils and staff were able to articulate this, commenting, 'It is for the common good; it is cross-generational respect for people and the environment around you.' This is further supported by the work of the CST group selling the plants they had grown on the school grounds and litter picking across the school site.
- The school's broader curriculum supports pupils in applying their understanding of the Gospels to the world they live in.
- Pupils are involved in evaluating the school's Catholic Life, though this needs further development.
- The Mini Vinnies work together to promote their faith in the community and think of others through their charity drive.
- The spiritual and moral development of staff is strong. The senior leadership team cares about their staff, and all the staff feel valued by them. The staff desire an opportunity to nourish their spiritual development by attending a planned retreat.
- Relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) is taught within the context of the Catholic Church through TenTen's programme, 'Live Life to the Full'. Resources effectively promote an understanding of relationships, health, and sex education from a Catholic perspective.

**CL3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school**

- The strength of the Catholic Life of the school is a testament to the commitment of the principal, Religious Education subject leaders and governors, who all have a clear and ambitious vision for the school and the drive and commitment to realise it.
- The governance structure is a considerable strength in quality assuring the Catholic Life of the school. St John the Evangelist's has been on a long journey, and the principal has stabilised the school through her commitment to her faith and her generosity of spirit.
- The Newman Collegiate is a family of schools with a deep-rooted sense of vocation and calling. The accuracy, rigour, and consistency of monitoring and evaluation are real strengths and show deep forensic analysis. Strategic plans are robust and demonstrate a clear pathway for improvement.
- The leadership team is committed to the Church's mission and live out the Gospel. As a result of placing mission at the heart of all they do, leaders are quick to celebrate the many successes within the Catholic Life of the school. They rapidly identify areas they wish to develop, supported with well-targeted and effective action plans.
- Governors and directors are actively involved in the school and challenge the principal to achieve high expectations, resulting in an outstanding ambition to be the best they can be.
- The governors support the mission of the Church; their caring ethos is driven by energy and dedication.
- The school's self-evaluation is exceptionally detailed and accurate, rooted in shared ownership by leaders and governors to effectively monitor and evaluate the Catholic Life of the school.
- The induction of new staff is highly comprehensive, focusing on Catholic Life being integral to the development of all the staff when they join the school.
- Due to the pandemic, the engagement of parents and the wider community has been limited. However, the school developed ways to ensure the Catholic Life of the school was of high priority through remote mission assemblies and school Masses.
- Parents speak highly of the school and are very happy with the provision. Parents commented that 'The school has a good ethos,' and 'All staff are always helpful and supportive.' Parents value the pastoral, moral and spiritual guidance that their children receive.
- The chair of governors, who is also the Catholic Life link governor, enthusiastically promotes the Catholic Life of the school. She has actively taken part in the school's self-evaluation and has a secure understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the school responds well to diocesan policies and initiatives. They promote the archbishop's vision for the diocese throughout the school.

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

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

**RE1 How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education****RE2 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education**

- Pupils, from varied starting points, make good progress in Religious Education. Many pupils start school with a low baseline knowledge of key religious facts, and teachers work well to ensure that most pupils meet expectations. During the inspection, pupils in Reception were seen drawing on prior knowledge of key artefacts used during Lent and building a prayer focus. The progress can be seen continuing in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, where most pupils meet expectations for their age group.
- Standards in Religious Education are comparable with those in other core subjects.
- All groups of pupils make steady progress in Religious Education, including pupils from minority ethnic groups, disadvantaged pupils, and pupils for whom English is an additional language. Pupils with special education needs or disabilities (SEND) make steady progress; however, a more comprehensive range of activities and scaffolds is required to extend SEND pupils' learning.
- Pupils are engaged and motivated in most Religious Education lessons. This is because teachers plan creative and exciting lessons that pupils enjoy. During the inspection, a wide variety of creative lessons were observed, and these lessons motivated pupils to engage with the messages being taught. In one class, pupils were role-playing characters from the Parable of The Pharisee and the Tax Collector; pupils could articulate how Jesus 'leads us to love one another' and 'put others in front of yourself.' In another lesson, pupils reflected on Jesus being tempted in the desert and how this affected their own lives, saying, 'Jesus is like a shepherd guiding us; we are his sheep.'
- Most pupils are religiously literate, using their knowledge, understanding and skills to reflect spiritually. Pupils can reflect by utilising a variety of approaches that are recorded in the high-quality Religious Education journals.
- In lessons, pupils concentrate well and enjoy learning, approaching their studies with interest and enthusiasm. Pupils can articulate and understand how well they are doing and what they need to improve.
- The quality of pupils' written work is good. Their work is of a good standard, with a clear focus on presentation standards. Books are marked with the next steps to enable the pupils to reflect on the Religious Education teaching and apply this knowledge to their own lives.
- Pupils' books reflect a range of writing applications and various writing genres, linked with good quality questioning from both the teachers and pupils. However, this is not always consistent across all year groups. Good practice must be shared across other year groups to improve outcomes for all pupils.
- Teachers plan good lessons and are confident in their subject knowledge. Consequently, most pupils can apply themselves well.

- Behaviour in lessons is good with the vast majority of pupils saying that they enjoy Religious Education lessons.
- Lessons are linked to pupils' current assessment so that most pupils learn well. As a result, teaching is mostly good.
- Some pupils are unclear on the outcomes of lessons. Teachers must ensure all pupils understand the lesson's objective and relevance to the Religious Education curriculum.
- Some teachers employ a range of teaching strategies in the classrooms; however, this could be further enhanced by developing a range of strategies to improve learning opportunities through dance, art, drama and thinking skills to form the foundation for higher-order learning outcomes.
- Teachers manage time well to secure good learning in most of the lessons observed. In some lessons, the pace is a little stilted, which needs to be addressed to challenge pupils continuously.
- Teachers communicate high expectations about Religious Education to all pupils, which motivates pupils to produce work of a high standard.
- Good quality feedback both in lessons and in pupils' books leads to most pupils' engagement, interest, and achievement.

### **RE3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Religious Education**

- The Religious Education curriculum, including curriculum time, meets the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales requirements and the additional requirements of the Archbishop of Birmingham.
- Governors ensure that Religious Education is comparable to other core subjects.
- The school self-evaluation is detailed and coherent, reflecting on monitoring and analysis. Strategic action has taken place by the school, leading to at least good outcomes in Religious Education.
- Religious Education curriculum leaders have a clear vision for teaching and learning and have a good level of expertise in securing the vision. They are used effectively to improve teaching and learning in Religious Education, resulting in mostly good teaching. Staff welcome the support from both the highly effective subject leaders and the guidance they have given over time, commenting, 'It is invaluable.'
- There is a planned and well-established cycle of monitoring and evaluation in Religious Education. The subject leaders have scrutinised books, monitored assessments, spoken to pupils and governors, and monitored teachers' planning. This has resulted in leaders having a clear and detailed development plan, resulting in improvements across the school. However, this has not been sufficiently embedded to ensure consistency across the school in all year groups and staff.
- Performance data in Religious Education has been carefully analysed and used to inform the actions in the improvement plan.
- The subject leaders attend governors' meetings and present comprehensive reports about the quality of Religious Education in the school. Governors are updated about the progress of the subject improvement plan, and they challenge leaders appropriately. As a result, the governors have an accurate understanding of the quality of Religious Education at St John's the Evangelist.
- Leaders and governors ensure Religious Education is planned to meet the general needs of pupils.

**COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

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

**CW1 How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship****CW2 The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school**

- Pupils act with reverence and are keen to participate in Collective Worship. They sing joyfully, join in with prayers and acknowledge periods of silence. Pupils are given opportunities to express their spirituality, playing musical instruments while gathering to pray and sing with joy.
- Pupils' response to Collective Worship in its many forms is positive. They are incredibly reverent and respectful during all acts of Collective Worship, and they respond with enthusiasm because liturgy is made relevant to their own lives.
- Pupils enjoy preparing and leading liturgy; however, this needs to be further developed and embedded across the school as they are not routinely prepared and must become part of the daily worship of the pupils' spiritual lives.
- Pupil-led Collective Worship is of a good standard, but more opportunities are needed to allow pupils to plan independently and confidently.
- Pupils are exposed and use a variety of approaches to prayer in Collective Worship. They have access to year group prayer books which contain prayers that they should know. One pupil explained to inspectors, 'The prayer book is like a colour palette – primary colours are prayers you say every day - morning offering, lunchtime prayer; secondary colours are the prayers you say a bit more regularly - Hail Mary and Our Father and the other colours (gold, silver) are prayers that you say on special days.'
- Most pupils have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons and feasts. However, this is not embedded across the school.
- Improvement is needed with the pupils' understanding of those of other faiths through Collective Worship and Religious Education lessons.
- Collective Worship is part of the school's daily life, and prayer is included in school celebrations. Praying together is part of the everyday experience for pupils and staff; however, the four sections of 'gather, listen, respond and go forth' need to be more explicit to increase pupils' understanding.
- Collective Worship has a purpose and direction. The themes chosen reflect the liturgical seasons and Catholic character of the school.
- Staff are supportive in helping pupils plan and deliver Collective Worship; however, this is not embedded across the school.
- Prayer leaders across the school check that pupils are correctly forming the sign of the cross and check on pupils' learning of traditional prayers.
- Religious artwork stimulates discussion in prepared liturgies allowing pupils to reflect and respond to the questions, 'How does it make you think?' and 'How does it make you feel?'

- Where Collective Worship is most effective, teachers plan opportunities for meditation and periods of silence to allow the pupils to talk to God in their hearts. This needs to be developed across the whole school.

**CW3 How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship**

- The principal is a strong and engaging prayer and worship leader and is a positive role model. Her friendly and confident approach inspires the pupils and staff.
- Leaders know how to plan and deliver high-quality prayer and liturgy; themes for Collective Worship reflect the Church's calendar, seasons and feasts.
- Leaders have developed staff spirituality by ensuring they are strong role models, increasing opportunities for voluntary prayer, and creating prayer areas around the school to enable pupils to pray spontaneously.
- A comprehensive focus on CPD for Collective Worship and prayer has been prioritised for all staff.
- Collective Worship is monitored but is not yet consistently evaluated. Leaders are aware that Collective Worship is a development focus and robust plans are in place to ensure this is given the highest priority.
- Further opportunities are required for other school community members, such as parents, parishioners, and governors, to engage in Collective Worship. The school is going through a period of building work to bring both sites together, which will result in a larger hall to ensure all of the school community can pray and worship together.
- All additional requirements of the archbishop regarding Collective Worship are fully implemented.

**SCHOOL DETAILS**

Unique reference number	140146
Local authority	Staffordshire
<i>This inspection was carried out under Canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the Education Act (2005).</i>	
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	177
Appropriate authority	The board of directors
Chair	Gillian Meller
Principal	Helen Rigby
Telephone number	01782 987200
Website address	<a href="http://stjohnsnewman.co.uk/">http://stjohnsnewman.co.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@stjohnskidsgrove.org.uk">office@stjohnskidsgrove.org.uk</a>
Date of the previous inspection	May 2017

**INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL**

- St John the Evangelist Catholic Primary School is a smaller than average-sized primary school with 177 pupils on roll (including Nursery), serving the parish of St John the Evangelist in the centre of Kidsgrove.
- The school is part of the Newman Catholic Collegiate. This multi academy company (MAC) comprises the local secondary school and seven other Catholic primary schools in the Stoke-on-Trent area of the archdiocese.
- The academy operates across two sites: the Early Years and Key Stage 1 building is next to the parish church in the town centre, while the Key Stage 2 building is situated on the outskirts of the town. A Nursery operates on the site with the younger children.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 37%.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The percentage of SEND pupils is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with EAL is below the national average.
- Attainment on entry is below average.
- The DfE are directly involved in building a new school on the Key Stage 2 site.
- The school has undergone significant leadership change since the last inspection. The long-serving principal left in May 2018 and an executive principal was appointed. These changes resulted in the loss of pupils to other local schools. A new substantive principal was appointed in October 2019, and the vice principal returned from an 18-month secondment in January 2020. In September 2020, a new Religious Education leadership team was created, including the principal, vice principal, and another experienced teacher.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THIS INSPECTION**

- Two Diocesan Inspectors carried out the inspection: Paul Madia and Veronica Gosling.
- 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 inspectors observed teaching across eight Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment quality. All of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors completed 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 Collective Worship experience.
- Meetings were held with the Catholic senior executive leader of the MAC, the chair of governors/the Catholic Life link governor, governors, members of the board of directors, the principal, the Religious Education subject leaders, parents, staff and the Mini Vinnies.
- The inspectors attended several Collective Worships 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 inspectors 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 Religious Education action plan, teachers' planning and learning journals.