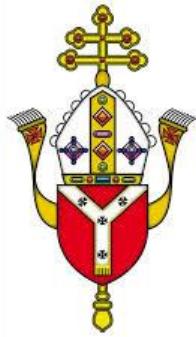


# John F Kennedy Catholic School

Hollybush Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP1 2PH



Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 6 – 7 December 2017

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### A. Classroom religious education is good

- The schemes of work meet the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory.
- The department is well resourced to deliver the content of the new GCSE and A level specifications.
- Learners achieve well in religious education.
- Moderation of levels ensures that assessment is rigorous and consistent.
- The teachers have strong subject knowledge which impacts positively on learners' progress.
- Assessment takes place regularly and is monitored to track pupil progress.
- Teachers have a good rapport with pupils and as such there is a positive climate for learning.
- The senior leadership team and governing body work hard with enthusiasm and a clear commitment to promoting religious education.
- The acting head of department has a strong sense of the educational mission of the Church.

### Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- A greater degree of stretch and challenge in schemes of work is necessary to extend learning and outcomes further.
- More opportunities for collaborative and independent learning are needed.
- All pupils are not yet provided with detailed feedback and the opportunity to respond.

### B. The Catholic life of the school is good

- Religious education is at the core of the curriculum.
- The school fully complies with the curriculum time requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- St Mark's parish cements the school's role in the community.
- The weekly worship theme is central to the school's understanding of itself as a Catholic school.
- In assemblies pupils experience good quality acts of worship.
- The school celebrates the talents of all and recognises the uniqueness of the individual.
- Its mission of 'Inspire, Achieve, Serve' is clearly understood and lived out by the school community.
- The school collaborate extensively with the diocese.
- The pupils are proud to belong to the school and are appreciative of the encouragement to succeed and the holistic education they receive.

### The Catholic life of the school is not yet outstanding because

- Pupils need further opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation at key times of the year.
- Pupils do not play a big enough role in planning and leading a wide variety of liturgical celebrations.
- Not all pupils have a sound understanding of the Common Good and their commitment to it.

## A. Classroom Religious Education

### What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last inspection, the department was challenged to advance the marking process by ensuring all pupils respond actively to teachers' guidance on how to improve their work. Whilst there has been some attempt to address this through the introduction of a departmental policy, practice across the department is not yet consistent. By way of fulfilment of the department's own development plan, a biennial trip to Rome now takes place and virtual trips to synagogues and mosques are built into lessons to enhance the teaching of Judaism and Islam. In addition, following a review of the Year 9 curriculum the GCSE syllabus will be delivered from February half-term.

### The content of classroom religious education is good

The Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD) is mapped thoroughly at Key Stage 3 with direct links being made to the Key Stage 3 units of study across Years 7 to 9. The curriculum content is varied and reflective of the liturgical year. Scripture is explored in detail, providing a vital underpinning for the GCSE. At Key Stages 4 and 5, programmes of study demonstrate that the RECD is covered but explicit mapping still needs to be carried out. The department is well resourced to deliver the content of the new GCSE and A level specifications. Teachers access material from a variety of both published and in-house resources. Resources are centrally stored and circulated to ensure consistency across the department. With time, and under the guidance of the newly appointed acting head of department, the initiatives being implemented will have a positive impact on the materials used and tasks undertaken in lessons.

### Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Overall, pupil achievement in religious education is good. The religious education attainment at Key Stage 4 is above the national average. In comparison with other core subjects, at GCSE pupils' achievement is higher in religious education than in mathematics and largely the same as in English. As the department has highlighted, achievement at A level needs addressing, where there is a three year trend in negative value added. At Key Stage 3, there has been a significant decrease in the higher levels of attainment following an upturn in 2016. Good progress is made by most pupils but with a greater degree of stretch and challenge, learning could be extended further and thereby improve outcomes at all key stages. The department has adopted the diocesan Year 7 benchmarking assessment as a diagnostic tool to measure pupil progress. Termly key assessments and half termly data collection provide regular opportunities to measure pupil progress. Departmental moderation of levels ensures that assessment used by teachers is rigorous and consistent across the department. External moderation with local schools and the diocese is conducted to ensure that the levels and grades awarded are accurate. At Key Stages 4 and 5, pupil achievement is bolstered due to the acting head of department's role as an A Level and GCSE examiner and the assistant headteacher's role as an A Level examiner and Chief Examiner for GCSE Religious Studies.

### The quality of teaching is good

The quality of teaching is good. The teachers have strong subject knowledge which impacts positively on learners' progress and results in a high proportion of students undertaking Religious Studies A level. The department, under the direction of the acting leader, is working collaboratively to try and ensure pupils enjoy parity of experience. Lessons are well structured and the most effective teaching observed promoted pupils' engagement and high level discussion. For example, in a Year 13 lesson on life after death, pupils explored the validity of Platonic Dualism as support for the existence of the soul and were able to articulate complex evaluative points. Teachers have fostered a good rapport with pupils and, as such, there is a positive climate for learning. In the main, pupils

display impressive levels of religious literacy. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on vocations, pupils identified how their study of the Holy Spirit led them to a better understanding of the nature of God and their faith. Where teaching was less effective, there were fewer opportunities for collaboration or independent learning to consolidate or extend knowledge. Assessment takes place regularly and is carefully monitored to track pupil progress. Pupils' books demonstrated that in some cases detailed feedback is provided, however, pupils do not always respond and practice is inconsistent across the department.

### The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is good

The leadership and management of the religious education department are good. The acting head of department is well supported by the headteacher through the line management system. Collectively, the senior leadership team and governing body work hard with enthusiasm and a clear commitment to promoting religious education. The acting head of department has a strong sense of the educational mission of the Church and is developing a vision to ensure this can be achieved in the department. There is a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in religious education but there needs to be greater cohesion between the self-evaluation form and departmental action plan. The self-assessment narrative is largely accurate but the grades awarded are overly generous. The systems and structures to drive improvement in religious education are beginning to be put in place but are yet to have a measurable impact. The acting head of department has a very inclusive and collaborative approach and realises the need to improve teaching and learning to ensure learners fulfil their potential. The monitoring of teaching and learning is regular and there are some systems in place to support teachers but these need to be formalised. The department and pupils benefit greatly from the school's professional development programme and the acting head of department's role as a GCSE and A level examiner.

### What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Allow for a greater degree of stretch and challenge in schemes of work to extend learning and outcomes further.
- Provide more opportunities for collaborative and independent learning to enable pupils to become partners in learning.
- Ensure all pupils are provided with detailed feedback and the opportunity to respond, thereby improving their learning.

## B. The Catholic life of the school

### What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last inspection, around 25% of parents who returned questionnaires perceived that they were not well informed about religious education and worship and that they were not invited to school liturgies. This figure has now decreased to around 10%. Some parents and carers took the time to write lengthy letters in praise of the school and its ethos.

### The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum is outstanding

Religious education is at the core of the curriculum as evidenced by the timetable allocation across all key stages, the designated classrooms and staffing. Pupils enjoy 10% of curriculum time at Key Stage 4 and 5% at Key Stage 5. The school is very fortunate to have St Mark's parish church on site which cements the school's role in the community and provides a very visible link to the parish. The church is well loved and adds a definite richness to the school's religious education and liturgical programmes. Displays are current and very engaging, ensuring classrooms and corridors are inspiring to the pupils. The departmental budget is in line with the core subjects of English and mathematics. The majority of staff are subject specialists and many hold additional post graduate qualifications. The introduction of a Catholic Life of the School Committee is timely and will provide an additional level of support and challenge to the department. Through the school's excellent Year 7 transition programme, parents and pupils are made fully aware of the Catholic ethos. The importance of community and a sense of belonging are instilled through the visits made to 34 feeder primaries prior to pupils starting Year 7, the building of a symbolic Jenga wall on transition day and the celebration of a Mass of welcome for pupils and parents.

### The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community is good

Overall, the experience of Catholic worship is good. The carefully planned weekly worship theme is central to the school's understanding of itself as a Catholic school and follows the liturgical year, drawing on a variety of sources to maintain pupil interest. During the inspection the theme focused on migrants and provided pupils with valuable opportunities to pray, reflect, discuss and learn. The weekly theme is shared with parents through the school's newsletter. Liturgies are offered at key points and some whole school Masses over the course of the year. There is, however, scope for pupils to attend Eucharistic celebrations more frequently. Pupils are supported in preparing for Mass but more opportunities for pupils to plan and lead a wider variety of liturgical celebrations could be created. A small group of pupils from across the school meet daily for morning prayer and they are aiming, through the newly named 'REaction' team, to involve more pupils. In assemblies pupils experience good quality acts of worship; the themes are clear and linked well to scripture. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered but this should be extended to ensure provision for every year group during key points in the liturgical year. The former assistant priest and chaplain, who was a highly visible presence in the school, remains a governor and is fully involved in all aspects of religious education and Catholic life. He supports the school's decision to appoint a lay chaplain as a crucial next stage in further developing the Catholic life of the School.

### The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice – is good

John F Kennedy (JFK) school celebrates the talents of all and recognises the uniqueness of the individual. For example, as part of anti-bullying week pupils were invited to wear odd socks to

demonstrate JFK's celebration of diversity. Its mission of 'Inspire, Achieve, Serve' is clearly understood and lived out by the school community. For example, pupils enthusiastically took part in the random acts of kindness project, where pupils were given an envelope in form time containing a random act of service to perform. Pupils are given opportunities to raise funds and awareness for a number of charities, including the Dacorum Emergency Night Shelter, the Hospice of St Francis and several other national and international causes but there is scope for more pupils to take part. The weekly theme is helping pupils to acquire a greater understanding of the theology underpinning Catholic social teaching but a greater emphasis could be placed on this. In the sixth form a popular volunteering programme has been implemented which encourages all students to undertake a volunteering placement within or outside school and the students greatly value these opportunities.

**The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf**

**is outstanding**

The school's key relationships with parents, other local schools and the diocese are outstanding. Links with the local parish are strong with the local parish priest celebrating Mass on site every week. Evidence from the recent parental questionnaires shows very high levels of satisfaction with the Catholic life of the school. Parents and carers are invited to attend a number of key events throughout the year. There are excellent links with the primary schools, especially St Albert the Great, to which the headteacher was seconded for a term and a half. The RE department ran two post First Communion retreats for the Year 3 children of the local Catholic primaries. The school collaborates extensively with the diocese, leading sessions on Core RE and the new GCSE and A level specifications. In addition, the assistant headteacher helped to produce the Year 7 diocesan benchmark test which was subsequently rolled out across the diocese.

**The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school**

**is good**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is good. The mission statement is central to daily life and the Gospel values are clearly evidenced in the interactions between all members of the community. The pupils are proud to belong to the school and are grateful for the encouragement to succeed and the holistic education they receive. Despite facing challenging recruitment issues, the leadership is fully committed to the Church's mission in education. This is evident through its work with local schools and the support given to the diocese. The assistant headteacher with responsibility for the Catholic life of the school makes a significant contribution by ensuring that new staff are inducted and that all staff regularly reflect on the nature of the school as a Catholic community. The governors are well informed and play a key role in the continuous drive for improvement. The appointment of a chaplain will secure a focus on outstanding practice and ensure that initiatives such as the 'REaction' team and the weekly worship theme become embedded in the culture of JFK, thereby significantly advancing the Catholic experience for pupils and staff.

**What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?**

- Provide further opportunities for all pupils to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation at key times of the year.
- Allow for further opportunities for pupils to plan and lead a wider variety of liturgical celebrations.
- Afford pupils greater opportunities to deepen their understanding of the Common Good and their commitment to it.

## Information about this school

- The school is a 6 form entry voluntary aided Catholic secondary school in the locality of Hemel Hempstead.
- The school serves the parishes of St Mark's, Hemel Hempstead, Sacred Heart, Berkhamsted and Corpus Christi, Tring as well as parts of Luton and Bedfordshire.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 93%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 6.5% and from other faiths is 0.5%.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 53.5 %.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 16.
- There are 6 % of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 6 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is below average.
- There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 140 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (13%).

<b>Department for Education Number</b>	9194619
<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117557
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary Aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	1057
<b>The appropriate authority</b>	The Governing Body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Heather Houston
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Paul Neves
<b>Telephone number</b>	01442 266150
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.jfk.herts.sch.uk">www.jfk.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@jfk.herts.sch.uk">admin@jfk.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	January 2013
<b>Grades from previous inspection:</b>	
<b>Classroom religious education</b>	Outstanding
<b>The Catholic life of the school</b>	Outstanding

## Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 12 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended assembly and a number of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

## Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

## Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Mrs Nancy Conoboy	Lead Inspector
Mrs Alison Berwick	Associate Inspector
Mrs Monica McCarthy	Associate Inspector
Mrs Noreta Reece	Associate Inspector

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