

Diocese of Hallam

INSPECTION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
(Section 23 of the 1996 School Inspections Act)

**St John Fisher Catholic Primary School
Springwater Avenue
Hackenthorpe
Sheffield
S12 4HJ**

Inspection Date: 16th and 17th June 2003

Diocesan Inspector: Mr J. J. Burke

The inspection of the denominational character of St John Fisher Catholic Primary School was carried out under the direction of the Governors of the school in fulfilment of their obligations under the requirements of Canon Law (ref.804,806), Section 23 of the 1996 Inspection Act, Section 13 of the Education (Schools) Act 1992 and Sections 241 and 259 of the Education Act, 1993. This inspection was conducted according to the Handbook for the Inspection of Religious Education in the Diocese of Hallam

The process of Inspection in the Diocese of Hallam has been developed to support and encourage each school community. It is hoped that this report will celebrate all that is positive and praiseworthy in St John Fisher Catholic Primary School and help promote sound development for the future.

A copy of this report may be obtained from the Governors of St John Fisher Catholic Primary School, Springwater Avenue, Hackenthorpe, Sheffield, S12 4HJ or from the Diocese of Hallam Schools' Department, The Hallam Pastoral Centre, St Charles Street, Sheffield S9 3WU

INTRODUCTION

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Name of School	St John Fisher Catholic Primary School
Type	Primary
Status	Voluntary Aided
Number on Roll	211
Age Range	4 – 11 Years
Gender of Pupils	Mixed
Chairman of Governors	Mrs Esther Beeston
Headteacher	Mr Liam McGurrin BA(Hons)
Address	Springwater Avenue Hackenthorpe Sheffield S12 4HJ
Telephone Number	0114 2485009
Date of Inspection	June 16 th and 17 th 2003.
Diocesan Inspector	Mr J J Burke

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School was officially opened in September 1957 by Bishop Ellis of the Nottingham Diocese. It began with four teachers and one hundred and twelve pupils.

The school has a wide catchment area including Gleadless, Frecheville, Ridgeway, Sothall, Beighton, Mosborough and Hackenthorpe. It serves the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes, Hackenthorpe.

Since 1993, a Special Educational Needs room, an I.C.T. Suite and a Library have been added. There have been extensive environmental playground improvements. A beautiful new hall has been recently built adjacent to the nearby Catholic Church.

The Headteacher is supported by seven full-time teachers, a half-time Special Educational Needs teacher and a point four teacher. Staff include a Special Educational Needs support assistant, two classroom support assistants and a Reception classroom support assistant. Since the last inspection there have been five changes of teaching staff, four fairly recent.

At the time of the inspection there were two hundred and eleven pupils on roll organised into single age classes as follows:

Reception	27
Year 1	30
Year 2	29
Year 3	32
Year 4	31
Year 5	32
Year 6	30

Seven of the ten teaching staff, that is eight full time and two part time teachers, are Catholic ie 70% and sixty two per cent of the pupils are baptised Catholics.

PART ONE

ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

1. THE MISSION OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St John Fisher School is a positive force in the development of its Catholic community. The school lives out its Mission to ‘accept individuals into a journey of living faith based on Gospel attitudes, beliefs and values and the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum, emphasising Religious Education’.
- 1.2 The Mission Statement is displayed around school and alongside the School Development Plan, informs aims, philosophies, policies and plans. All policies are regularly reviewed and the School Development Plan allows input from all the school community members. This is good practice.
- 1.3 The hardworking, dedicated school staff actively participate in community developments including liturgical and sacramental celebrations, parish functions, extra curricular activities, in-service work, school trips, community projects and meetings.
- 1.4 Thirty eight parent questionnaires were returned representing 46 pupils. Parents are extremely happy with the standard of Religious Education, their involvement in the school, the provision of spiritual and moral development and the caring, happy atmosphere engendered by the school staff. A significant number of parents reiterated how happy their children were to be at school and the levels of care provided especially by the headteacher. A minority of parents stated they would prefer to receive information about the Religious Education Curriculum termly rather than at the beginning of the year.
- 1.5 The school as a Catholic Community has developed strong outgoing links with local and global communities. Children are involved in many extra curricular activities including drama, music, rugby, hockey, football and martial arts. There is an excellent School Council completely run by the children. There is a ‘Buddies Friendship’ scheme where the older children care for younger children. A “Rainbows” programme for children who have suffered bereavement is run by the school. Parents are welcome visitors into school many attending liturgies, assemblies and Masses. The parish priest with the assistance of staff and parents runs sacramental programmes for Reconciliation and Eucharist. Many visitors come into school including various artists and police to promote the development of pupil citizenship welfare.
- 1.6 Involvement by the children in the European Citizenship programme enables them to consider issues and responsibilities for the building of a better society and increases their knowledge of right and wrong, justice and peace. There is an extensive Citizenship website. The Comenius Project encourages association with children from other communities. Cultural friendly relationships have been developed with children from Ireland, Italy, France, Australia, America and Africa.
- 1.7 The school and parents give generously to others including the Hallam Diocesan Caring Service, Mission Together and annually a nationally recognised charity, currently Barnado’s.

- 1.8 Relationships in school are very good. Children show consideration and kindness towards each other. Staff promote a quiet atmosphere, listen carefully to the children and advise them openly and honestly.
- 1.9 The parish priest, who came to the parish five years ago and is a frequent visitor into school, is developing strong school parish links, he leads liturgies and Masses and meets pupils for discussion.

2. THE SCHOOL AS A WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

- 2.1 Collective Worship meets statutory requirements, it is well planned and is a strength of the school.
- 2.2 During the inspection, Collective Worship was seen as a class liturgical celebration, a whole school liturgy and a school and parish Mass. A Key Stage 2 hymn practice was also observed.
- 2.3 The liturgical celebration led by the Religious Education co-ordinator, gave due honour and worship to God, had whole class involvement, prayer, symbolism, scriptural references and time for reflection. Nineteen parents and grandparents attended this excellent example of worship.
- 2.4 The whole school liturgy led by the headteacher had elements of prayer, scripture, spiritual and moral messages, involved music and children, was reverent and reflective.
- 2.5 There is a comprehensive diary of assemblies, liturgies and celebrations which each week takes a variety of forms. Staff and Governors take great trouble to carefully plan liturgies and sacraments. The parish priest often plays a significant part in liturgical presentations.
- 2.6 Prayer plays an essential part in Collective Worship and is supplemented by an outlined prayer progression chart for each class. There is a quiet prayer area inside the entrance hall and focal areas of prayer in each classroom to encourage reflection.
- 2.7 Displays around school are varied, multidimensional and encourage reflection on the diversity of religious and cultural heritage and God's abiding presence of love. The permanent display in the main hall is a strong reminder of our common journey in faith.

3 SPIRITUAL AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Spiritual Development

- 3.1a The spiritual and moral development of children is very good.
- 3.1b The 'Here I Am' Religious Education programme, used in school, is significant in the development of spiritual and moral codes.
- 3.1c During the inspection the focus topic was Freedom and Responsibility. In a lesson observed, the children were invited to focus on a particular simplified version of a

commandment and how it related to their own personal existence and experience. The children were asked to consider if the rule offered freedoms and responsibilities and what might happen if the rule was broken. The children dramatised their feelings and actions and through discussion made choices and decisions on the importance of God's laws as they relate to their lives.

- 3.1d In an observed class liturgy the children were asked to reflect on the presence of Jesus, the scriptural story of 'an eye for an eye' in St Matthew's Gospel and the need for forgiveness. After consideration of Jesus' response in the story, the children made their own faith responses in prayer.
- 3.1e The Religious Education curriculum, reflections on scripture, liturgical and sacramental celebrations contribute towards helping the children make spiritual sense of their own lives, their relationships, experiences, how to behave, encouraging in them Gospel values and attitudes and a greater sense of joy, hope and love.
- 3.1f Prayer plays a significant part in the children's lives. They are encouraged to pray by adult example and in response to situations of life. Many children said how much they enjoyed praying. There are prayerful expressions of their feelings in their workbooks.
- 3.1g Spirituality is deepened, for the children, through active participation in liturgical and sacramental preparation and celebration, school assemblies and in their work where they reflect on and respond to the ministry of Jesus and other faith communities.

3.2 Moral Development

- 3.2a The moral development of children is very good.
- 3.2b A strong code of moral values underpins the school. Staff are dedicated to upholding moral codes of behaviour reflected in the very good behaviour seen on the playground and in the classrooms. Children are polite, helpful and consider others. Staff show good example to the children by respecting their views and gently encouraging moral codes.
- 3.2c The Religious Education curriculum offers appropriate opportunities for moral development. In one lesson observed the children dramatised some of the commandments as they related to their own life experiences, positive and negative. The children were then encouraged to choose a preferred drama and give the reasons for their choice. In the dramatisations the children were presented with moral choices, encouraged to remember why they made their choices and why they related to them in a particular way.
- 3.2d Parent questionnaires state that the moral and spiritual development of the children is very good. All the parents interviewed were very happy with the standards and benchmarks for behaviour.
- 3.2e Liturgical celebrations, assemblies, sacramental preparation and enactment, place before the children scripturally based choices and decisions, as a framework for right living. Some of the older children have opportunities for retreat participation.

- 3.2f The 'Buddy Friendship' programme where older children look after the younger school members encourages deepening friendships, a responsibility of action, a caring ethos and the confidence which making right choices brings.
- 3.2g The school has very good policies, regularly reviewed, that set guidelines and aspirations towards codes of moral development such as those on spiritual and moral development, equal opportunities, special needs, behaviour, PHSE, citizenship and pastoral care. The children have their own School Council and a Children's Charter.

PART TWO

CURRICULUM – RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

4 STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

4.1 Attainment and Progress

- 4.1a Ten per cent of teaching time is allocated to Religious Education as required by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- 4.1b All children make satisfactory progress in knowledge and understanding and the majority of children made good or very good progress. Where progress is very good, children are challenged with appropriate activities commensurate with age and ability and are encouraged to analyse and reflect on their responses. The children's listening and questioning skills are very good.
- 4.1c The quality and quantity of written work is satisfactory in all classes and in many good or very good. Where the work is very good it is characterised by clear understanding of objectives, high expectations of presentation and application. The quality and quantity of work seen is as high as in other curriculum areas and displays the full breadth of the Religious Education curriculum.
- 4.1d Children are encouraged to recall previous work done, enhancing and reinforcing knowledge and understanding.
- 4.1e Extensive moderation of work takes place throughout the school. This will further benefit a sharing of expectations amongst all staff.
- 4.1f Marking is in some cases very good but generally inconsistent. Where marking is very good it is thoroughly affirmative, regular and a tool for further dialogue and clarifies expectations.
- 4.1g Many children stated how much they enjoyed Religious Education.
- 4.1h Attainment is in all cases satisfactory and in most cases good or very good. Where it is very good it satisfied high standards commensurate with age and ability, is complete as a piece of work and carefully presented.

4.2 **Attitudes to learning**

- 4.2a Children's attitudes to learning are very good. They listen well and respond confidently. Quiet classroom atmospheres encourage good listening and speaking skills.
- 4.2b The children generally apply themselves enthusiastically to work whether it is dramatic, artistic or discursive.
- 4.2c The children participate enthusiastically in assemblies, liturgies, dramas and the Eucharistic celebration but show lesser enthusiasm for hymn singing.

5 **QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROVIDED**

5.1 **Teaching**

- 5.1a The quality of teaching observed ranges from satisfactory to very good. In the majority of lessons observed it was good or very good.
- 5.1b Lesson plans seen were well structured and had clear learning objectives.
- 5.1c Where the observed lessons were very good they had differentiated activities with regard for ability and experience, a rigorous pace and the children had a clear understanding of what was expected of them
- 5.1d Good use was made of all facets of the 'Here I Am' Religious Education programme together with a planned programme for Sacramental preparation.
- 5.1e Planning of the Religious Education curriculum is comprehensive and complemented by short, medium and long term plans for Religious Education in the School Development Plan.
- 5.1f Teachers generally apply good, often open-ended questioning skills to facilitate furtherance of knowledge and ease of understanding for the children.
- 5.1g The classrooms are generally well managed with all the necessary resources available. The children, whether working inside the classroom or outside, got on readily and quietly with the tasks in hand.
- 5.1h Children's workbooks show evidence of multi-faith education. In the beautiful new library there is a good resource of multi-faith books.
- 5.1j Monitoring of teaching and learning does take place but needs to be more rigorous and regular. A work evaluation system is in place alongside a comprehensive assessment system but evaluation needs to be more challenging.

5.2 **Religious Education Curriculum and Assessment**

- 5.2a The Religious Education curriculum has a high profile in school.

- 5.2b The aims, policies and philosophies of Religious Education are clear and comprehensive. Staff have clearly defined responsibilities.
- 5.2c The Special Educational Needs policy is thorough. There is regular liaison between the Special Educational Needs co-ordinator, headteacher and Governing Body over legislative matters, timetabling, resourcing and working systems. Children benefit from individual, group, class activities and a comprehensive assessment system is in place to inform progress. The Governing Body is aware of the need for and have made plans to improve wheelchair accessibility particularly within school.
- 5.2d The last Religious Education inspection in 1997 identified assessment as an area for improvement. There is a new practical, useful and consistent assessment system in place using the children's own workbooks and Diocesan assessment sheets. There is a school assessment policy. This key issue has now been successfully addressed.
- 5.2e Parents have termly open evenings, and an annual evaluative comprehensive report on how their children have progressed in Religious Education.
- 5.2f The Governing Body would beneficially receive and consider regular reports or presentations on the 'Here I Am' programme.
- 5.2g There is a recently updated Sex Education policy. Parents have been informed and consulted but the policy requires ratification by the Governing Body.

6 MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

6.1 Leadership and Management

- 6.1a The school has good leadership. The headteacher is committed to the development and care of children and staff.
- 6.1b The school has a clear mission and vision. An audit of requirements and priorities takes place through regular curriculum and school management meetings. There are outline plans for future developments.
- 6.1c The Religious Education co-ordinator is actively involved in the promotion of her subject. She helps to monitor planning and evaluate work and assessment. She observes lessons, oversees a small budget, helps with sacramental preparation and develops liturgical and collective worship celebrations.
- 6.1d Good links have been established between governors, management, staff, the parish priest and parents. Parents are especially vocal about the care shown by the headteacher for the children and his approachability. Parents are involved in school development plans.
- 6.1e Governors actively support school staff in their efforts to promote the school and in developing community links.

6.1f In-service training for staff is planned and cyclical. It should benefit teachers to attend courses applicable to their teaching and developmental needs within the Religious Education forum.

6.2 Staffing, Accommodation and Resources

6.2a All staff are hard working, caring people. Many parents interviewed during the inspection spoke highly of staff, their dedication, the happiness of their children to be in school and the extra time given by staff to extra curricular activities.

6.2b To support seven full time teachers there are four classroom teaching assistants, a half time special educational needs teacher and a point four part time teacher. Clerical staff, lunch time and playground assistants, cleaning staff and the building supervisor all play their part in making St John Fisher School a happy place to be. More involved participation of classroom assistants would benefit the delivery of the Religious Education curriculum.

6.2c Since the last inspection many major improvements have taken place in and around school. The two mobile classrooms have been replaced by two new classrooms. There is now a spacious well-stocked library with computer input. What was the science and technology room has been converted into a well provisioned I.C.T. suite. The playground and its environment have undergone huge improvements to include many superb play and play equipment areas.

6.2d The school is adequately resourced to deliver the Religious Education curriculum. However the School Development Plan outlines further needs such as Bibles for Key Stage 1 children, candles, appropriate music tapes for assemblies and liturgies and artefacts for an expanding multicultural/multi-faith dimension of education. The school recognises that improved resources will require greater allocation from the school budget.

PART THREE

7 MAIN FINDINGS

7.1 St John Fisher's is a good, caring school with a hardworking dedicated staff.

7.2 The school is a positive force in the development of the Catholic community in school, locally and globally. The children with their own School Council and Charter are involved in a lot of extra curricular activities. The Rainbows programme, the European Citizenship and Commenius projects all have a positive impact on the school.

7.3 The school is very ably led by the headteacher who is committed to the development and care of each child and staff member.

7.4 The Religious Education co-ordinator is actively involved in school life. She has raised the profile of Religious Education, developed strong parish and governor links, assessment processes, liturgical programmes and assisted with sacramental preparation.

- 7.5 The Governing Body is actively involved in curriculum related matters and the development of community links. The Governing Body would beneficially receive regular reports or presentations on the 'Here I Am' programme and need to ratify the new sex education policy. The parish priest, a foundation governor, promotes very good parish school links.
- 7.6 Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of their school, extremely happy with the standard of Religious Education and the hardworking caring staff. They welcome their invited involvements in school activities and celebrations.
- 7.7 The school provides very good opportunities for worship. This is a great strength of the school.
- 7.8 The spiritual and moral development of children is very good. A strong code of moral values underpins the school. The Religious Education curriculum and its delivery significantly promotes moral and spiritual development together with liturgical, sacramental preparation and celebration and good staff example.
- 7.9 All children make satisfactory progress in knowledge and understanding of Religious Education. The majority of children make good or very good progress. The quality and quantity of work is satisfactory in all classes and in many good or very good. Further developments in attainment and progress should ensue from challenging differentiated activities and higher expectations.
- 7.10 Children's attitudes to learning are very good. The children listen attentively respond confidently and work together amicably.
- 7.11 The quality of teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. Further progress should ensue from more differentiated activities acknowledging ability and experience and when a more rigorous lesson pace is adopted.
- 7.12 There is a very good practical, useful, consistent assessment process in operation that informs further teaching and learning processes. A more rigorous moderation and evaluation of work could improve progress and attainment.
- 7.13 Staff are hardworking, caring and supportive of each other. Parents speak highly of staff care and commitment. More involved participation by classroom assistants will improve children's progress.
- 7.14 Since the last inspection major accommodation improvements have taken place. There are two new classrooms, a beautifully spacious well stocked library, a well provisioned I.C.T suite and environmental improvements to the playground, play areas and play equipment.
- 7.15 The curriculum is adequately resourced. The School Development Plan outlines the need for improved resourcing in some areas, notably, Bibles for Key Stage 1 and artefacts for multicultural, multifaith dimensions.

- 7.16 The Special Educational Needs programme and provision is very good with regular staff/governor liaison, good resourcing and equipment, sound systems and strategies in place for teaching and learning.
- 7.17 Since the last inspection all key issues for action have been addressed.

AREAS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The Governors and staff of St John Fisher School should now:

- 1 Celebrate and consolidate existing good work and practices, the children's spiritual and moral development, parental partnership and involvement and the strong outgoing links between school, parish and wider community.
- 2 Ensure consistency in teaching standards by sharing good practice and more regular lesson monitoring.
- 3 Improve existing learning standards by using appropriately differentiated activities, consistent work levelling and marking systems and having higher expectations regarding the presentation of written work.

APPENDIX: EVIDENCE BASE

The programme of inspection included a pre-inspection visit, two full days of inspection and a visit to observe a Eucharistic celebration.

Seven Religious Education lessons, a Year Two liturgy led by the Religious Education co-ordinator, a whole school assembly led by the headteacher and part of a hymn practice were observed.

Interviews were conducted with the headteacher, Religious Education co-ordinator, the parish priest, the Special Educational Needs co-ordinator and the Chair of Governors.

Discussions were held with children, twenty parents, grandparents, teaching and ancillary staff, the building supervisor and classroom assistants.

A comprehensive range of documentation was provided by the headteacher and Religious Education co-ordinator including policies on: Contact and Co-operation, Special Needs, Equal Opportunities, Admissions, Collective Worship, Religious Education and Citizenship, Forms S1 to S4, Governor minutes and reports, a Reception Induction Pack, a Vision and Mission policy, the School Development plan, a comprehensive liturgy file, a Religious Education Subject-Leader file with Curriculum Development Plans, levelled samples of work, and a diary of assemblies.

A schedule of prayers taught in each class was also provided with a list of Religious Education resources, budgetary plans and expenditure.

SUMMARY REPORT

The major strengths in Religious Education, collective worship and the spiritual and moral development of the children in school:

- Standards of work in Religious Education range between satisfactory and very good and are at least as good as standards in other curriculum areas.
- The quality of Collective Worship is very good.
- The school has strong Catholic community links.
- The spiritual and moral development of the children is very good.
- Children's attitudes to learning are very good.
- Teaching ranges from satisfactory and very good.

How the school has improved since the last inspection.

- All key issues of the last inspection have been addressed.
- There have been extensive accommodation and playground improvements.

How the parents view the Religious Education, collective worship and spiritual and moral development of their children.

- Parents are satisfied with their children's standards of Religious Education.
- Parents are happy with their invited school involvements and celebrations.
- Parents are happy with school support and the approachability of staff.
- Parents are happy with the Christian, caring ethos of the school.
- Parents are happy with their children's spiritual and moral development.

Areas for further development.

- Celebrate and consolidate existing good work and practices, the children's spiritual and moral development, parent partnerships and involvement and the strong outgoing links between school, parish and wider communities.
- Ensure consistency in teaching standards by sharing good practice and more regular lesson monitoring.
- Improve existing learning standards by using appropriately differentiated activities, consistent work levelling and marking systems and having higher expectations regarding the presentation of written work.