

St Francis Xavier Roman Catholic & Church of England School

Darlington Road, Richmond DL10 7DA

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Dioceses	Leeds CE / Middlesbrough RC
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Name of multi-academy trust / federation [delete as appropriate]	N/A
Dates of inspection	10 & 11 May 2018
Date of last inspection	17 September 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Joint voluntary aided secondary 121715
Headteacher	Sharon Keelan-Beardsley
Inspectors' names and numbers	Lyn Field 151 (Church of England) Meg Baines (Catholic)

School context

St Francis Xavier is a smaller than average, oversubscribed school with 486 pupils on roll. It serves a wide area around Richmond that includes Catterick Garrison. Around 10% of pupils have a parent currently in the armed services. Half of the pupils come from Church of England families and around a third from Roman Catholic families. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and of those who have special educational needs and/or a disability are below average. The school is part of both the Diocese of Middlesbrough Teaching School Alliance and the Yorkshire Teaching School Alliance.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Francis Xavier as a joint Roman Catholic/Church of England school are outstanding

- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher is central to the school's success and shaped by her personal faith. She is fully supported by governors and a strong senior team.
- The joint Catholic/Anglican foundation enriches the life of the school and the local community because everyone comes to a deeper understanding of their own faith and its place in society.
- Pupils grow into mature and compassionate young people, with the confidence to express their own beliefs and to challenge any form of injustice. Their leadership of collective worship is fundamental to the school as a worshipping community and is wholeheartedly embraced by all groups.
- Exceptional pastoral care is rooted in Gospel values. It is headed by an outstanding pastoral team and chaplain who together with all staff model exemplary relationships.
- High academic standards are the direct result of the vision to enable every pupil to develop their God-given talents and to demonstrate the 'Love of God and Love of Neighbour' by being the best they can be.

Areas to improve

- Establish the leadership of the new head of religious education by setting clear priorities and milestones for:
 - completing the process of reshaping the curriculum so that progression from Year 7 to 11 is suitably challenging
 - ensuring that formative assessment is consistent, actively engages pupils and brings about noticeable improvement.
- Access training and refine systems to provide a clear structure for governors in holding the school to account.

The school is outstanding in developing its distinctive Christian nature

The school, through its distinctive joint faith Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of its pupils. A strong Christian foundation is embedded across all aspects of school life including through the exemplary behaviour of pupils and the strong relationships evidenced across the whole school community. A number of staff and parents indicated that when they needed help or support it was readily given. Saint Francis Xavier School (SFX) is an aspirational school where attainment is well above the national average. Pupils in all groups make outstanding progress from their various starting points. Christian teaching expressly underpins the school's code of conduct and the highly effective pastoral support available. This means that learners are happy and feel safe. Consequently, attendance is very high. Pupils understand that their personal development and wellbeing are given a high priority and that these expressly support their learning. In those few instances where attendance or behaviour is an issue, staff work together with families compassionately towards a resolution. Consequently, fixed term exclusions are rare and there have been no permanent exclusions in 6 years. Religious education (RE) and chaplaincy support the school's mission and its core Christian virtues of 'Love of God and Love of Neighbour'. These areas also effectively support the very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development opportunities provided. Charitable fundraising is a key part of school life. It is expressly seen as an outworking of the school's Christian life and integral to the character development of the pupils and whole school community. 'There is a caring ethos here, we are a small school so we are able to take care of each other' a Year 10 pupil reflected. RE makes an excellent contribution to developing pupils' respect for difference and diversity. It also helps them gain an appropriate understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world-wide faith.

Integrated into the life of SFX are groups of pupils, teachers, clergy and parents who live out their faith through membership of the Chaplaincy Team, Eco Team, Worship Band, Parent Prayer Group, Voluntary Liturgy and Eucharist Group, the Lourdes Team and the Flame conference. In these and in other areas, pupils and staff are active in their Christian calling. This is also demonstrable in the everyday atmosphere and interactions during lessons where behaviour for learning is exemplary and in corridors at break time where interactions between staff and other adults were seen to be highly respectful and courteous.

The effectiveness of collective worship is outstanding

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding. Daily worship is central to school life: all staff and pupils begin the day with an act of worship. It is extremely well planned and is monitored effectively by senior leaders. Christian values are modelled by the headteacher and her team and this, in turn, ignites the flame of Christianity throughout the whole school community. Accordingly, it contributes effectively to the Christian ethos and to the school community's spiritual and religious development. The place of worship is seen as central by staff and pupils alike. They value it and relish their involvement in the variety of worship-related activities available to them. A Year 9 pupil reflected, 'taking part in worship makes you a better person, it gives you guidance'.

Pupils and staff are inspired to acts of charity and service during high quality collective worship. Appointed since the last inspection, the chaplain ensures there is support for worship across the school in many forms. Use of biblical material and an understanding of the importance of Jesus for Christians are fundamental to worship. This means that pupils have a detailed knowledge of Christian belief and worship practices, including Anglican and Catholic aspects. Pupils have an appreciation of the Christian concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Daily worship is admirably extended through regular communion services and by annual retreats for each year group, staff and governors. These retreats focus on topics of religious, spiritual and moral concern. Pupils are encouraged to scribe their own prayers. Classrooms used as form rooms have a holy space or wall which often displays these prayers and reflections. Prayer is said regularly and along with the school prayer is included in pupils' planners. Pupils understand that prayer is 'communicating with God, speaking as well as listening'. They know that they can go to staff or their chaplain or to some of their peers for prayer in difficult situations. Local clergy from both denominational backgrounds commendably support worship by leading and supporting the various prayer groups and liturgies. Worship is enhanced through singing of Christian hymns and songs at key events and through the Worship Band and choir. The programme's themes and biblical focus follow the Christian Church's liturgical year. It is devised by the chaplain in liaison with senior leaders. A team of pupils (chaplaincy team) contribute to and support worship in class and for special services. The team is made up of pupils from across the age range who receive highly effective support from the chaplain and other staff. Pupils are confident and eloquent when speaking about their faith and worship. They clearly recognise the common ground they have in both traditions. Staff also affirmed their commitment to this and one summed it up, 'it's our Gospel values that unite us'.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Pupils regularly achieve exceptionally high standards in RE, leading to GCSE results that are well above the national average. This is one of the highest achieving departments and particularly impressive as all pupils take the subject to GCSE, in line with the high profile given to RE as a core subject. Any disparity between the attainment and

progress of disadvantaged pupils and their peers narrows as they move through the school and contributes to the school's high rating for progress compared to similar schools. Staff changes led to a slight dip in 2017, although still above the national average. Senior leaders have managed this situation well, giving it the high priority appropriate to a core subject. Actions taken ensured that pupils continue to receive teaching that is consistently good and often outstanding. A common and accurate approach to assessment has been re-established and monitoring indicates that pupils are back on track to achieve highly. The newly appointed head of RE is ambitious for the department and has a proven track record as a highly effective pastoral leader and outstanding classroom practitioner. The current RE development plan, however, does not analyse immediate needs sufficiently well to inform priorities for action. Work is already underway to amend the curriculum for Key Stage 3 so that pupils are fully prepared for national changes at GCSE. This is a wise move but the timing of new initiatives has not been fully considered in the context of staff changes.

RE has an exceptional impact on pupils' positive attitudes to diversity and difference in society. The jointly agreed syllabus enables pupils to understand the distinctive features of Catholic and Anglican faith that they then see enacted in worship. A comment that was widely echoed was, 'The school makes sure we are united, not divided by our own brands of Christianity.' The study of different religions gives pupils a wider perspective and they freely express their opinions with both honesty and sensitivity. They learn to 'disagree well' because they are able to explore and question issues of faith in an atmosphere where they are safe and supported to do so. Consequently, they are not judgemental about any form of difference through gender, race or religion. They are confident that at SFX, pupils themselves would challenge any form of prejudice-based bullying from a biblical perspective. This is reinforced by RE lessons and their study of different religions. Typical comments are 'It feeds into Love of God and Love of Neighbour' and 'just works in an incredible way'.

Pupils have benefited from a whole school marking initiative that requires students to take responsibility for improving their work, although this is not consistently implemented. Topics are planned to develop pupils' skills of enquiry and investigation. This is popular because questions that 'kick-start lessons' capture pupils' interest for their relevance to contemporary issues. Although cross-curricular links are not formally planned or monitored, numerous examples exist of where pupils apply their learning in RE to other subjects and where teachers take advantage of opportunities to explore the wider role of religion in life. This adds much to pupils' mature spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Christian life of the school is outstanding

Leaders and governors are totally committed to their shared vision for the school, captured in the words 'Love of God, Love of Neighbour'. It is a constant marker for the headteacher and her senior team in motivating adults and young people to the highest standards of performance and personal conduct. It is equally seen in the rigour and compassion with which policies are implemented because the personal faith of senior leaders shines through and is at the heart of their leadership. Consequently, the ethos is engrained in the school's daily life because, as a governor explained, 'Pupils are unconscious missionaries, not consciously serving each other but doing so naturally.' The vision fully embraces and promotes the school's joint Catholic and Anglican status. A natural balance is achieved between these traditions in daily life that provides rich spiritual experiences whilst leading everyone to a better understanding of their own faith. Partnerships with both dioceses are strong and fruitful although full advantage is not always taken of Church of England networks and developments at national level. The school's involvement in two teaching alliances is of mutual benefit in the access it offers to professional development, especially headteacher peer reviews and opportunities for the headteacher to share the practice more widely. Governors justifiably have immense confidence in the headteacher to implement the Christian vision in all aspects of school life. They know the school well and are unwavering in their support through financial priorities and staffing procedures that demonstrate a deeply Christian responsibility for meeting the needs of each individual. The innovative development of the Eco Team was initiated by the business manager and is fully understood by the whole community to be an expression of the school's Christian purpose in the community. Governors' ability to question strategic planning prepared by senior leaders is increasing with the Ethos and Immersion Days. The headteacher has devised these to enable governors to jointly reflect on the vision and gather feedback from staff and students. However, the analysis of this information is still not incisive enough to help determine priorities for development as a church school. This is hampered by the format of action plans that does not make a clear distinction between the role of those who are responsible for implementing actions and those who monitor the impact. Governors, therefore, have limited guidance from training and actions plans in holding leaders to account. In spite of this, development plans as a church school are ambitious and wide ranging. They fully reflect the benefit of senior leaders' efficient and rigorous monitoring systems and result in leaders' insightful understanding of exactly where the next steps should be. Issues from the previous inspection have been addressed and taken further by the headteacher to ensure the school is a fully worshipping community.