

Response to recommendations of the Catholic School Inspection

(October 2025)

We welcome the report of our Catholic School Inspection, which took place in October 2025. We are pleased that the report acknowledges that we are *“on a rapid journey of improvement”* and notes that *“strong, appropriately skilled leadership”* is in place. We are now acting on the report’s suggestions for further development.

Although the Catholic School Inspection Framework is relatively new, and this is the first time it has been used to inspect The John Fisher School, its structure mirrors that of its less demanding predecessor, the Section 48 inspection, and covers three key areas: Catholic Life & Mission, Religious Education, and Collective Worship.

Catholic Life & Mission (CLM)

The report notes that students are *“happy, confident and feel secure”* and recognises their *“sense of belonging within the house system”*, the *“sense of family”* within the school, and the willingness of pupils to support others. One student is quoted as saying: *“We take our Catholic values with us beyond school.”* Another student describes the impact of the school’s Catholic character: *“The impact is everywhere — how I behave and relate to people outside school and in the future.”*

In relation to the continuing development of CLM within the school, the report acknowledges that leadership in this area is at an early stage, with a new leader appointed in September 2025. However, it also highlights that strategic changes made by the Governing Board have *“laid the foundation for the school to move quickly towards its vision of regaining a strong Catholic purpose.”*

What we are doing to improve further:

- We are working with external advisers to embed Catholic Social Teaching (CST) more firmly within the life of the school. Although the report recognises that pupils already understand the importance of virtues and CST principles, we are now teaching them more explicitly so that students gain both the language and the confidence to apply these principles in their daily lives.
- We are preparing to participate in the Oscar Romero Award.
- We are simplifying our fundraising efforts to focus on a smaller number of charitable causes, while raising their profile across the school community.

Religious Education (RE)

Although our 2024 RE results were the highest since the new GCSE grading system began in 2018, outcomes dipped somewhat in 2025 due to unfilled vacancies and the absence of key staff. These issues have now been fully resolved, and the report is

complimentary about the positive impact already made by the RE team just one month into the new academic year.

The report observes that *“students have recognised a clear change in their religious education lessons this academic year, saying lessons have been made interesting, fun and applicable to their own lives.”* It also praises the new subject leader, *“who has a clear vision and is being supported to carry this out, which is evident in the rapid improvement in teaching and learning.”*

What we are doing to improve further:

- We are continuing to support the RE department to maintain its current steep trajectory of improvement.
- We are exploring ways to enrich the RE curriculum, including the introduction of more educational visits and strengthened provision within the Sixth Form.
- We are investigating the feasibility of introducing an A Level course in Religious Studies or a related subject, should there be sufficient demand.

Collective Worship (CW)

The report acknowledges *“leaders’ work to establish and renew the practice of prayer which had been lost”* and highlights a number of positive changes that have already been implemented, including:

- The introduction of prayers at the start of each lesson, about which the report states that *“a daily pattern of prayer is the norm”* and that *“students respond reverently”*;
- The reintroduction of regular Masses before school on three days each week;
- The availability of the Sacrament of Reconciliation every week;
- The reintroduction of the Faith Club;
- A commitment to weekly class retreats;
- The daily opening of the Chapel for prayer at break and lunch.

Unfortunately, due to the timing of the inspection and its brief duration, other acts of prayer and liturgy such as Welcome Masses, Leavers’ Masses, and Epilogue were not observed during the inspection and therefore were not mentioned in the report. However, these are very much part of the rich spiritual encounter that we seek to provide for all our students and a member of staff is quoted as reflecting on the renewal of spirituality within the school: *“We are no longer a school that has lost its spirituality but one that is growing it.”*

What we are doing to improve further:

- Weekly class retreats began as scheduled in the week following the inspection, and initial feedback from students has been highly positive.

- We will continue to encourage greater participation in voluntary prayer and liturgical activities.
- Class prayer representatives have been appointed throughout the school to help lead a new common Form Prayer initiative, which began on 3 November.
- We will explore ways of providing students with further opportunities for reflection and participation in the prayer life of the school.
- As the report described the Remembrance Cross and Statue of Our Lady as “*underused*,” we will look at ways to maximise their visibility and use in the spiritual life of the school.

Through this inspection process, we have received valuable affirmation of the progress made so far and a clear roadmap for our next steps. We remain fully committed to ensuring that The John Fisher School continues to grow as a community rooted in faith, learning, and service — a place where every student can flourish academically, spiritually, and personally.

November 2025