



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
Of the Education Act 2005
URN 137959

St James the Great Catholic Primary & Nursery School
Windsor Road
Thornton Heath
CR7 8HJ

Inspection date: 22 May 2013

Chair of Governors:	Mr Edwin Abreo
Headteacher:	Mr Stephen Beck
Inspectors:	Mrs Angela O'Connor
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EDUCATION COMMISSION

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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

The school converted to Academy status in April 2012. It is in the Croydon Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Croydon LA. The principal parishes which the school serves are St Andrews, Thornton Heath and St Bartholomew's, Norbury. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 100%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in all Key Stages.

The school takes pupils from 3 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 482. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils who receive extra support in class is below average. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority heritages is high when compared nationally, although only a few pupils are at an early stage of learning English.

Publication date ... 28 June 2013

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

GRADE

1

St James the Great is an outstanding school which is committed to high academic achievement and the all-round development of the pupils. The school has many strengths. The leadership and management of the highly regarded and inspirational headteacher, well supported by the leadership team and governors is outstanding and a key ingredient in the success of the school. There is a strong committed staff, who provide excellent pastoral care and all members of the school community work together to ensure good relationships exist between home, school and parish. Excellent teaching, a well-planned curriculum and an attractive and stimulating learning environment, enable the pupils to thrive and to make good progress. The pupils are lively, polite, friendly and respectful. They are extremely well behaved, very proud of their school and are very considerate of each other. The parents are overwhelming in their support and appreciation of the school. One parent spoke for many as she said, "I chose this school for my three children because the values are based on the love of God, prayer and discipline within the backdrop of an excellent academic background". The issues from the last inspection have been addressed and the school has excellent capacity to continue to improve.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, headteacher and staff should:

- Continue to develop 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' scheme, to embed its assessment procedures so that continuous accurate data can be used to further raise standards. This has been identified through the school's own rigorous and thorough self evaluation.

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The Catholic life of the school

GRADE 1

Leadership and management

Leadership is outstanding and underpins the success of the school. The Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team and the Governors all work together to create a vibrant and successful school. The highly effective Headteacher, who is well regarded by all, is an inspirational leader, who has created a strong and cohesive staff team and successfully developed leadership capacity within that team. He has a clear vision of Catholic education and is totally committed to the success and wellbeing of the school. He plays a leading role in the Catholic education and life in the Deanery and Diocese.

The very knowledgeable and committed governing body make a positive contribution to the success of the school. They have a very good working knowledge of the school and act as a critical friend maintaining a good balance between challenge and support e.g. they were very involved in the introduction of 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' taking part in Inset and having regular reports on its introduction and progress.

The Parish Priest is a frequent and regular visitor to the school. He is well known to all the children and their families. He works closely with staff and children who greatly appreciate his care and support. The Home/School/Parish relationship is very strong.

Parents are very supportive and take an active role in the school such as organising pre-school reflections in the Oratory to which staff and children are welcomed. They are very appreciative of the Catholic ethos, the staff and the headteacher and are effusive in their praise. One parent said, which echoed many "The school provides a secure and loving environment which fosters, develops and encourages the children's spiritual needs. This powerful Catholic ethos is upheld through involvement with home and parish".

The pupils are able to articulate the Mission Statement. It is displayed prominently and can be seen in action around the school.

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

GRADE 1

Prayer and Worship are central to the life of the school and it more than fulfils its obligations with regard to collective worship. There is a well-planned programme of Masses, liturgies and assemblies which follow the liturgical year. There are a variety of assemblies which include those led by the Headteacher, class teachers and pupils and parents are invited and welcomed where appropriate. For example an Ash Wednesday service is held in school for staff, pupils and parents to mark the beginning of Lent. The excellent whole school assembly observed was led by Year 5 and was on the subject of reconciliation and parents were invited. The pupils spoke clearly and fluently. The assembly consisted of several activities including role play. The other pupils listened intently with interest and engagement and responded enthusiastically to questions asked by Year 5, which were handled with great maturity. The Assembly culminated with class prayers the pupils had written themselves. The outstanding chamber choir sung at the end of the assembly with some beautiful two part singing

Mass is celebrated in school at certain times during the year and all classes attend a weekday Mass in one of the two parishes at some time during the year. Each year the pupils lead a Carol Service, the Stations of the Cross and Year 6 Leavers' Mass in one of the two parishes.

There are many opportunities in school for prayer and the response of pupils to Prayer and Worship is outstanding. They know the traditional prayers of the Church and they have opportunities to write personal and reflective prayer. There is a school Prayer Book which

records some of the favourite prayers of the families and individuals, pupils' own prayers and the traditional prayers of the Church.

Every class has a focal prayer corner and very comprehensive displays of a high quality, which include pupils' own prayers and thoughts. A prayerful ambience was created at the beginning and throughout the lessons with candles and music. The school is fortunate to have an oratory which provides a quiet space for prayer and reflection and is available to pupils, staff and parents.

Community cohesion

GRADE 1

This is a fully inclusive school, which celebrates its diverse community and where all are welcomed and given the opportunity to succeed. Staff work hard to ensure that all pupils are involved in school life, enjoy their learning and participate in extra school activities. Pupils with additional needs are valued by the school community and make very good progress.

Pupils are given many opportunities to take responsibility in their own community for example as 'Squabble Busters' or members of the School Council. As one pupil said "All of us put together make our school happy and helpful. We help to make the school better".

The school contributes to the wider community through fund raising and various activities. For example, Year 3 prepare and serve a harvest lunch each year to raise money for CAFOD and groceries are collected for the Salvation Army and other charities to distribute to those in need. Other charities supported include the Cabrini Society, the Evelina Children's Hospital and NSPCC among others. The school is currently supporting a Catholic school in Sri Lanka with very few resources or basic provision. This also provides opportunities for the pupils to appreciate and respect the lives of other children and families less fortunate than themselves.

The 100 Days of Peace was a major topic for the school, which involved all the classes studying a different country representative of the pupils at school. This culminated in a celebration of food, song and dance to which the wider community were invited.

Members of staff are very active and committed members of their parishes, supporting sacramental preparation and the Parish Council.

The parents are very supportive and involved in school life. There is a thriving Friends' Association which fund raises and organises events to which the whole community is invited.

Religious Education

Achievement and standards in Religious Education

GRADE 1

Attainment on entry to the Reception class is broadly average. Pupils settle in quickly and make very good progress by the end of the Foundation Stage. This is sustained as they move through the school so that by the end of Key Stage 2 they have reached levels of attainment above the national average.

Through their own self-evaluation and the introduction of 'The Way, The Truth and The Life', tracking and assessment procedures more accurately reflect the abilities of the pupils. Improved methods of assessment show that attainment in Religious Education is in line with attainment in Literacy. The school is continuing to embed this system.

Pupils with additional needs have interventions put in place which ensure they access the curriculum and make good progress. Analysis of data has informed future planning and how to further raise standards.

Religious Education makes a positive contribution to the moral, spiritual, social and cultural development of the pupils.

Pupils take great pride in their Religious Education workbooks, which are well presented and show a quantity of work of a good standard. Books are marked regularly and there is evidence that pupils are reflecting on and reacting to comments made by the teachers.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

GRADE 1

Teaching is outstanding, with many strengths. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, displaying spirituality and vitality. Learning intentions are clear and shared with the pupils and lessons were built on prior knowledge. Lessons have a vitality which maintain the pupils' interest and concentration.

The pace was brisk with many varied and interesting learning activities, which challenged the pupils' thinking, and were well matched to their needs. Pupils were encouraged to relate their learning to their own experiences and good questioning developed pupils' understanding and gave them opportunities for empathy. In group work observed discussion was lively and interesting and pupils remained on task. The teachers ensured the pupils knew what was required of them and discussed the success criteria at the beginning of the lesson. For example in one class the teacher asked, "How will you know you have done well?".

A variety of teaching techniques were used such as talk partners, group work, use of ICT, and drama and role play. For example in a key Stage 2 class there was a good use of talk partners to discuss how they would use the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The pupils then put their learning into action with a drama about using those gifts. They organised themselves with excellent cooperation, showing empathy and understanding. Support Assistants are effectively deployed to extend the learning of individuals and groups of pupils, where appropriate.

Behaviour is exemplary and teachers' class management is excellent resulting in a productive learning environment, which all pupils enjoy and in which they are all actively engaged.

The Religious Education curriculum

GRADE 1

The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops Conference and 10% of the timetable is allocated to the teaching of Religious Education.

The school has recently introduced 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' in order to better meet the needs of the school. There was a well thought out and comprehensive programme to implement the scheme and staff were well supported. Some aspects of 'Here I Am' are sensibly used to support the multi-faith curriculum.

The Religious Education curriculum is supported through the chaplaincy of the parish priest and sisters, and events such as the 'The 100 days of Peace'.

The curriculum is further enriched by the close collaboration of the staff and the positive attitude and enjoyment of the pupils. As one pupil said, "There are lots of different things happening. It's very exciting and I don't know how they fit them all in".

Parents are kept well informed through regular newsletters, meetings and information on the school website.

The Religious Education curriculum is well resourced.

Leadership and management of Religious Education

GRADE 1

The Religious Education coordinator is passionate and committed with a strong sense of spiritual purpose. She is a member of the senior leadership team which ensures that Religious Education has a high priority in the school. She works closely with the headteacher and they share a clear vision for the development of the Religious Education curriculum. Her action plan is very practical and focuses on embedding 'The Way, The Truth and The Life', the new scheme and its assessment procedures. Through regular monitoring and discussion with the staff, she is well aware of areas for development and has put in place strategies for further development. She gives excellent support to the staff both formally and informally, and is very proactive in supporting newly qualified teachers, students and non-Catholic staff. Her monitoring role includes lesson observations, learning walks, book and planning scrutiny.

The coordinator has developed links with other Catholic schools in the deanery, has delivered Inset to the staff and has presented the new scheme to the governors. They have a good understanding of the Religious Education curriculum, the new scheme and its implications.

Everyone works together to create a stimulating, safe and supportive environment which truly celebrates the work of this Catholic community.