

Diocese of Arundel & Brighton

SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Report on the inspection of denominational education under  
Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

St John the Baptist Catholic Primary School  
Whitehawk Hill Road  
Brighton  
BN2 0AH

Chair of Governors  
Headteacher  
Inspectors

Mr Dave Muscato  
Mrs Maria Rimmer  
Mr Stephen Beck  
Mrs Bernadette Brech  
13 June 2007

Inspection date:

# Introduction

## Description of the school

The school is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Brighton Deanery of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. It is maintained by Brighton and Hove Local Authority. The principal parish the school serves is St John the Baptist, Brighton. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 41%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10% in Key Stage 1 and 10% in Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 210. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals is average. The number of pupils who receive extra support in class is in line with most schools nationally. Most children are from White British backgrounds but about a tenth of pupils are from Asian backgrounds. There are increasing numbers of pupils from Eastern Europe joining the school at an early stage of speaking English.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

St John the Baptist School has many good features. Under the direction of the interim headteacher, the school is moving forward effectively. During a period of change, the staff team has supported the school in providing a very stable and secure environment for the pupils, within a calm supportive working atmosphere.

The governing body, and in particular the Chair, have been proactive in supporting the school in identifying and addressing areas for development. As a result the school is in a strong position to build on its strengths and to move forward on the appointment of a substantive headteacher.

It was good to note how well the use of ICT in religious education has developed since the last inspection, turning this from an area of weakness to one of strength.

The school reflects its Catholic ethos in the good, caring and professional relationships that exist between adults and pupils. All are respected and valued.

The ethos of the school is firmly underpinned by Gospel values. Respect, tolerance and forgiveness are openly promoted.

## **Grade 2**

### **What steps need to be taken to improve further?**

- Broaden opportunities for pupils to develop their prayer life through extended periods of reflection and personal prayer.
- Make the religious education content of topic work more explicit and implement consistent use of developmental marking.
- Look to establishing links with feeder parishes other than St John the Baptist.
- Develop further communication with parents regarding the religious education curriculum and provide more opportunities for parents to attend school based liturgies.

## **The Catholic life of the school**

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher has a clear vision of Catholic education which is shared and supported by governors and staff. The school has been actively working on policies and strategies to ensure that the Catholic life of the school is effectively monitored and celebrated. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, through the Chair's regular visits to the school and through reports to governor committees by the religious education link governor. There is a clear emphasis on religious education in the school's development plan and this will secure and support future progress. The mission statement is visible and well articulated by adults. The school might now work with pupils on producing their own versions of the statement in order to gain greater ownership of it.

## **Grade 2**

### **Quality of Catholic life of the school**

Displays of religious education and focal points throughout the school are a strength. The care of pupils by staff and each other is noteworthy and acknowledged by both the children and their parents. The school is a welcoming community in all aspects of its daily life contributing positively to the local parish. Pupils are provided with opportunities for involvement in a broad range of activities.

Parents are rightly proud and supportive of their school. One parent wrote, 'St John the Baptist School is a wonderful Catholic school'. Another said, 'St John

the Baptist has succeeded in achieving a good balance for the pupils with regard to their academic progression and appreciation of their spiritual education'. In discussion they commented on their appreciation of the hard work undertaken by the staff in providing continuity and security for pupils during a period of change. It is clear that parents have an awareness of the school's strengths and actively contribute to maintaining these.

Sacramental preparation is parish based and parents would welcome more explicit links between this programme and the religious education curriculum being undertaken in school during this period. They would also welcome more detailed information with regard to the work being undertaken in school to complement the parish based sacramental programmes for First Reconciliation and Holy Communion. It would be appropriate for the school to address this issue.

Parents, staff and pupils welcome the visits undertaken by the parish priest and the celebrations he leads for them at various times in the school year. More recently, classes have been attending normal weekday parish Masses. This programme is enjoyed by the pupils, whose presence in the parish has been welcomed by the parish community.

Pupils are drawn from a number of different parishes. The school might consider forming some links with these parishes in addition to the good links currently enjoyed with the school's own parish.

## **Grade 2**

### **Quality of provision for personal and collective worship**

The school fulfils its statutory obligations with regard to worship. Opportunities are given for periods of meditation and reflection. In the lessons seen it was notable how well children utilised these opportunities. Parents welcome the invitations to attend class assemblies. The school is planning to develop these assemblies so that they become more focused with a distinctly religious theme. Pupils experience a good range of prayer opportunities which could be further developed in Key Stage 2, to include more extended periods of reflection and personal prayer. In an assembly on the theme of the Ten Commandments and respect, pupils were reverent in prayer and participated fully in singing. The school should examine ways of ensuring projected materials are clearly visible for all.

## **Grade 2**

# **Religious education**

The school's religious education curriculum is soundly based on the diocesan recommended scheme 'Here I Am'. The school issues a termly religious education newsletter to parents.

Work has been undertaken to develop paired planning procedures to support more consistent whole school approaches to the delivery of the religious education curriculum. This recognises that a number of teachers are not from Catholic backgrounds and would benefit from greater clarity in regard to progression

Further strengthening planning would serve to broaden subject knowledge and enhance teaching and learning across the school.

### **Achievement and standards**

Attainment is sound with the majority of pupils meeting expected age related levels. Steady progress is made as pupils move through the respective key stages. This is particularly commendable considering the generally low levels of attainment on entry and the increasing demands to meet English as an additional language. In the lessons seen and through discussions with pupils, it is clear they enjoy their religious education lessons. They work effectively individually, in pairs and in groups and the way they move between these different approaches during lessons is commendable.

### **Grade 3**

#### **Quality of provision for religious education**

Classroom management is of a high order. The beginnings of religious education lessons are distinct from others through the incorporation of a prayerful start. Teachers are good at encouraging pupils to participate in lessons. Teaching is good overall with some outstanding elements in Early Years. Teachers clearly identify and articulate learning objectives and return to these at intervals throughout lessons. Praise and affirmation are used effectively to encourage pupils to do their best. Lessons are generally well paced and the work the school has undertaken in developing consistency in marking is clearly evident and proving effective. Teachers build commendably on previous work. Assessment is developing well. It is carried out in accordance with diocesan guidelines. The school has already identified assessment as area for further development and has set itself appropriate targets to further develop assessment.

### **Grade 2**

#### **The religious education curriculum**

The school meets the required time allocation of 10% for religious education in addition to its programme of liturgies. The ongoing implementation of the 'Here I Am' scheme and shared religious education planning will serve to strengthen all teachers' subject knowledge. The school is building up a good level of religious education resources and artefacts. It was pleasing to see a high level of differentiated tasks in lessons to meet the needs of individual pupils. Work is already established to develop the school's 'Personal, Health, Social and Citizenship Education Policy (PHSCE) and to update provision for

sex education. Parents are kept informed of this programme and are very happy with the school's approach to this area of the curriculum. The school is strong in this area, making good use of 'circle time' opportunities and focussed themes such as anti-bullying week.

## **Grade 2**

### **Leadership and management**

The newly appointed religious education coordinator is working well with the headteacher, who has been managing religious education. The self-evaluation statement gives a clear and accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for future development. The coordinator is working hard to prepare herself to take over the management of this curriculum area. Due to the priority the school has given to religious education, the impact on the development of the subject has been significant. The coordinator, with the headteacher, is ensuring that religious education has a high status throughout the school. The focus is, correctly, on working to secure consistency across the school in all aspects of the subject. The vision for religious education is clear and the school is in a strong position to realise it.

Religious education policy documentation and record keeping are substantial and well presented. As the coordinator assumes greater responsibility the move from policy into practice will become more firmly established.

## **Grade 2**