

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK  
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**



***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 118763

St John's Catholic Primary School  
St Elmo's Road  
Rotherhithe  
London SE16 6SD  
URN 100841

Chair of Governors	Mrs Kim Insley
Headteacher	Mrs Janice Babb
Inspectors	Mr Stephen Beck
	Mrs Madeline Brading

Inspection dates	05 July 2011
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COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES  
St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington BR5 2SR  
Tel 01689 829331 Fax 01689 829255  
Director of Education: Dr Dilys Wadman**

# Introduction

## Description of the school

St John's School is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Cathedral Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Southwark Local Authority. The principal parish which the school serves is The Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Rotherhithe. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 77%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10% in both Key Stages.

The school takes pupils from 3 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 186. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly average although an increasing number are entering the school with skills levels below expectations for their age both in language and personal development. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. Around 22% of the pupils receive extra support in class. More than 50% of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds with the largest group being from Black African heritage. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is above average at around 25% although few of these are at an early stage of English language development.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

St John's is an effective school that has moved to address the issues raised in the last inspection in November 2008. It is a welcoming and inclusive community where pupils feel valued and supported. It is a school that provides a good standard of education to its pupils and is continuing to improve in many ways and shows a growing number of good features. The whole school community is committed to the mission statement, 'To love and serve one another'. This has seen the school improve its outcomes over recent years and the determination to continue to build on this progress is very clear. The school now benefits from a Catholic vision that is both well communicated across the whole school community and is also shared by them. All are committed to its development and implementation. There is a strong sense of all members of the school community pulling together to secure the very best provision possible for pupils, offering a clear Catholic direction to the school which is an undoubted strength of the school. As one parent commented, "My children love coming to school and they are always excited to learn new things - in all subjects. I am always very pleased and impressed when my children tell me what new things they have learnt in religious education and retell me the stories/facts they have learned/found out. (Some of them I didn't even know). I feel that children are encouraged very well to take part in Masses, prayers and become responsible members of society". The school serves a very diverse area with an increasing percentage of pupils coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school celebrates this richness and diversity confirming the highly inclusive nature of the school. Its pastoral care is of a very high order and creates an extremely safe environment for pupils who also develop their own self confidence and commitment to looking after each other and the vulnerable. Positive relationships exist between all members of the school community which has established a close working partnership between home, school, parish and the local community. Parent coffee sessions are held on a monthly basis for parents dropping their children off at school. This is done in liaison with the parish and provides a good forum for parents and further serves to strengthen parish links.

Pupils achieve well and make good progress in each key stage. Teaching is good. The school uses the 'Here I Am' Diocesan recommended religious education programme. Parents receive a termly religious education topic newsletter which they find provides them with useful information to help them support their children at home, whilst also providing useful information about the school's activities and parish links. The standard of Religious Education overall is good and during their time at St John's, pupils make good progress. The School Council is developing well in its role as a pupil voice under the guidance of the Deputy Headteacher. Work on assessment in religious education is developing well and remains ongoing. Pupil behaviour is very good at all times. Worship and prayer have a strong central role in the life of the school. Pupils have a broad prayer base that includes the use of the traditional prayers of the Church, pupils' own prayers and spontaneous prayer, as appropriate. The Parish Priest is a regular visitor to the school and his input into the home, school, parish partnership is highly valued and

appreciated by all connected with the school. He values the mutual trust that has been built up between the Headteacher and the Governing Body which has created a climate in which the role of critical friend can operate effectively. The Governing Body as a whole operates well to fulfil and discharge its responsibilities to the school and wider community. It is proactive in supporting the school. The school's self evaluation is clear and accurate in identifying and understanding the school's strengths and areas for development. It now needs to document with more clarity the processes it has established and is implementing, as well as what will be required to move the school to achieve its laudable aspiration to be outstanding. The school has identified six appropriate developmental areas in its religious education action plan; marking, standards in religious education, the teaching of world faiths and the new Mass translation, which it has correctly identified as its highest priorities.

## **Grade 2**

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

- continue to develop the good assessment procedures which are in place, in order that assessment data, including the levelling of pupils' work, has a consistent impact on teachers' planning and provision of differentiated work to further raise standards.
- Share examples of good practice in marking to secure greater consistency across the school, particularly with regard to developmental marking and pupil self assessment.
- Further develop the school's current work in the teaching of other faiths and communities to broaden pupils' awareness by extending the global dimension to their understanding of community cohesion, through different faiths and traditions.
- the Governors should consider reviewing the school's policy on Sex and Relationship Education in consultation with staff and parents with the aim of establishing a whole school cross curricular policy with reference to the Diocesan policy for Education in Human Love.

# The Catholic life of the school

## Leadership and management

## Grade 1

The effective leadership within the school is marked by ambition, a determination to succeed, the intrinsic value of the individual and a common view that complacency is not an option. It is strongly focussed on the school's mission to raise standards and promote the personal development of learners. Leadership and management was noted in the previous inspection as developing well. The work underway at that time to develop teamwork, set high expectations and develop the role of the new Governing body, has borne fruit that now sees excellent leadership and management of the school established. The Headteacher is rightly held in high regard and is strongly supported by the management team and governors. She is highly effective in maintaining the now established strong Catholic community and cohesive staff and governor teams. Her clear vision of Catholic education is firmly based on the common good, ensuring that St John's is an inclusive school where every pupil is nurtured as a unique and valued individual. The mission statement has a very high profile and appears everywhere. Governors know their school well and willingly share their expertise in order to support the school. They play an active role in the life of the school. Together with the Headteacher and management team they are committed to moving the school forward, whilst maintaining and developing its Catholic ethos. Displays around the school are of a good standard and mark the school out as distinctively Catholic. Whilst they would benefit from being more interactive, the content of displays was varied and covered topics such as Moses and Mount Sinai, Meditation in the Woodland, and in the hall the topics of Respect, Friendship, Courage, Equality, Inspiration and Excellence. Some good links were shown with ICT where the pupils had photographed themselves to make up story boards reflecting the school motto. There were also good examples of links with the church, picturing pupil visits to the church with explanations quoted from the Parish Priest. The school issued 208 parental questionnaires with a good return of 38%. The responses were overwhelmingly positive, reflecting a high level of parental satisfaction. This was matched in an equally positive and supportive parents' meeting. The Headteacher is seen as an outstanding role model and her open door policy is much appreciated by parents who feel issues raised are taken seriously and attended to promptly. An example was given where parents had raised concerns about the way children entered the Nursery at the start of the day. This was addressed within 48 hours following consultation with the parents and a new arrangement was put in place.

## Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

## Grade 2

The School more than fulfils its statutory obligations with regard to worship. The quality of provision is good, central to, and at the heart of the daily life of the school. The programme of assemblies, Masses and other liturgies help the pupils to be part of a worshipping community. Prayer is a key component of school assemblies which strongly feature the lives of the Saints and stories from the Bible. There are many opportunities for collective worship and

liturgy, including whole school, key stage and class assemblies to which parents are invited. Pupils are given the opportunity to attend a weekday parish Mass led by a class on a rota basis, a school based Mass at the beginning of the year and opportunities for a more active role when marking events in the church's calendar. The parish based Sacramental programmes for Reconciliation and First Holy Communion are supported through the religious education programme in school and benefit from the co-ordinator's involvement at parish level. Opportunities are provided for more personal worship through prayer in Lara's Garden, which is an area dedicated to a child who attended the school. The praying of the Rosary is encouraged in October and May and the school undertakes Stations of the Cross during Lent. Children are encouraged to write their own personal petitions utilising the Lenten Promise Box in Lent and a Memorial book in November. In an assembly attended on the theme of prayer, Year 6 pupils presented a delightful act of worship incorporating reflection, prayer and singing with signing to a high standard. This was especially commendable as half the year group was absent on a secondary school induction visit. The assembly was marked by the pupils' own input, with a group of boys preparing and undertaking a liturgical dance and by the taking of photographs for use during a period of reflection. It was impressive to hear a group of six pupils say the Our Father in their home language. One also said the Hail Mary. As a Nursery parent wrote, "I strongly appreciate the school's religious life because my child can say the 'Lord's Prayer', to my amazement. I'm really happy about this aspect".

## **Community Cohesion**

## **Grade 2**

St John's is situated in a very mixed socio-economic area and pupils come from a range of minority ethnic groups. The school places much importance on maintaining affable relationships within the school community. It is an inclusive school and a harmonious community where Gospel values are lived out in the daily life of the school. Diversity is valued and pupils have a good understanding of community in a local and national sense. The school's promotion of community cohesion has grown over time and is becoming increasingly effective. The school has for example joined the parish community to celebrate the cultural diversity and richness of the community outside of the school. This is an 'International' event celebrated through the sharing of food, drink, music, dance and dress. Pupils are given opportunities to participate in a 'Street Leader Scheme' which highlights good citizenship and responsibilities as a member of a society. The school is a proactively 'Green School' being the second school in the Borough to achieve the Eco 'Green Flag Award'. It is also justly proud of winning the school's prize for Southwark in Bloom two years running. It is of note that St John's hosts visits from a rural school in Yeovil, and has established links with schools in Truro and Kent. The school could now consider expanding this, particularly taking account of the school's ethnic diversity, to include links with schools in other countries and thereby provide understanding of the global nature of community cohesion. The school supports a range of charities frequently chosen by the pupils through the school council. Recently this has included CAFOD, Help our Heroes, The Good Shepherd Appeal and Red Nose Day. A

regular termly religious education newsletter keeps parents updated with regard to events in the school and parish and also highlights subject issues including religious education.

## Religious education

### **Achievement and standards in religious education**

### **Grade 2**

The school's ethos of looking after each other permeates all the school does and is equally reflected in pupils' desire to help and support one another within lessons. This very positive attitude towards each other and learning is impacting on achievement and standards which sees pupils make significant progress in Foundation Stage frequently from a lower than average starting point. Across all key stages, pupils make good progress. They are able to express their understanding of religious topics with confidence. Pupils are gaining religious literacy at a good rate. Role play, hot seating and ICT are well used and reflect teachers' skills at employing a range of strategies to make religious education lessons enjoyable for pupils and to get across the learning objectives being taught. Discussions with pupils highlighted their enjoyment of their religious education lessons. Achievement in religious education compares favourably with other subject areas. Pupils' oral skills are better developed than their written skills which reflect progress throughout the school at appropriately age related levels. The standard of pupils' written work is good overall and well presented. Workbooks show good coverage of topics and benefit from a wide range of recording methods. Differentiation is consistently by outcome and could usefully be more varied by task. The extent to which pupils can think morally, spiritually and ethically is a strength. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in class and achieve appropriate standards commensurate with their abilities. Trends over recent time show a positive trajectory for all groups of pupils with no statistically significant variations. The engagement and behaviour of learners throughout the school is very good. Classroom focal points are variable in quality and use. Reception and Year 2 made good use of their focal points as a focus for prayer. This good practice could usefully be disseminated across the school.

### **Teaching and learning in religious education**

### **Grade 2**

In lessons seen, the quality of teaching and learning was consistently good. They were marked by a strong rapport between teachers and pupils and good classroom management. Lessons would benefit from less teacher led input and shorter carpet sessions at the beginning of lessons. The school follows the 'Here I Am' Diocesan recommended religious education programme. Questioning by teachers is good and encourages pupils to reflect on the church's teaching and how this relates to their everyday lives. This is also frequently central to assembly messages and common themes that are shared. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own actions and discuss issues with each other and staff. Lessons are marked by high levels of pupil engagement and good behaviour creating a conducive learning environment.

Pupils are supported in their learning in a variety of ways. They work effectively in mixed ability groups, in pairs and individually, with paired working being a particular strength. Teaching assistants provide discreet but effective support for individual and groups of pupils within classrooms. They are well prepared for the work they undertake and have good relationships with pupils. They would benefit from training in the use of questioning of pupils to ensure these provide more open-ended opportunities and thereby expand pupils' learning. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and both lesson planning and marking are developing well. Marking is, in the main, summative and would benefit from a more developmental approach that would afford pupils opportunities to respond to marked work. Parents feel well informed about their children's religious education and feel able to support their children at home as a result. In a Year 3 lesson observed, pupils were able to use Bibles effectively to find passages identifying special places in the life of Jesus. These were then well related to the pupils' own 'special places'. In a Reception lesson seen, pupils were told the story of Bernadette. They were very attentive and then used beads to make their own rosaries. They were able to talk about the formal prayers of the rosary. The Year 2 lesson provided examples of a range of learning strategies e.g. talking partners, show and tell, and this lesson ended with a very reverent reflection. Year 5 pupils had researched places of special interest to Jesus. This previous learning was then used in the lesson to enable pupils to communicate with each other about the different places they had researched. The lesson concluded with good use of biblical texts which were leading towards the production of a postcard to send to a nominated person.

## **The religious education curriculum**

## **Grade 2**

The curriculum content in religious education continues to fully meet the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and it is pleasing to note how well the school has addressed the shortfall in religious curriculum time identified at the time of the last inspection. They now more than meet the 10% recommended allocation. The school describes its religious education teaching as innovative and cross curricular. The inspectors agree that these aspects are developing. The curriculum continues to be enriched by the incorporation of PHSE and SEAL materials which following on from the last inspection are now a well established aspect of the religious education curriculum. The school made good use of the opportunity to be one of the schools able to take part in the 'Big Assembly' during the Pope's recent visit to the United Kingdom. Pupils based back at the school during the assembly were also given the opportunity to participate through school based work maximising the learning opportunities the Pope's visit provided. The school utilises the 'All that I Am' materials produced by the Birmingham Archdiocese to support the teaching of Education for Personal Relationships including sex education. This currently focuses on Year 6 and there are plans to develop this into Year 5. It may be an opportune time, particularly in the light of the school's use of SEAL materials, to revisit the current PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) policy with a view to developing a programme that integrates into a whole school programme. 'Pupil voice', has been listened to through the work of the school council which is developing well under the



auspices of the Deputy Headteacher. Pupils are very keen to share the activities they have been involved in. They are particularly proud of their environmental achievements. Whilst Year 6 have the monitor roles throughout the school, the school council enjoy planning for events and feel pupils are very supportive of each other. The teaching of other faiths is managed on a 3 yearly cycle with two faith weeks a year, ultimately covering the 6 major faiths of the world. The pupils were greatly enthused by a visit to a mosque. They clearly learned much from this experience. This is an area of the school's religious education curriculum that it is planned to develop further. Evidence of this practice would benefit from inclusion in pupils' workbooks so that it is recorded as part of the religious education curriculum. The school could consider including a section on their website that celebrates both this aspect of the curriculum and the many wider religious activities in which they are involved.

### **Leadership and management of religious education**

### **Grade 3**

The religious education coordinator is well supported by the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher. The school has clear structures, policies and procedures in place to enable the subject to be further developed. Coordination of religious education has developed under the current coordinator and continues to do so. He is growing in confidence as a result of the active support being given to the subject by the leadership of the school. Whilst there is a programme of monitoring the religious education curriculum, which includes some lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils books, the coordinator's approach lacks credibility and as a result is not rigorous enough to enable him to further raise standards. With the schools' leadership he has established a clear educational direction for religious education through policies, aims and objectives and has an understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development as identified in the pre inspection self evaluation form. With the Headteacher he takes every opportunity to mark the subject as a core subject; and maintain its profile throughout the school and ensure it is given appropriate prominence within the school's improvement plan. New staff are well supported, as are current teachers, in developing their subject knowledge and teaching skills through a programme of in service training. Budgetary allocation is good which has enabled a good range of resources and quality artefacts to be built up. The coordinator maintains a full and well organised coordinator's file. He is to be commended for his work in supporting the parish in preparation for First Holy Communion. He is able to draw on his experience in Catholic schools, as well as his work in his home parish.