



Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

INSPECTION REPORT

St John's Catholic Primary School
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DfES Number: 938 3331

Headteacher: Mrs Joanna Brown

Chair of Governors: Mr Matt BoveyBrown

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 27th February 2014
Date of previous inspection: 20th January 2009

Lead Inspector: Mrs Catherine Walker
Associate Inspector: Mrs Angela Ireland

Description of School

- St John's is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- A single form entry primary school with a pupil age range of 4 – 11 years. There are currently 204 pupils on roll.
- The school is located in an urban setting taking pupils from the immediate area and feeder parishes of St John the Evangelist, Horsham, Our Lady of Consolation and St Francis, West Grinstead and St Gabriel, Billinghamurst.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through pupil premium is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from ethnic backgrounds is much lower than average, but a higher than average number of pupils speak English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St John's is a good school with some elements that are outstanding, particularly in relation to its Catholic life. The school recognises the uniqueness of each individual pupil, striving to promote their self-esteem and self-confidence. It is committed to enabling all pupils to reach their full potential socially, personally, academically and spiritually. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in each key stage. Teaching is never less than good over time. The care the school provides for its pupils is outstanding.

Positive relationships exist between all members of the school community and have been established by a close working partnership between home, parish and the local community. Pupils flourish in a community that lives and celebrates its Catholic faith and witness. This is the result of the quality of Catholic leadership. Parents fully support and praise the staff stating, "The teachers and teaching assistants look after all the children with a caring attitude."

The school has developed effective systems for evaluating its strengths and the areas for development and has an accurate view of what needs to be done. This, together with a strong commitment from the headteacher, staff and governors to continue to build on what is good, indicates that the school is well placed to continue on its journey to make further progress.

Grade 2

Improvement since the last inspection

All areas from the previous inspection have been fully addressed. The school is not complacent and regularly carries out reflective self-evaluation to ensure it continues to strive towards becoming an outstanding school.

- 1) The sex education policy has been comprehensively reviewed and is now subject to annual monitoring and evaluation.
- 2) St John's school has ensured greater levels of community cohesion by facilitating a wide range of local and wider community events in which the pupils are actively engaged.
- 3) Pupil self-assessment has been introduced and developments in this area are on-going. There have been increased religious education library resources provided for the pupils.
- 4) There is a stronger and ever increasing partnership between the school and the parish. Class masses are well established and the school has a real presence within the parish community.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

To support the school on its journey to becoming an outstanding school the following areas should be addressed:

- Build on the work underway to provide a wider range of challenges for more able learners so higher ability learners have access to a broader range of tasks and independent work, which will provide increased levels of challenge.
- To continue to raise standards through high quality, developmental marking, ensuring opportunities are created for pupils to respond.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The leadership of the school is strongly focused on the school's Catholic mission, on raising standards and promoting the personal development of learners, and has created a shared sense of mission among staff. Due to the committed Catholic leadership of the headteacher, the support of the chair of governors, the dedicated leadership team and the wholehearted support of all the staff, the school is well placed to continue to improve. The headteacher's total commitment to Catholic education has a profound impact on the Catholic life of the school.

The school benefits from a very active, knowledgeable and supportive governing body, which discuss and revise religious education policies. The school is a truly reflective community. Governors provide very good support to the school. They are proactive in celebrating its

Catholic life and have a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. The recently reviewed mission statement inspires and engages all members of the school community. Pupils were confidently able to demonstrate their ownership of the newly published mission policy. All school policies reflect the values enshrined in the mission statement.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

St John's fully recognises that prayer, collective worship and liturgy are central in supporting the Catholic life of the school.

All staff give witness to pupils by partaking in collective worship. Staff are given regular opportunities for their own spiritual development through private reflection time during meetings and INSET days. There is good provision for Mass both at the school and through regular visits to St John's Church. Staff and pupils are also offered the Sacrament of Reconciliation through the seasons of Advent and Lent.

Prayer pebbles are used very effectively to encourage spontaneous prayer and are clearly visible in classrooms and in the front entrance. An annual School Mission provides a valuable opportunity for pupils to extend their journey of faith through a whole school act of prayer. One particular theme focused on Our Lady and every child in the school made a prayer bead, which was included in a giant Rosary.

Pupils are very responsive during collective worship and liturgical celebrations. During the inspection pupils reacted with enthusiasm, joy and silent awe. They demonstrated good spiritual development responding thoughtfully and willingly to a variety of opportunities to share ideas and prayer in all its various forms.

Good quality artefacts support the prayer life of the school. Pupils can engage in a variety of prayer experiences to deepen their relationship with God.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school promote community cohesion?

St John's is an inclusive school, which has been awarded International schools status in recognition of their reaching out to the wider community. The inclusion of all is at the heart of St John's vision. The school is passionate about developing the pupils' understanding of community at school, local, national and international level. The school has a long established partnership with a school in Kenya. This has been facilitated through the charity The Kimili Trust. Various letters and visits between the two schools have taken place throughout the year including a visit from the headteacher in Kenya and the parish priest. The pupils are actively involved in several fund raising activities for their partner school in Kenya. This has helped the pupils develop a good understanding of the impact their efforts have as global citizens.

The school is held in high regard in the community and leaders and managers work with others beyond the school to ensure that children are given opportunities to show concern and respect for cultural and religious differences.

Close links with local schools in the Horsham cluster and schools in the Crawley deanery, including the secondary school, enable the school to work with other schools providing support and sharing good practice. The Chaplain from the local secondary school is a regular visitor. Transition links are excellent.

Pupil voice is very strong with a multitude of opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills. These include Prefect, School Council, House Captain, Sport Leaders, Eco Council and Living Streets.

Parents and pupils spoke very highly about the warm welcome given to them at the school. This is a major strength of the school. One parent stated,

"Whenever I visit the school for a liturgy, open afternoon, or even just to listen to readers, I am struck by how well the children behave towards each other and towards visitors to the school."

One pupil echoed this when he was interviewed and proudly spoke of his school saying, *"We are a very special Catholic school. Everyone is kind and friendly, warm and welcoming."*

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Religious education is given the highest priority as a core subject. Pupils are able to record in a variety of interesting ways.

Attainment on entry is average and pupils make good progress by the end of Key Stage 1. All pupils make very good progress in their oral skills and are able to discuss their thoughts and knowledge openly. They ask focussed questions and respond positively to encouragement from teachers when exploring ideas. All pupils demonstrate a very strong religious vocabulary.

When given a task, pupils settle quickly and are clearly focused on their learning demonstrating enjoyment for the subject. Pupils are gaining knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate across all key stages. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils standards are broadly above average.

All teachers mark positively. Some marking provides feedback which shows pupils how to make their work better, however this needs to be consistent throughout the school to ensure that all children are able to build on their prior learning.

Displays around the school are good. In one lesson observed, the display was used effectively to support learning. All classes have prayer corners and children's work features prominently. Correct liturgical colours are evident throughout the school to help children understand the changing seasons of the Church calendar. Photographic evidence seen in Spiritual Journals and workbooks shows the range of opportunities that the pupils have throughout the year to enhance their religious education.

Behaviour is exemplary; pupils are warm, welcoming and friendly. Pupils work well together and collaborative working is a strength.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Teaching at St John's is good. In the strongest lessons observed there was evidence of good subject knowledge and high expectations. Interesting activities were demonstrated in well-planned lessons. Relationships were excellent and contributions from additional adults impacted positively on pupil learning and progress. This was clearly evident in a Key Stage 1 lesson where a group of children worked on their own class "grace" that was to be used at a celebratory meal.

While many of these activities are differentiated, they are not always sufficiently matched to the abilities of the pupils. The more able in particular, would benefit from more challenge and for more opportunities for independent research.

Consistently good classroom management ensures lessons start promptly and a calm purposeful atmosphere is created. Learners with special educational needs make good progress because they are very well supported.

As staff become more familiar with the new 'Come and See' religious education programme, assessment practice will develop and impact further on pupil progress.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

Inspectors would support the school's own self-assessment that the curriculum is good. The school uses the diocesan scheme for religious education, 'Come and See'. This is supplemented through teacher's own cross-curricular links and additional resources. The curriculum in religious education fulfills and exceeds the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools. Pupils' own life experiences and those of the staff are shared in lessons, enhancing the curriculum offered. Pupils with different faith backgrounds are well supported in the school. The curriculum contributes to the spiritual, social and moral development of the pupils. Pupils confidently spoke of how they felt safe at the school and that they could turn to any adult if they were worried about anything. One child reinforced this by saying, "*The teachers make you feel safe.*"

Curriculum provision is good and teachers now need to link activities to specific ability groups in order to provide more challenge for pupils, especially the most able.

Following the directive of the Bishop's conference the school allocates 10% of the curriculum to the teaching of religious education as a discrete subject. This curriculum time is supplemented by the regular weekly visits from the parish priest who works with the pupils.

Grade 2

Leadership and management of Religious Education

Inspection evidence gathered judges the leadership and management in religious education to be good. The religious education co-ordinator plays a strategic role in the development of religious education in appropriate action planning, provision of resources and feedback from courses and conferences attended. She monitors teaching and learning systematically by observing lessons and feeding this back to governors. This could be further enhanced through a more robust recording, reporting and monitoring system. Governors and the Spiritual Committee have a very active role in monitoring the religious education curriculum.

The religious education co-ordinator has worked extremely hard to maintain the subject's high profile in the school. Good links exist with parents and parish where the relationships are particularly strong and this has a positive impact on the curriculum. The school's self-evaluation is very accurate with both strengths and areas to be developed clearly identified. Governors are acutely aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Grade 2