



# **DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT**

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on  
behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

**URN 137959**

**St James the Great Catholic Primary & Nursery School**

**Windsor Road**

**Thornton Heath**

**Croydon, CR7 8HU**

**Inspection date: 22 June 2018**

**Chair of Governors: Mr E Abreo**

**Headteacher: Mr C Andrew**

**Inspectors: Mrs J Mann**

**Mr D G Fox**

## **EDUCATION COMMISSION**

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR  
Tel 01689 829331

**Director of Education: Mr Simon Hughes**

*Publication Date 6th September 2018*



## Key for inspection grades

|         |             |         |                      |
|---------|-------------|---------|----------------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | Grade 3 | Requires improvement |
| Grade 2 | Good        | Grade 4 | Inadequate           |

## FULL REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St James the Great Catholic Primary and Nursery School is an Academy and is a member of the Croydon Catholic Schools Umbrella Trust. The school is situated in the Croydon Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. The principal parishes which the school serves are: St Andrew's, Thornton Heath; St Bartholomew's, Norbury; and the Polish Mission of the Merciful Jesus, South Norwood. Since last year, the number of parishes which contribute pupils has increased considerably. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 100%. The weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10%.

The school is a two-form entry school, with a bulge to three-forms in Year 4, taking pupils from 3 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 482, including 37 in the nursery. Pupil Premium Funding is received by 12% of pupils and 11% of pupils receive extra support in class for their Special Educational Needs (SEN). Both figures are below the national average. The attainment of pupils entering the school is broadly average. A higher than average number of pupils, 67%, has English as an additional language (EAL) with Polish being the predominant first language. Increasingly, more pupils are at an early stage of learning English when they enter the school. 20% of pupils in the latest cohort are completely new to English and a further 15% are at the early language acquisition stage. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority heritages is high when compared nationally.

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## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St James the Great is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- Leaders and governors have a deep commitment and passion for everyone in St James the Great to develop their spiritual and academic potential. The Headteacher articulates a vision which gives the community a strong sense of shared values ensuring its distinct Catholicity.
- The pastoral support given by the school to its pupils and their families is exceptional. Every care is taken to help them face the challenges of difficult times with advice, the help of professionals and the promotion of self-help and nurture groups.
- The pupils of the school are great ambassadors for Catholic Education with their enthusiasm for prayer and learning. Their willingness to work with each other, sharing their time, opinions and emotions, develops openness, mutual respect and warmth and fosters great pride in themselves and others. One said, "no other school could have been better for me."
- Parents overwhelmingly endorse the work of St James the Great, as one said, "the school community is amazing – a loving, nurturing place!" They are full of praise for how the school cares for their families' physical, mental and spiritual welfare.

## WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- To develop teaching so that the outstanding practice seen by inspectors is consistent throughout the school.
- To continue to develop assessment without levels in Religious Education in line with other subjects using Diocesan guidelines
- To continue to develop the role of pupil-led chaplaincy, thereby giving pupils a larger sense of ownership of their liturgical and prayer lives.



## Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

1

### Catholic life

1

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.

1

The quality of provision for the Catholic life of the school.

1

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school.

1

### Religious Education

1

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

1

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

2

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

1

### Collective worship

1

How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' collective worship.

1

The quality of provision for collective worship.

1

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship.

1

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## CATHOLIC LIFE

1

### The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- St James the Great is a welcoming, caring school where pupils feel safe, valued and respected. The school community is committed to 'Learning with God's Love' where Gospel values ensure that a nurturing environment helps everyone on their faith journey.
- Everyone values, appreciates and actively participates in its Catholic life. Each key stage within the school produces assemblies which celebrate the seasons of the liturgical year.
- The school has a harmonious atmosphere. Pupils follow their own class rules and the rules of the school, are self-regulators of their own emotions and strive to do their best in a calm, supportive and purposeful environment. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong. Their exemplary behaviour results from their strong personal development and excellent relationships with others.
- Mutual respect for others is enhanced by events in the cross-curricular Multi-Faith Week where the similarities and differences of different religions, cultures and traditions are shared, promoted and understood. Outcomes are shared with parents in an open-evening and a parent told us that they appreciated that their children were becoming "more aware of the world and its challenges."
- The recently established Chaplaincy team is already contributing to the Catholic life of the school by, for example, working with a parent to install a prayer area in the grounds. They asked to represent the school at a day of prayer at Aylesford Priory.
- Pupils take on responsibilities within the school. The School Council met with the cook to share ideas about a new menu, older pupils are buddies to Early Years pupils and Squabble Busters help pupils to sort out their problems.
- With their heightened social conscience, pupils choose which charities to support. For example, the Eco Council highlighted how we take water for granted and collected money to provide a boy's home in Sri Lanka with running water.
- Pupils are a visible presence in the churches of the Parishes, sharing Mass and Liturgies, like Stations of the Cross on Good Friday, serving and reading and singing to the elderly.
- Pupils link with other Catholic schools at the Croydon Annual Mass and Saint James the Great hosts the Croydon Catholic Schools' Sports Day.



### The quality of provision of the Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The Mission Statement of St James the Great ensures that the values, traditions and beliefs of the Catholic faith lie at the centre of its ethos. It was recently reviewed by all stakeholders to be more concise and child-friendly. The values of faith, love, self-belief, determination, respect and resilience lie at its heart and are purposefully promoted in assemblies, classes and newsletters to parents. This shared understanding of the Catholic mission, drives the school community to achieve high spiritual and academic standards.
- Staff enthusiastically promote and participate in the Catholic life of the school, leading by example and ensuring that all relationships within the community show warmth, mutual respect and courtesy. They share training, liturgies and prayers, for example, they pray at the start of the week in briefing meetings.
- A retreat led by one of the parish Deacons enhances the spiritual and moral development of Year 6 pupils.
- Catholic identity is strongly evident in the eye-catching and meaningful displays and areas throughout the school, for example, the beautiful 'Learning with God's Love' mosaic in the school hall. The school has a peaceful Oratory where pupils, staff and parents can pray and reflect.
- The Headteacher's newsletter is welcoming and informative. It advertises and celebrates liturgical events, charitable work and other activities of interest. The website is attractive and expresses the core values that St James the Great holds dear. It could further enhance its ambassadorial role for Catholic Education to parents, the public and other schools if it included more pictures and descriptions of the many Catholic events that take place in the school. The school has a Twitter account that shares events, prayer resources and messages from the Pope.
- Pupils' pastoral care is excellent. They are supported by experienced staff, for example, in cases of bereavement, anxiety or adoption; the Lighthouse project enables pupils to talk about their problems; mental health issues are discussed with the whole family; a play therapist helps with emotional stress; social communication groups help emotional literacy. The cohesive and collaborative nature of the school ensures that staff care for and support each other.
- Workshops help parents, for example, with phonics and with learning English. Self-help groups are held for families with looked-after pupils and those with special needs; families are supported with absenteeism. One parent said, "there is excellent support to enable parents to support each other." A monthly newsletter 'Life to the Full' helps parents on their faith journey.

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**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school is outstanding**

- The energetic and engaging Headteacher has the vision to promote the values which bring the community together with a common spiritual and academic purpose. He is ably assisted by a dedicated Religious Education Leader and experienced Senior Leaders who ensure that the Catholic ethos creates rich and varied opportunities for the community's wellbeing and growth.
- The school has recently become a flagship school of excellence for the Inclusive Quality Mark which will involve them, amongst other supportive initiatives, in playing a strong leadership role in developing best practice for inclusion across a network of schools.
- Governors have a high profile in the school attending liturgies and Masses, meeting parents in the playground, taking part in learning walks with senior leaders, spending time in classes and running clubs. Parents said "Governors were very evident."
- Regular updates about the Catholic life of the school are presented at Governing Body meetings. Their work is shared with parents in the school newsletter. The Chair of Governors meets with counterparts within the Croydon deanery to discuss ways of maintaining Catholic ethos. Governors recently received feedback from the School Council in regard to the condition of the pupil toilets and action was taken to clean them at mid-day.
- School leaders and governors have a clear vision and love of Catholic education which ensures that, through reflection and challenge, their high aspirations develop everyone's spiritual and moral development, for example, they have taken steps to improve the school/parish links.
- Training for staff, at school, deanery and diocesan levels, is well-thought out and enhances their understanding and commitment to the Church's mission. They were recently trained on how to use outdoor spaces to enhance the Catholic life of the school.
- St James the Great encourages parents to engage with the Catholic life of the school with newsletters, texts uses, Twitter and the website and by inviting them to Masses, liturgies, celebrations and events, like Fathers Day breakfast and Mothers Day tea. The active Friends Association has a good understanding of the school's mission, raising much appreciated funds and building a strong school community. Parents said their views were listened to and prompt action taken.

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## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

### How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is outstanding

- The pupils, many who arrive with lower than expected communication and language skills, make very good progress in Religious Education which is a testament to the care and support they are given by the school. Pupils who have additional needs are targeted and achieve at least expected progress.
- The number of pupils reaching the expected standard and the higher standard of achievement in Religious Education by the end of Year 6 is well above the number achieving the expected level in English and Maths in school and nationally.
- Pupils are confident learners who have high expectations for themselves and are committed to doing well. They know they have achieved their objectives via feedback from teachers. Pupils assess their learning at the end of each unit.
- Pupils show pride and respect for their written work which is evident from their Religious Education books which are working documents showing the range, breadth and variety of activities undertaken.
- Their understanding and use of scripture in their responses is excellent and they make very good use of religious vocabulary. For example, a pupil in Reception remembered that Jesus appeared for 40 days after His death.
- They show in-depth knowledge when discussing religious topics. When asked about motives in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, a Year 3 pupil inferred that the priest refused to help the injured man to avoid dirtying his temple robes.
- Pupils are developing the skills to reflect spiritually and morally and clearly articulate their opinions. Year 5 pupils were asked to think about the consequences of the actions of characters in the Parable of the Lost Son, they thoughtfully answered the question "should people be punished before they are forgiven?"
- Pupils' enthusiasm, eagerness and interest are excellent. They can work independently but collaboration is a very strong and well-used feature of their day ensuring that they listen attentively to their teachers and peers, readily sharing their ideas and their faith.
- In classes observed, pupils made it very clear how much they enjoyed their Religious Education lessons. One Year 5 said, "I like RE because I like to read stories in the Bible and write about what it says because I can refer to it in my life."



### The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good

- Teaching is effective and purposeful and many excellent features were observed during the inspection, such as:
  - how the specialness of Religious Education lessons was promoted
  - confident, knowledgeable teachers, passionate about pupils' learning
  - the emphasis on prior learning
  - high level questioning and use of reflection time
  - the use of scripture and its relevance to pupils' lives
  - a strong emphasis on cross-curricular links to Literacy
  - relationships built on care and mutual respect which foster strong collaboration
- Effective assessments for and of learning are made with staff, taking into account ongoing verbal and written observations alongside formal assessments three times a year. Assessments are moderated in school and amongst deanery schools to ensure accuracy. They are clearly linked to planning which ensures that building on prior learning enables pupils to fulfil their potential. St James the Great is currently developing assessment without levels in line with other subjects using the Diocesan Guidelines.
- Staff work together to share their talents, enthusiasm and resources. Training in-house and with other Catholic schools keeps staff up-to-date with new initiatives and best practice, such as implementing the new Relationship and Sex Education curriculum.
- Teachers have high expectations and regularly give verbal feedback to encourage and to drive their pupils' progress. Written comments affirm success but are not always used to develop or extend religious thinking. There was little evidence of pupils assessing their own or their peers' day-to-day success or planning their next steps.
- Pupils enjoy receiving awards for their achievement and effort in Celebration Assemblies and seeing their best work on display. Feedback from parents on Proud Clouds and when they are invited into the classroom to review books also reinforces pupils' learning.
- In lessons, 'Deep Thinking Challenge' ensured pupils were given time to reflect on difficult concepts. For example, Year 6 pupils were asked to think philosophically about the concept that, 'to be filled with the Spirit, we must be emptied of self', a pupil said of the Holy Spirit "One match can light up your whole belief."
- Teachers place great emphasis on the pupils expressing their emotions and their opinions, especially with regard to characters in the Bible. Effective use of drama, seen during the inspection, helped the pupils to empathise with the characters' feelings, for example, in Year 5, pupils thinking about the Parable of the Lost Son, were asked the question, "How can I be more like the father?"



- Although the pace in many lessons was excellent, this was not seen consistently throughout the school which resulted in the disengagement of a small number of pupils. High-level questioning was used to challenge in classes but extension activities to stretch pupils were not always evident. Peer observations and sharing of outstanding expertise would benefit all staff.
- More encouragement should be given to enable pupils to become more accomplished self-learners by allowing them to make choices about their learning, to assess their work and determine their next steps.
- A generous budget is intelligently used to provide high quality, needed resources, like augmenting and updating existing material in the 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' scheme to ensure pupil progress. St James the Great stores and facilitates the use of multi-faith resources for Croydon Catholic Schools.
- Teaching Assistants, who network and meet counterparts from other schools and who were recently trained on scribing, prompting and questioning, were well briefed and worked instinctively and patiently to help pupils.

#### **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding**

- St James the Great meets the requirements of the Bishop's Conference in terms of schemes used and the time allocated to Religious Education.
- The scheme for Religious Education, 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' is implemented effectively and thoughtfully adapted to meet the needs of all pupils; it is augmented and enriched with additional material, such as The University of Birmingham Character Education scheme. Cross-curricular links with Relationships and Sex Education were made very successfully in an observed Year 4 lesson.
- Leaders of the school have a strong commitment to self-reflection which ensures that systematic and productive monitoring activities, such as book scrutinies, identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. This has led to the successful introduction of new resources for teaching other faiths.
- The Governors take a passionate interest in St James the Great and through, for example, meetings about progress and attainment, they ensure that the provision for Religious Education enables all pupils to reach their spiritual and academic potential. They are extremely supportive but also confident and questioning in their approach.
- The Link Governor for Religious Education meets regularly with senior leaders. A Learning Walk prompted him to ask how the range of activities undertaken in lessons was evidenced which resulted in the school devising different ways of recording coverage.
- The Religious Education leader is dynamic and has excellent subject knowledge. She and her deputy have committed spiritual purpose and passion. They are positive role models and staff appreciate their professionalism, approachability and advice. They attend training from the



Diocese as well as The umbrella trust planned sessions. They liaise with other Catholic schools to share best practice, for example, by moderating work samples together.

- The school enriches the curriculum with creative activities which enhance pupils' engagement, motivation and enjoyment, for example, visits from the Islamic community and a Chinese Roadshow. Pupils visit the South London Synagogue and Houses of Parliament. The school runs a range of clubs and the developing Forest Circle helps pupils to experience and celebrate God's world.
- Written reports, parents' evenings, informal meetings and an open-door policy keep parents up-to-date with the learning and development of their children in Religious Education. Excellent class curriculum newsletters on the website inform parents of termly Religious Education themes to be covered.

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## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

### How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship and prayer life is outstanding

- St James the Great is a prayerful school where individual, group and collective worship is an integral aspect of pupils' time in school, irrespective of their ability or cultural background. The Catholic liturgical year, seasons and feasts are confidently understood and celebrated, for example, a local homeless charity, Nightwatch, is supported at Harvest.
- Each class plans and prepares its own prayer service and class assembly; pupils are involved in preparing and delivering whole school liturgies including the Easter Liturgy which they present through drama, art, music and song. Each class has a prayer leader to lead class-based collective worship. This was evident in the Nursery Class where a volunteer pupil led the class with the sign of the cross and the nursery prayer. The school has recently established a Chaplaincy Team and plans to increasingly involve key stage 1 pupils in reading prayers and being responsible for the offertory in Mass.
- In the whole school assembly observed, pupils were respectful and reverential. They were invited to respond to questions and answered willingly, showing depth of knowledge; talk partners readily discussed ideas. The Chaplaincy Team performed a drama and read scripture and prayers they had written. Pupils meditated on questions that were relevant to their lives. They said the school prayer, and some were able to offer up spontaneous prayers linked to the theme. They were asked to go forth and find out the answer to a relevant question.
- Pupils use a range of formal and spontaneous prayers. Each class writes its own class prayer and pupils contribute to a well-used class prayer book. They add prayers to prayer boxes. At relevant times of the year, they can choose to say the rosary or attend early morning Lenten Masses.
- Each classroom has an interactive and meaningful focal area, linked to the scheme and season of the year, which the pupils adorn with artefacts, statues, flowers and liturgical colours. Pupils realise the specialness of their Religious Education lessons which begin with prayers and often the lighting of a candle.

### The quality of provision for collective worship and prayer life is outstanding

- Acts of worship provided by St James the Great reflect the Catholic character of the school in their depth and variety. Everyone feels included.
- The Religious Education leaders and their team are responsible for all assembly, prayer service and Mass timetables and themes. Parents say they are given plenty of notification about liturgical events.
- Collective worship is planned, led and evaluated by knowledgeable staff with a clear message and purpose. Staff are now confidently using the new assembly planning resource from Ten:Ten. They are keen to teach, encourage and support their pupils to take an active role in planning and delivering worship, a feature of the new resource to which the pupils have responded well.



- Whole school Masses are celebrated at the start and end of every school year, during Advent and Lent and on Feast days. These are held in the school or in the closest Catholic churches. Each class attends a parish Mass during the year. There is a key stage 2 carol service in the church and children in the early years present the nativity in school.
- Daily collective worship is either whole school, key stage or class-based with themes based on the liturgical year, weekly readings from the Gospels, character development, key festivals of other faiths and a celebration of the achievement and efforts of the pupils.
- Staff at St James the Great organise other events to enrich pupils' experiences, including workshops and assemblies run by the NSPCC and CAFOD and an assembly for World Peace Day.
- The Parish Priests, ably supported by Parish Deacons, celebrate Mass, sacramental Reconciliation and liturgies in the churches or in school.
- The school also has an Oratory, recently used by all classes in Pope Francis' worldwide day of prayer, which lends itself to quiet reflection, prayer and Reconciliation.
- Parents are welcomed to Masses and liturgies, such as, Stations of the Cross, class prayer services, assemblies and a Rosary group. Parents and their children can attend a weekly before school Mass during Lent and a Rosary procession around the school in May. Parents said one of their favourites was the Christmas Candlelight Service.

**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship and prayer life is outstanding**

- The provision for collective worship is a very high priority for Leaders and Governors. They have a keen understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts. Throughout the school there is a strong sense of the traditions of the Catholic Church.
- Leaders' expertise enables them to accurately evaluate the schools delivery and its effect and to plan for its improvement, for example, reviewing the success of the new Ten: Ten prayer and assembly resources. Collective worship is a standing item for Governor meetings.
- Leaders provide professional development opportunities, advice and assistance for staff and governors on planning and delivering collective worship. They recently organised training on the structure of liturgies and the nature of prayer and they plan to provide retreats for staff.
- The school listens to suggestions from parents and has supported them in setting up and running a weekly Rosary Group before the start of the school day.
- Leaders and governors, by their behaviour, attitude and practice, are very effective and inspiring role models for pupils and staff. They work hard to provide thought-provoking, age-appropriate and accessible collective worship for everyone at St James the Great. They are committed to releasing the potential of their pupils to lead and facilitate the faith journey of themselves and their peers.