



St John's Catholic Comprehensive School

URN: 118933

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

04–05 March 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

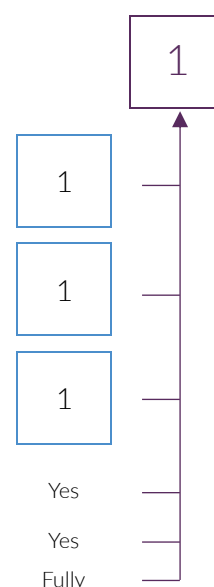
Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



Compliance statement

- Religious education is taught for a specified portion each week and constitutes at least 10% of the taught curriculum time.
- The school is fully compliant with the requirements of the Archbishop.
- The areas for improvement from the previous denominational inspection have been addressed fully.

What the school does well

- There are very high expectations of behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- St John's is a very inclusive community that welcomes all, especially the most vulnerable.
- The school is a positive, inviting and welcoming learning environment.
- The wellbeing of all in the school community is exceptional.
- Prayer is central to the life of the school permeating all areas and impacting upon the home.

What the school needs to improve

- Utilise the Sixth Form spiritual leadership model so that younger students take greater ownership in the planning, preparation, organisation and leadership of prayer and liturgy.
- Ensure marking and feedback is consistent across all classes to ensure that all students clearly understand what they need to do to make progress in their learning
- Ensure student voice on prayer and liturgy is an integral and valued part of the cycle of self-evaluation and planned improvements.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

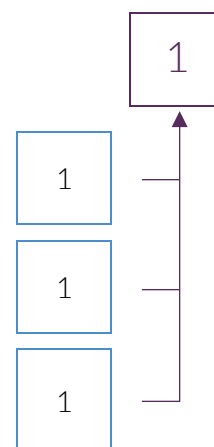
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

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



Students embrace and clearly understand the mission statement, 'Excellence for All, Service to Others, Inspired by Christ'. They feel happy, safe and proud to be members of the school community. 'Compassionate' is the word used by many students in St John's school. Catholic social teaching is well known, and students use Gospel values to show they understand why it is important. A student stated, 'Everything learnt is centred on Christ.' Sixth Form spiritual leaders have a clear vision of their mission and cascade this to younger students so that they carry it forward. For example, St Vincent de Paul society (SVP) students visit SVP in Brixton to learn, bring back and implement further ideas. Students highly value school chaplaincy, meeting regularly with the school chaplain which positively impacts upon them. The students engage in extensive charity work, both local, such as the Christmas shoebox appeal, and internationally, raising funds for St Philomena's school in Kenya which, a student stated, is 'raising money to help build and educate.' Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent, and students know they are cared for and loved, knowing with whom to speak if needed.

The very well-known mission statement is in the very fabric of the school; it is regularly revisited and is a clear and inspiring expression of the educational mission of the Church. It impacts upon the lives of students, staff and the home. A staff member stated, 'Our mission statement is not simply a statement of intent; it is lived and experienced daily by staff, students and families.' A parent stated, her daughter, 'shows her understanding by being, "Inspired by Christ", showing "service to others" and kindness and respect to all around her.' The care for each individual student is visible. A parent stated, 'All the staff go above and beyond.' And another stated, 'It's a wonderful school where dedicated teachers work tirelessly to help our children flourish in every aspect of their faith and learning.' Students describe the diversity in St John's as 'amazing', and 'everyone feels included'. For example, the spiritual leaders include non-Catholic representatives, and a parent stated, 'Great school for Catholics and non-Catholics'. Chaplaincy provision is central and celebrated. Relationship, sex and

health education recognises parents as the first educators and, using Ten:Ten, enhanced by visiting speakers, ensures it fulfils both Church and statutory expectations.

Christ is at the heart of this community, and governors are highly ambitious and very enthusiastic about St John's. The school is at the service of the parish and the chair of governors met with the new parish team to ascertain how they could be involved in the school governing body which ensures a continuance of the thriving partnership with the parish. The new parish priest stated, 'I am in a Catholic school.' Governors ensure that Catholic life and mission are central to their vision and purpose. They are very conversant with the strengths of the school and its areas for development. Governors participate in professional training provided by the diocese and Kent Catholic Schools Partnership. New staff stated they feel 'absolutely valued,' and another stated, 'We feel lucky to be here.' The pastoral care of staff is of the highest priority. A staff member said, 'I have always felt part of a large family at St. John's, very well looked after and senior leadership are always there to support during difficult times.' This is felt by parents, one stated, 'I have always been supported as a parent, and my children have always had excellent support from the staff.'

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

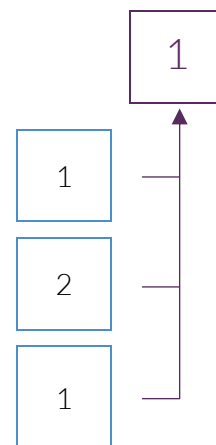
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Students are developing excellent knowledge and understanding, data shows that from their starting points students achieve better attainment when compared with other core subjects and make better expected progress than students nationally, including those who are disadvantaged. Students are religiously literate, for example a student showed deep understanding when engaging in a discussion about the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. Students are very engaged in lessons and said they, 'Enjoy religious education because it tells us how Jesus lived.' As a result, behaviour is very good. Students speak confidently about what they have learnt responding enthusiastically. For example, during a lesson on meditation students spoke with understanding about the meaning of enlightenment, and in a lesson on the Incarnation, using scripture a student said, 'Jesus is fully human and fully God.' Students show independence in their learning and can clearly think for themselves. For example, in response to a question about the Nicene Creed, a student responded, 'a statement of belief,' to which another student added, 'fundamental beliefs.' Students produce high quality work, demonstrating good presentation with clear evidence of progress which shows students know how well they are doing.

The quality of teaching is never less than good, some outstanding. Most teachers have a high level of confidence based on authentic subject knowledge, have high expectations and demonstrate a deep commitment to religious education, which is communicated very effectively to students. In strong lessons questioning is used skilfully identifying precisely where students are in their understanding and leading to a deeper understanding. For example, in answer to a question on the Mass a student answered, 'The whole Mass is an experience of God.' Staff planning leads to very positive learning environments, meaning students feel safe and able to participate. Most parents agree that their children enjoy learning religious education, and a parent stated, both their children, 'Adore religious education learning.' Marking and assessment is in line with school policy. There are examples of good practice, but greater consistency is needed to maximise learning for all students. The text, *Source to*

Summit, is used well, leading to work presented being of a high quality and other adults are used very effectively to optimise learning for all students especially the most vulnerable. Students use art, such as Oscar Romero cross designs, to present their learning which are displayed around the school.

Through investing in *Source and Summit* governors ensure that the religious education curriculum is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Directory*. The effectively planned sequential curriculum meets the needs of all students. The core religious education programme, with Catholic teaching at its centre, helps students engage with deeper learning of other faiths, and strong links with external groups mean enrichment activities enhance the learning experience of students. Several examples of adaptive teaching with challenge were evident. Religious education is integral to the school assessment policy and has parity with other core subjects, such as in timetabling and budget. Leaders and governors ensure staff have access to high quality professional training relating to both subject knowledge and pedagogical development. The subject leader has a vision for teaching and learning which is inclusive of all, especially the most vulnerable. A parent of a child with special needs stated, 'My son before going to St John's didn't particularly enjoy religious education. Since being at this school, he has flourished and really enjoys the teaching...and does very well in this subject.' Monitoring is carried out through regular lesson observations, learning walks, work scrutiny and discussions with students and staff, reports of which feed into governors' strategic planning.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

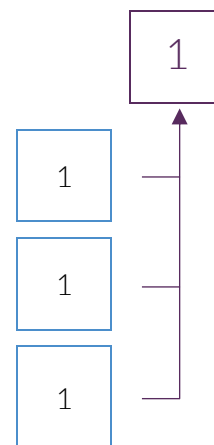
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

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



St John's provides experiences of prayer and liturgy which engage students, helping them to participate and the quality of prayerful silence is excellent, as demonstrated during a whole school assembly. Students entered in a quiet calm manner and kept a prayerful silence at appropriate moments. Students can use extempore and traditional prayer, students citing the 'Hail Mary,' as an example, and in the House Assembly, students shared their own prayers of intercession. Appropriate scripture passages are used, as are focal points with a statue appropriate to the liturgy and candles as part of a penitential rite. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul,' was sung joyfully by the choir and some students and staff joined in the singing. Sixth Form Students were very clear that they work collaboratively with the school chaplain in preparing and leading well-constructed experiences of prayer and liturgy, and undertake liturgical ministries with confidence, skill and reverence. The new parish priest described his recent first whole school mass as 'beautiful.' Stating the 'readers and altar servers responded very well, and all joined in the singing.' Students spoke about their experiences of prayer, for example, on retreats and how that influences their thoughts and impacts upon their lives.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school. There is a rhythm of prayer which is alive throughout the day and is something embedded into the daily life of the school, in meetings, lessons and beginning and the end of the day. Staff stated, 'The practice of beginning and ending each day with prayer provides purposeful moments of reflection.' Its impact also reaches beyond the school, a parent stated, 'all are participants in the liturgical life beyond the school doors.' And another stated, 'my son regularly leads us in prayer and often shares prayers from school.' Seasonally appropriate scripture passages are used, for example, the transfiguration and the student choir enhances the students' experience by their joyful singing. Prayer spaces around the school are well cared for and reflect the liturgical season. In addition, the school's patron saint and house saints are clearly depicted and well known. Student artwork provides time for reflection, and, staff stated, 'all members of the school community are encouraged to make use of' the school's beautiful intimate Chapel where the

Blessed Sacrament is reserved and available for private prayer during the day. There is a flourishing partnership with the parish and the new parish priest said, he felt 'very much welcome and at home here.'

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is carefully formulated, regularly reviewed, accessible to all and most staff feel it is useful to them. There is a strategy for building up skills of participation as especially sixth form students are very enthusiastic about sharing their skills with younger students. The school ensures everyone is clear about the liturgical year by planning the school calendar in great detail to include significant feast days, the house saints and the patronal feast and liturgical colours are used accurately. The calendar highlights opportunities for celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Most staff agreed and valued the high priority placed on their professional development focussing on liturgical formation, and the support they receive in planning and leading experiences of prayer and liturgy. Governors ensure it is a high priority when setting budgets and allocating resources and through learning walks, discussions with the student school council and staff, they regularly review the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy as part of the school's cycle of self-evaluation. This needs to become a more integral part of the school's evaluation such that it impacts upon planned improvements.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St John's Catholic Comprehensive School
School unique reference number (URN)	118933
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8865461
Full postal address of the school	Rochester Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 2JW
School phone number	01474534718
Headteacher	Matthew Barron
Chair of governors	Mark Hannon
School Website	http://www.stjohnscs.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	January 2020
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Stephen C Horsman	Lead
Patricia Slonecki	Team
Bernie Woodcock	Team
Bridget Durrant	Team

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement