



# **DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT**

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

**URN 118933**

**St John's Catholic Comprehensive School**

**Rochester Rd**

**Gravesend**

**DA12 2JW**

**Inspection date: 28 & 29 January 2020**

**Chair of Governors: Tony Thomas**

**Headteacher: Matthew Barron**

**Inspectors: Damian G Fox**

**Eileen Watson**

## **EDUCATION COMMISSION**

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

**Director of Education: Dr Simon Hughes**



## Key for inspection grades

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

## FULL REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St John's Catholic Comprehensive is a voluntary-aided mixed School. It is located in Kent Local Authority. It is situated in the Gravesend Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. The principal parishes the school serves are St John's, Gravesend, Our Lady of the Assumption, Northfleet and English Martyrs, Strood. The percentage of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 36% at key stages 3 and 4 and 32% at key stage 5. The majority of pupils are from other faith traditions. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in key stages 3 and 4 and 5% in key stage 5.

The school takes pupils from 11 to 18 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 1215, including 257 in the sixth form. The attainment of most pupils on entering the school is significantly below average. 170 pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), sixteen of whom have an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP). There are 275 students eligible for Pupil Premium funding. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is 47%. 40% of students are of white British heritage. 12% are of White Eastern European heritage. 12% are of Indian heritage.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St John's is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- It is an inspirational, Christ-centred community with a strong moral purpose. It provides a welcoming and prayerful environment that inspires the community to pray and learn together.
- The partnership between leaders at all levels is highly effective. Leaders and managers are deeply committed to building an authentic Catholic school. Leaders have a shared vision and understanding of the value of an education built on Gospel values. Governors provide highly effective leadership. They are knowledgeable and have a deep understanding of the strengths and areas for development in all areas of the school.
- The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. He is deeply committed to developing spirituality within the lives of the whole school community. He has a clear vision which is shared and understood by parents, pupils and staff. He is ably supported by senior leaders in constantly developing the Catholic character of the school and achievements in Religious Education.
- Pastoral care for all pupils is a significant factor in effectively supporting all members of the community. It contributes to the sense of belonging, evidenced in interviews with pupils across all key stages during the inspection process. Pupils thrive in a safe, spiritual learning environment.

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

- Continue to develop expertise in raising standards of teaching and learning so that outcomes in Religious Education consistently exceed expectations.
- Continue to develop and extend the leadership skills of pupils by providing further opportunities for them to be involved in strengthening chaplaincy across the school.



## 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



## CATHOLIC LIFE

1

**The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.**

- Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic Life of the school and derive great benefit from attending St John's. Through their attitudes and actions, pupils reflect the mission of the school to do the right thing for each other. Pupils have pride in the school and in their achievements. Pupils across all ages spoke with confidence about their role in developing the spiritual ethos of the school through prayer.
- Strong student leadership is evident across the school. Sixth form students, as prefects and chaplaincy leaders, are outstanding role models for younger pupils. They set an example of leadership and maturity to which pupils can aspire.
- Fundraising is a significant strength of the school. Pupils' understanding of their responsibilities to others is evident in the range of causes they work for and the enthusiasm with which they raise money and awareness. For example, sixth form students spoke with enthusiasm about the homeless sleep out to support the work of the House of Mercy. They understood the plight of homelessness. Their response encapsulates the mission of the school to serve.
- The school's concern for all pupils is reflected in the highly effective work of the transition groups for pupils with a range of complex needs. This ensures pupils learn with staff dedicated to supporting pupils with learning and emotional needs. Interviews with pastoral staff during the inspection witnessed the care and intense support by specialist teachers for these pupils. 'What is best for the pupil', is the starting point when working with pupils.
- 'I am happy with the spiritual guidance my son receives; the staff are excellent at caring for children' sums up the overwhelmingly positive response from parents. The school is valued for being open to parents at all times. Relationships between home and school are highly effective in ensuring the needs of pupils and families are met.

**The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.**

- The school mission statement, 'Excellence for All, Service to Others, Inspired by Christ', simply yet eloquently reflects the school's understanding of their vocation to live for each other in faith and love. By their words and actions, pupils across all ages, ensure the mission statement is a living reality.
- All staff are committed to its implementation. Pupils appreciate the highly effective care and support they receive. As a result, St John's is a calm, harmonious community.
- Behaviour throughout the school is exemplary. It reflects outstanding pastoral care for all members of the community. A significant strength is the transition process from primary school. Pastoral staff liaise with every school to develop an understanding of each pupil's strengths and unique needs.



- Parents overwhelmingly affirm the level of support they receive from the school. The confidence they have in the headteacher and his staff is a consequence of the close links teachers establish with parents/carers when a child joins the school.
- The attractive learning environment of the school reflects its Catholic identity. At its heart is the chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. Distinctive displays relating to Catholic life, including pupils' prayers, are a feature of the school. In the main hall, for example, the mission of the school is large and ever present. Its central purpose is encapsulated in the lives of teachers and pupils. The call to serve permeates the community.

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

- Leaders and governors have a sincere commitment to developing the Catholic life of the school. They understand it is their personal mission of leadership and service to the community. They demonstrate a clear understanding of their responsibilities in leading a Catholic school.
- The school is recognised in the local community as a place where pupils excel in a spirit of care. The visiting mayor, for example, spoke warmly about the reputation pupils have for their response to local need, such as the welcome they give to pupils and families with unique and difficult challenges.
- Staff understanding of the Catholic life of the school is excellent. It is a result of continued professional development (CPD) opportunities that focus on creating an ethos in which teachers and pupils live and learn together with mutual respect. Pupils develop a profound awareness of the needs of others. They thrive in a school in which the dignity of each person is promoted.
- Governors are experienced and expert in carrying out their responsibilities. They ensure they are well informed about the Catholic life of the school through regular visits and formal reports. They make scheduled, focussed visits to the school as part of their monitoring and evaluation. The development of the Catholic life is explicitly set out in the school development plan.
- The headteacher demonstrates outstanding leadership. He articulates a clear vision for Catholic education. He describes the mission statement 'underpinning everything we do'. He balances the pursuit for excellence with care for the well-being of the school community. Consequently, the strong Catholic ethos provides a strong foundation. The Catholic roll has increased over recent years.



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

- From attainment levels on entry that are significantly below average, school value added data shows that pupils make outstanding progress against baseline predictions.
- Pupils are interested and enthusiastic in Religious Education lessons and are keen to do their best. Behaviour for learning was excellent in the lessons observed as part of the inspection. In consequence, standards achieved in Religious Education GCSE have continued to improve since the last inspection. They are high and reflect sustained improvements in Religious Education across the key stages over time.
- Almost all pupils are actively engaged in learning and are inspired to improve their knowledge and understanding in Religious Education. A review of pupils' books demonstrates the pride that pupils have in their learning. The quality of pupil's current written work and their behaviour in class is outstanding. This reflects the commitment pupils have to their learning.
- Pupils' attainment as indicated by school data and public examinations is outstanding in the context of a consistently improving school. Outcomes in Religious Education are above the average for the school, including other core subjects. This continues the upward trend over recent years.

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

- The sustained progress pupils make reflects effective lessons over time that have motivated pupils to engage in their own learning. Outcomes reflect the school's ambitions to improve teaching and learning for the benefit of each pupil.
- Although school evidence shows that teachers are committed to improving the quality of their teaching to ensure pupils make progress, school leaders are aware that the quality of teaching overall, demonstrated by observations during the inspection, did not show the expected consistency required to sustain improved levels of teaching and learning.
- Lessons are planned in line with the scheme of work and take account of pupils' prior learning. Progress was demonstrated in most lessons. Pupils were confident working together and individually. Consequently, pupils were engaged in learning throughout. Pupils, relative to their age, show a good understanding of religious terminology.
- A rigorous and robust process of assessment is in line with school policy and is used to identify pupils who make exceptional progress or who may need further support. As a result, pupils concentrate well. The 'Progress made', 'Progress further' and 'Task' system gives pupils a clear understanding of their level of progress and how to improve further. Pupils confirmed that they receive support and extra challenge as appropriate to their needs.

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

- Leaders and managers ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and in each key stage. They ensure



that at least the required amount of curriculum time is given to Religious Education in each key stage.

- Leaders and managers are deeply committed to improving the progress pupils make in Religious Education. Established processes for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning are in place. Consequently, they have a detailed knowledge of pupil progress. Leaders and managers have an expert understanding of the necessary steps to ensure that the quality of provision for Religious Education continues to be outstanding.
- The headteacher is an inspirational leader. He is committed to academic achievement as evidenced in the relentless drive to consistently improve the quality of teaching and learning. He is supported by senior leaders who are highly visible around the school. They monitor teaching and learning daily to ensure pupils learn and teachers are supported.
- The head of department demonstrates outstanding leadership. She has a detailed understanding of how to develop teachers' pedagogical skills. As a result of her leadership, teachers are increasingly effective in engaging pupils in learning.





## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

**How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.**

- Acts of collective worship engage all pupils' interests and inspire them in deep thought and heartfelt response. Pupils affirmed their participation in acts of worship and their readiness to write their own prayers.
- There is a high level of respect and reverence for the prayer and liturgical experiences, as evidenced in the assembly and Mass during the inspection. In the whole school assembly, for example, pupils entered in silence to spiritual music. They were attentive throughout and prayed sincerely.
- The parish priest said he was pleased with the high level of reverence and participation at Mass. Liturgical celebrations are enhanced by the support from the chaplaincy team and music department.
- Pupils are at ease when praying. They acknowledge that it is an integral part of daily life, starting with morning prayer in assemblies or the form room. Pupils are confident in offering their intentions and visiting the chapel for private reflections.

**The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.**

- Collective Worship is recognised as fundamental to deepening the spiritual life of the school. It is led by passionate and experienced chaplains. Daily prayer, the celebration of the Mass and weekly assemblies, reflect the commitment of leaders and managers to deepening the spiritual ethos of the school.
- Pupils confirmed that the extensive and varied religious experiences for staff and pupils form the heart of school celebrations. Collective worship has a clear purpose, message and direction. Themes chosen for worship reflect a deep understanding of the liturgical season. As a result, the school is a prayerful and spiritual community. Individual and collective worship is an integral part of daily life.
- The chaplaincy team has a profound impact on the quality of provision for prayer and acts of worship. They are passionate about the growth of faith in each person. Extensive resources are provided to support teachers and school leaders that ensure pupils benefit from the wide range of opportunities to pray.
- The chapel is a visually attractive and inspiring part of the school. It is used frequently for Mass and reflections. Pupils said it was open for private prayer. They appreciated that the chapel and the chaplaincy team are always there.
- The programme of retreats and days of reflection is in place. The chaplaincy team are developing further opportunities for retreats for all pupils with the Sisters of St Joseph.



**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.**

- Leaders and managers, including senior leaders and the chaplaincy team, have expert knowledge of how to plan and deliver quality liturgical experiences.
- They demonstrate a deep understanding of their responsibility to provide spiritual and liturgical experiences in line with the Church's liturgical year. They ensure prayer and collective worship are integral to the growth of a distinctly Catholic community.
- The headteacher is a highly visible leader of collective worship. His personal faith and vision for the school are understood and shared by all teachers. He has ensured that the quality of collective worship has remained at the heart of school improvement.
- Governors monitor and evaluate provision through their regular attendance in school. Regular formal and informal meetings ensure governors are fully informed. This enables them to challenge and support the school as appropriate.