



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 137958

St James' RC Primary School
Maybury Close
Petts Wood
BR5 1BL

Inspection date: 10 June 2013

Chair of Governors: Mrs M Hutchinson
Headteacher: Mrs A Boshier
Inspectors: Mrs J Lenahan
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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

St James' is a one form entry Catholic academy. It is situated in the Bromley deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark and in the Bromley local authority area. The school is oversubscribed by 2:1. The principal parishes, which the school serves, are St James, Petts Wood and St Swithin, Bromley Common. 100% of pupils are baptised Catholics. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in Key Stage 1 and 10% in Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 216. The majority of the school's intake comes from average and above average social economic backgrounds. 68% of pupils are White British with 32% comprising of Asian, African and other White backgrounds. A small percentage of pupils speak English as an additional language, although few are at the early stage of its acquisition. The attainment of pupils on entry is above average. 11% of pupils are on the special educational needs register with 6 pupils having full statements.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

GRADE

1

St James the Great is an outstanding school. It is a thriving, vibrant and successful Catholic academy offering its pupils high quality education. The coherent manner in which the Catholic life of the school and Religious Education are closely interwoven, together with active engagement with the local parish, serves to foster a community with a common purpose. There is unequivocal and explicit evidence that the Catholic mission to 'Work Together and Walk in the Footsteps of Christ' is given priority in association with the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. The school's Catholic ethos is evident in the excellent level of pastoral care. Pupils have high regard for the school's mission, sharing its tenets as evidenced in the respect they show for staff and one another and their caring attitudes.

High expectations are part of the school's ethos and there is clear direction for good quality education, which is shared by everyone. The headteacher and subject leader ensure that Religious Education is taught and evaluated with the same rigour as other subject areas. The school is fully inclusive serving all its pupils and their families. Provision for prayer and worship is outstanding.

Parents value highly the level of support, guidance and care their children receive. They are overwhelming supportive of the school, as seen from the 80% return of positive responses to questionnaires. They wrote about how much they value the high aspirations at St James'. They cite that the school "works hard to promote home-school partnerships"; "has inspirational teaching staff" and "excellent Catholicity throughout the school day and events".

Significant improvements have been made since the previous inspection in January 2008 in the areas of collective worship, monitoring and assessment of Religious Education, and 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' programme is now embedded in practice.

The Governing Body includes members who know the community really well, have a wide range of expertise and who understand their role in promoting the Catholic identity of the school.

Self-evaluation at all levels within the school is coherent, reflecting rigorous monitoring and self-challenge and is reviewed regularly by staff and governors. The school has excellent capacity for further improvement and development.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, headteacher and staff should:

- Review curriculum provision so that there is a spiral and systematic programme to teach pupils about the major world faiths

The Catholic life of the school

GRADE 1

Leadership and management

The school is very well managed. Strong links exist between the Governing Body and the headteacher who demonstrates outstanding leadership of a Catholic community. They are ably supported by the senior leadership team and committed staff. The School Improvement and Development Plan is well thought out and implemented. This in turn leads to targeted planning and actions taken. Spiritual and moral development is promoted not only in Religious Education but also across the wider curriculum.

Commitment to staff development is laudable with leaders and staff accessing training at diocesan and deanery level. Of note is the breadth of training such as, 'The Year of Faith', 'Incorporating Poetry into Religious Education', whole staff 'Reflection on the Gospel', as well as comprehensive training in teaching the Religious Education syllabus. A further noteworthy enhancement is the inclusion of a yearly 'Visions' meeting each autumn where staff and parents are invited to share in the Diocesan vision.

Positive relationships between staff, pupils and governors lead to a readiness to take on new ideas and initiatives. Leaders foster a close working partnership between the school, home and parish and this serves to enhance the pupils' education. External links with the Diocese, deanery cluster group and LA are fostered so that the best possible training and expertise is accessed for staff and pupils.

High standards of achievement are expected of staff and pupils with rigorous monitoring and evaluations being undertaken on a regular basis. The Catholic life and identity of the school feature at the centre of all policies, website, discussions and decisions.

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

GRADE 1

Provision for personal and collective worship is outstanding as it is well integrated into the life of the school. Leaders take an overt stance in guiding the school in a spiritual manner with all lessons, meetings for parents, pupils, governors and School Council commencing with a prayer. Prayer occurs naturally in classrooms, often introduced with quiet music to help the pupils to be still and reflective. The programme for collective worship is very well co-ordinated to reflect the Liturgical Year, Religious Education programme and Personal and Social Education. Focal areas in classrooms and throughout the school feature relevant artefacts; incorporate pupils' personal intercessions and are effectively used in a manner that inspires prayerful reflection. Pupils are taught about the significance of prayer in their lives. Personal and class 'prayer books' reflect their understanding of the various forms of prayer.

Collective worship makes an excellent contribution to the pupils' spiritual and moral development because teachers allow pupils time to reflect on the relationship between what they are learning and its impact on the practice of their faith. The assembly attended by the inspectors about the 'The Good Shepherd' was a joy to witness as the pupils were engaged in exploring the meaning of the Gospel message in a child-centred manner. The inclusion of high quality music and hymn singing in acts of worship brings an added dimension to acts of worship. The choir's rendition of 'The Lord's my Shepherd' was outstanding as it was uplifting, prayerful and a privilege to witness.

The celebration of the Eucharist is pivotal to school life with pupils' knowledge of the 'New Liturgy' fully embedded. There is a well thought out pattern of whole school and class Masses each term, as well as the whole school attending Mass in the local parish church on Holy Days. Pupils are actively engaged in the preparation of school and class Masses.

Older pupils are eager to serve on the altar and are very proud when they receive St Stephen's medals for their service. The parish priest makes a powerful contribution to the prayer and Eucharistic life of the school through a thoughtfully integrated programme of liturgies that enriches the pupils' acts of worship as well as serving to enhance links with the home and parish. His contribution and guidance is greatly appreciated by staff, pupils and parents.

Community cohesion

GRADE 1

St James' serves both its families and the local parish exceptionally well as it actively promotes community cohesion through the curriculum and the Catholic life of the school. Provision for prayer and collective worship is fully inclusive with parents and carers invited to join the pupils for celebrations. Pupils are encouraged to live their faith by following the teachings of Jesus. They are made aware of the cultural diversity to be found in the local community and are taught how to recognise and combat prejudice of any kind in their own or others' behaviour.

Understanding of citizenship is introduced through the PSHE programme with pupils actively involved with links such as the British Council and local safety and community officers. Year 6 pupils have been given the opportunity to explore environmental issues locally relating to anti-graffiti, trade descriptions and Bromley parklands. The global dimension of community is well developed through the 'Connecting Classrooms Project' where pupils have the opportunity to learn about life for children in the Lebanon. This association has also served to give pupils an insight into the landscape of the country and explore its links with the 'Old Testament'. A further commendable learning experience for the pupils was the manner in which the PTA raised funds not only to enhance the school playground, but also at the same time funded the development of playground equipment for a school in Africa.

The school's commitment to supporting charities is exemplary with pupils embarking on a wide range of activities, amongst which are sponsored walks, raising money for CAFOD projects, Lenten calendars sale, Marie Curie appeal, and supporting St Christopher's Hospice and Harris Hospice.

The programme to teach pupils about the major world faiths is under review as the curriculum is only delivered in some classes. The school has rightly identified the shortfall in provision and plans are being formulated to incorporate a more systematic and spiral approach throughout the school which will include opportunities for pupils to gain first-hand experience from practitioners of the faiths studied.

Pupils appreciate that they are given a voice through the School Council and that their ideas are incorporated into developments. Pupils benefit from engaging with fellow students in the local area in sporting and musical events.

Leaders and staff are excellent role models in living out their faith and also being actively engaged in extending their expertise by accessing training at diocesan and deanery level.

All of the above endeavours by the school serve to give its pupils the experience of belonging, sharing, growing and serving in the Christian spirit of community.

Religious Education

Achievement and standards in Religious Education

GRADE 1

The standards that pupils achieve in Religious Education are high. Pupils are gaining knowledge, skills and understanding at a very good rate. This is reflected in the added value measures of the percentage of pupils attaining high levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. Workbooks and conversations with pupils indicate that there are many opportunities for reflecting on links between the teachings of Jesus, the practice of their faith, and on developing their personal their relationship with God. The behaviour of pupils in lessons is exemplary as they are focused, have good listening skills and readily apply themselves to tasks. Lessons provide opportunities for social, moral and spiritual development and pupils concur that this has an impact on their behaviour as they display a strong sense of service to each other. Parents are given opportunities to become involved in their children's Religious Education through newsletters, the distribution of the 'Wednesday Word', consultations and the school's website.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

GRADE 1

Pupils thrive as a result of being taught by confident and enthusiastic teachers who exude commitment and belief in the Catholic faith. Lessons are marked by good pace with sound balance between teacher input and pupil response. Tasks are well planned and include challenge as well as evoking recall on previous learning. A key element of successful teaching is the use of achievable learning objectives; questioning skills that promote enquiry, together with careful exposition of key vocabulary. This results in pupils being able to use religious vocabulary with understanding and confidence. Examples of this good practice was seen in a Year 2 lesson when pupils reflected on how they could use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in their everyday lives and in Year 6 where pupils embarked on Bible research into 'What Jesus teaches us about serving others'.

The use of ICT in lessons by teachers and pupils is highly effective in extending learning opportunities. Prayer and music are integrated into lessons very well to enhance spiritual development. Assessment procedures are embedded and track pupils' progress effectively with each pupil given a level of attainment that is shared with them. Overall, the marking of pupils' work is thorough as teachers' comments challenge thinking with pupils' generally responding in a reflective manner.

The Religious Education curriculum

GRADE 1

The breadth and balance of the curriculum is outstanding. 10% of curriculum time is allocated for teaching Religious Education following 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' programme. This is complemented by PSHE, which is cross-referenced with the Religious Education syllabus. The introduction of time-tabled philosophical debate on moral issues for the older pupils is a further beneficial curriculum enhancement. Staff work hard to ensure the subject has high priority and pupils' needs and abilities are taken into consideration when preparing lessons. The termly 'tracking meeting' by leaders to identify pupils who are underperforming ensures that standards of attainment and pupils' progress are always to the fore. Attainment levels are effectively used to inform future planning. The curriculum is enriched by a whole school prayer day which is led by the parish priest and focused on 'Peace through Prayer' this year. Further enrichment aspects include drama workshops at Easter to bring the story of Christ's Passion to life, Advent Service in St James' Church, Carol Singing, Key Stage 1 Nativity play and the 'Festival of Light' Celebration.

Teaching assistants are very well deployed to support individuals and small group scenarios, which ensures that those with special education needs can fully access the curriculum. Cross curricular links in areas such as literacy, drama, role-play, music and ICT and are highly effective in the manner in which they are integrated into lessons.

Leadership and management of Religious Education

GRADE 1

The headteacher and subject leader ensure that Religious Education is taught to the same high standard as all other subjects. The subject is very well monitored with regular scrutiny of pupils' performance. The subject leader is also a good role model as she is a Catechist in St James' Church. Her subject knowledge is thorough; record keeping is well ordered; monitoring activities are rigorous and she brings a level of enthusiasm to her commitment to build on current good practice. Together with the headteacher, she aspires to raise standards even higher with the incremental development of the subject foremost in the School Development and Improvement Plan. The close working partnership between leaders and the parish priest serves to enhance the religious development of staff and pupils. The priority given to high levels of in-service training is commendable as it ensures that best practice is sought and implemented. A further commendable feature is the staff handbook, which has been compiled by the subject leader. This document entitled: 'A Guide to Religious Education at St James' outlines Catholic practice in a clear and concise manner and is a very useful resource for every member of staff. Members of the Governing Body actively support the development of the subject and foster links between the school and parish both strategically and through attendance at events.