

# St James' Catholic High School

Great Strand, London NW9 5PE

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 16-17 January 2020



## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- The content of classroom religious education meets all the requirements of the Bishops' Conference Religious Education Curriculum Directory.
- Pupil achievement at Key Stage 4 is better than in other core subjects results within the school and higher than local and national averages.
- There is a fully established culture of high expectations within religious education lessons, which in turn creates an outstanding atmosphere for learning and progression.
- Teaching is consistently good and teachers plan and teach lessons that deepen pupils' religious literacy and illustrate increasing depth to pupils' previous learning.
- There is a consistent approach to marking and feedback which is in line with the whole school assessment policy and evidence of diagnostic supportive feedback.
- The use of innovative technology benefits all pupils by giving them access to lesson materials before and after lessons which enhances and develops independent learning skills.
- The senior leadership team ensure that religious education has a high profile within the school and has invested in newly refurbished classrooms and resources.
- There are highly effective systems and structures in place to frequently monitor, track and ensure pupils progress in religious literacy.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and provides an excellent picture of the strengths and areas for development.

### B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- Human flourishing is at the heart of the school's Mission Statement: 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full', which reinforces the school's aspiration for every pupil to reach his or her God given potential.
- The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors value the religious education department to a very high degree. Religious education is at the heart of the school and influences and enhances the quality of Catholic education offered.
- Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school for pupils and staff providing engaging, innovative and creative experiences of the richness of the Catholic tradition.
- The distinctive Dominican heritage of the school continues in the 'VERITAS' values and the newly launched house system.
- There is a chaplaincy committee, drawn from across the school community which plans, organises and leads pupil involvement in a programme of internal and external events to support spiritual formation.
- The partnership between parents, school and parish is outstanding. The school cultivates excellent relationships with parents, parishes and Catholic schools.
- The headteacher, senior leadership team and head of department all have a strong understanding and appreciation of the centrality of religious education in the mission of the Church and its impact on daily life of the school.
- The governors share in the strategic leadership of the school with energy and enthusiasm.

## A. Classroom Religious Education

### What has improved since the last inspection?

Self and peer review are now a regular feature of lessons at all key stages. Pupils respond to teacher written feedback in their exercise books in green pen. Pupils set their own reflective targets after each assessment. Self and peer assessment of exam questions are a regular feature of religious education (RE) lessons. The GCSE course has been resourced with lesson powerpoints, worksheets; course-specific textbooks and revision guides are provided for all pupils. The use of innovative technology benefits all pupils by giving them access to lesson materials before and after lessons which enhances and develops independent learning skills.

### The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

Religious education is at the heart of the school and enhances the quality of Catholic education offered. The content of classroom religious education meets all the requirements of the Bishops' Conference Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). All teachers are subject specialists which has a positive impact on the learning and progress of pupils. Each key stage is mapped to ensure all areas of study are met. The schemes of work have been carefully planned to ensure that topics are revisited to allow pupils to study all four areas of the RECD in greater depth as they progress throughout the key stages. Religious vocabulary is a focus at all key stages and key words are provided for pupils at the start of every unit of study. Achievement at the end of Key Stage 4 is excellent and pupils make outstanding progress in their subject knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.

### Pupil achievement in religious education is outstanding

Pupils' achievement is outstanding when evidence of progress is measured against appropriate benchmarks, such as levels of attainment. The school attends deanery and diocesan moderation to ensure accuracy. Progress is rapid and sustained. Pupil achievement at Key Stage 4 is higher than other core subjects within the school and higher than local and national averages. Monitoring, assessment and analysis of pupil progress is consistent leading to targeted intervention. Pupils are regularly encouraged to reflect on feedback given to them as how best to improve their work and as a consequence make substantial progress. Achievement at Key Stage 5 is good although there are small cohorts. The school is looking to increase numbers in A Level Religious Studies. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and exceptionally well versed in religious language and understanding. They are confident users of religious literacy and illustrate excellent knowledge and understanding. Teachers set high expectations in lessons and pupil engagement is excellent.

### The quality of teaching is good

Teaching is consistently good with examples of good and some outstanding lessons seen. Teachers demonstrate a strong subject knowledge and are able to elicit positive pupil engagement in their learning. Teachers have high expectations, plan and teach lessons that deepen pupils' religious literacy and create a positive climate for learning. Teachers use multi-sensory and creative resources to stimulate conversations amongst their pupils, for example, in a Year 8 lesson the use of images provided a deep learning discussion about repentance. Pupils show signs of being proactive in their learning, for example in a Year 11 lesson there was an excellent group work activity on Jesus' trial, death and resurrection and evidence of pupils learning from each other. Teachers are able to elicit pupils' responses to source materials like scripture, scholars' theories or case studies. Pupils were confident to discuss issues such as the Church's teaching on the sacramental nature of human life, which was observed in some lessons. There is a consistent approach to marking and feedback which is in line with the whole school assessment policy and evidence of diagnostic supportive feedback in

exercise books and assessment folders. There was use of high-quality questioning, evidenced in a Year 12 lesson on the Cosmological Argument where the teacher really encouraged the pupils to be reflective with their answers. In assessment folders, there were redrafts in green pen where pupils improved on their understanding following teacher feedback. In the classroom, teachers consistently created a variety of structured learning strategies and positive encouragement through oral and written praise. Teachers used a variety of well-judged teaching strategies to match pupils' learning needs. In a Year 9 class there was an energetic debate on Jesus having too many titles. Pupils enjoy religious education as they can express their own opinions but are aware of Catholic teachings and doctrine.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education**

**is outstanding**

The quality of leadership and management of religious education is outstanding. The headteacher and the senior leadership team ensure that religious education has a high profile within the school and has invested in newly refurbished classrooms and resources. The newly appointed head of department has a strong understanding and appreciation of the centrality of religious education in the mission of the Church and its impact on the daily life of the school. There are highly effective systems and structures in place to frequently monitor, track and ensure pupils progress in religious literacy. Teachers have sound subject knowledge which is developed through continuing professional development and staff are well supported in this. There is an ethos of collaborative collegiality among the team and the department's shared area on the school's intranet is used effectively to share resources and develop teamwork in the department. Governors make an outstanding contribution in their strategic focus on developing religious education and work closely with the senior leadership team to support the development of pupils' religious literacy.

### **What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?**

- To improve the recruitment at A Level Religious studies.
- Share good practice so lessons are engaging and challenging for all pupils.

## B. The Catholic life of the school

### What has improved since the last inspection?

Retreats are delivered across all key stages and are very popular with students. Parents are invited to the annual pilgrimage to Walsingham. Year 7 pupils visit their former primary schools in July to share a picnic with the Year 6 pupils who will be transferring to St James' the following year; this is just one example of the many ways in which pupils are helped to settle into St James'. Link teachers from feeder primary schools also visit St James' to review the Key Stage 2 and 3 curriculums. The 'Faith in Action Awards' foster links between parish and school and enable pupils to share their gifts.

### The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

**is outstanding**

The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors value the RE department to a very high degree. The high status of RE is reflected in the staffing, including members of the senior leadership team, budget and accommodation. RE receives 10% curriculum time at Key Stages 3 and 4 and 5% at Key Stage 5 as required by the Bishops' Conference. RE is at the heart of the school; it influences and enhances the quality of Catholic education offered. Displays throughout the school support its Catholic ethos, exhibiting impressive work by the pupils. The department is well resourced and staffed by specialists and a new chaplain has recently taken up position, emphasising that this is a central role in the school. The budget allocation for RE is equivalent to other core subjects.

### The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

**is outstanding**

Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school, providing engaging, innovative and creative experiences of the richness of the Catholic tradition. The school offers many opportunities for the school to pray and reflect. The pastoral curriculum has been enhanced by the addition of specifically developed resources that focus on themes from PSHE, SMSC, Common Good and spirituality. Each day begins with a prayer in the tutor base: this is largely led by the pupils themselves and reflects their current concerns. There are opportunities for the celebration of the Eucharist as pupils attend the local parish church in their tutor groups. Reconciliation services take place during Advent and Lent with the Sacrament being offered during Lent, facilitated by a team of priests who visit the school from local parishes. There is an opportunity for Adoration every Friday and Ash Wednesday is marked with a reflective liturgy; there are also special liturgies at Advent and Easter. Holy days of obligation are marked with Mass in school which are also attended by members of the local parishes. Pupils are involved in the planning and delivery of Masses and liturgies. The 'Chaplaincy News' provides monthly reflections and prayers. The distinctive Dominican heritage of the school continues in the 'VERITAS' values. The newly launched house system will further embed these values as each house is named after a 'VERITAS' value and in the future, it is planned that the houses will support different charities. There is a chaplaincy committee, which plans, organises and leads a programme of internal and external events to support spiritual formation; staff, clergy and pupils are members of this committee. Pupils spoke very positively about the retreats where they had an opportunity to meditate and have a creative approach to thinking about their faith. One pupil commented 'that the school is a body and that everyone has to work together for it to function properly'.

### The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –

**is outstanding**

At its heart is the school's aim that every pupil should reach their God given potential and it recognises its responsibility to provide opportunities for pupils to achieve this. This is reflected in

the school's charity and outreach work. The school supports Mary's Meals clothes appeal, Colindale Food Bank and the Lenten backpack. Within the school, all gifts are recognised, celebrated and pupils are encouraged to share with others. They have a deep understanding of the call to serve and adopt positions of leadership including organisation of altar servers, student council and chaplaincy committee. Volunteering is an important part of St James'; sixth form students take part in community volunteering, involving different activities such as acting as guides at parents and open evenings, helping in local primary schools and supporting within academic departments. Sixth form students help senior citizens with their ICT skills weekly after school. Older pupils mentor younger pupils and run events such as a Year 7 disco and reading programmes. Not only do pupils actively engage in acts of service but they have an excellent understanding of the theology underpinning their actions. One pupil commented, 'there is a motivation to give back and Christ is at the centre of everything we do in school especially the charity work'. The pupils appreciated the school mission statement; one said, 'if we don't help them, we are not living life to the full'.

**The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf**

**is outstanding**

The school cultivates excellent relationships with parents, parishes and other Catholic schools. Parents of the school are highly supportive of its mission to educate the whole child; they value the Catholic education on offer and are active in involving themselves in school activities. One parent commented 'I am very happy with the Catholic ethos of the school, which helps to support and guide my son in life'. The school is regularly supported in the celebration of the Sacraments by priests from local parishes. This benefits the pupils as many see priests from their own parishes in school and also ensures strong links between school and parish. There are also strong links with its feeder primary schools through the school transition programme and visits by primary school teachers to St James' to work with the core departments and review the Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 curriculum. Staff regularly attend the professional development opportunities offered by the diocese. Sixth form students also visit local feeder schools as part of their sixth form enrichment.

**The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school**

**is outstanding**

Human flourishing is at the heart of the school's Mission Statement: 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full', which reinforces the school's aspiration for every pupil to reach his or her God given potential. The headteacher, senior leadership team and head of department all have a strong understanding and commitment to the Church's mission in education and demonstrate this in a dynamic and consistent way. St James' is a vibrant and engaging Catholic community and has a strong Catholic identity. The school's self-evaluation is a coherent and highly accurate reflection of consistent monitoring, analysis and challenge; it provides an excellent picture of the strengths and areas for development. There are effective systems in place to support the induction of new staff, to develop and enhance the contribution of all staff including those from other Christian traditions and other faiths so that they can actively contribute to, the Catholic life of the school. Governors share in the strategic leadership with energy and enthusiasm; they have a clear understanding of their role.

**What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?**

- Further embed the work of the newly appointed chaplain and the chaplaincy committee
- Continue the work of the newly launched houses that link to the 'VERITAS' values with the allocation of a charity to each house.

## Information about this school

- The school is an eight-form entry voluntary aided school in the locality of Colindale.
- The school serves the eight parishes of Barnet, Harrow and Colindale deaneries.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 94.5%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 5.2% and from other faiths is 0.3%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 26%
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 6.
- There are 14% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 41 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average.
- There is an average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 261 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (24%).

<b>Department for Education Number</b>	3025407
<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101364
<b>Local Authority</b>	Barnet

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary Aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	1094
<b>The appropriate authority</b>	Governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Margaret Brady
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Carolyn Laws
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8358 2800
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-james.barnet.sch.uk">www.st-james.barnet.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@st-james.barnet.sch.uk">admin@st-james.barnet.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 March 2015
<b>Grades from previous inspection:</b>	
<b>Classroom religious education</b>	Outstanding
<b>The Catholic life of the school</b>	Outstanding

## Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 36 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 1 assembly and 3 of acts of worship.
- 6 meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

## Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Mrs Mary Coyle

Lead Inspector

Miss Susan Grace

Associate Inspector

Ms Eleisha Maton

Associate Inspector

Ms Winnie Greer

Associate Inspector

## Information about inspection

The purpose of Diocesan inspection is to report to and advise the Archbishop on the quality of classroom religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The inspection report is also used to inform parents and carers, and the wider Catholic community. Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools. It also assists schools in the work of self-evaluation and improvement and enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools.

### Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

This report is published by the Diocese of Westminster and is available at:

<http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

Vaughan House  
46 Francis Street,  
London  
SW1P 1QN

T: 020 7798 9005  
E: [education@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:education@rcdow.org.uk)  
W: <http://rcdow.org.uk/education>