



Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **St John the Baptist Catholic Comprehensive School**

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Headteacher: Ms A Magill

Chair of Governors: Mr C Kemp

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Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Bishop of Arundel & Brighton  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Date of inspection: 17-18 March 2014  
Date of previous inspection: 10 December 2007

Lead Inspector: Mr P Ward  
Associate Inspector: Dr J Lydon

## **Description of School**

St John the Baptist is a voluntary aided comprehensive school situated in the Woking Deanery of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. It is maintained by Surrey LA. The principal parishes which the school serves are St. Dunstan's, Woking, Our Lady Help of Christians, West Byfleet, and St. Hugh of Lincoln, Knaphill. The proportion of students who are baptised Catholics is 88% overall, including the Sixth Form. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 6.7% in Key Stage 3, 10% in Key Stage 4 and 5% for general religious education in the Sixth Form.

The school takes students from 11 to 18 years. The number of students currently on roll is 1232. The attainment of students on entering the school is broadly above average. Achievement and attainment are significantly above national average at all key stages. The proportion of students eligible for free schools meals is below average. The proportion of children from minority ethnic groups is slightly above average as is those whose first language is not English. The number of students with statements and with school action plus support is below the national average. The school is a National Teaching School. The school supports a number of primary and secondary schools in difficulty, seeing this as part of the mission of the school.

### **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

This is an outstanding Catholic school where the Catholic Christian faith is central to its vision and the realisation of its educational mission. Prayer and worship are at its heart, supporting the personal development and achievement of all. Concern and respect for the disadvantaged among its members and the wider community goes hand in hand with a striving for excellence. High academic achievement and significant personal development demonstrate that "every individual is highly valued". Key to achieving this is collaborative and distributive leadership throughout the school, animated by an outstanding headteacher, that enables all staff to make a distinct contribution. Recognising the importance of collaborating for the common good and the benefit of Catholic education, the school engages with other schools and undertakes teacher training and development, partly by virtue of its National Teaching School status. Working with the home and parish, the school provides an excellent Catholic education that prepares its students for further study and for adult life.

**Grade 1**

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

There has been considerable development since the last inspection. All action points of the last inspection report have been addressed fully.

**Grade 1**

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Review curriculum time for religious education in Key Stage 3 in order to meet the requirements of the Bishops' Conference, to reflect the fact that it is the core subject in a Catholic school and to ensure that it is an appropriate foundation for the forthcoming changes to GCSE Religious Studies.
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## **The Catholic Life of the School**

### **Leadership and Management**

Leaders at all levels have a clear understanding and strong commitment to the educational mission of the Church, of the distinct role that the school can play in promoting it and of how it may be achieved. The school is very efficiently managed; resources are very carefully deployed to support the objectives of the school. The headteacher who has a positive presence around the school and the leadership team are purposefully developing the school as a Catholic educational community committed to the inclusion and flourishing of all reflecting the belief that each is created in the image and likeness of God. The talents and skills of all are deliberately nurtured and developed by excellent teaching and by an extensive range of activities and opportunities. Sensitive yet effective pastoral monitoring and robust academic monitoring are complemented by a system of rewards and commendations valued by students. Morale is very high. All teachers share a strong commitment to outstanding teaching and to working closely with parents and carers. There are close links with the parish clergy and primary schools of the deanery and beyond, as well as with the diocese and other local schools and agencies. Thus the school strives to collaborate with home and parish to promote the integral education of all and as a result students flourish and embrace the school's mission.

**Grade 1**

### **The Prayer Life of the School**

The celebration of Mass is at the heart of the life of the school. Each term the whole school gathers for Mass in the school hall and each Friday morning Mass is celebrated in the school chapel, recently refurbished in its prominent location abutting the hall. Numbers attending weekly Mass are increasing as a result of a range of school initiatives. Prayer and worship are a vital daily element in school life, students participating readily and attending attentively. Reflecting the liturgical cycle and Sunday gospel, the weekly themes are complemented by extensive well-judged resources. Support by the outstanding chaplain empowers tutor groups to devise and lead year and school worship. Each week begins with the whole school assembled in the hall. Inspectors witnessed a striking presentation on the theme of Reconciliation which included excellent use of song and video, drama and a reflection by Fr. Peter. Students confirmed that this was representative of each Monday's assembly. Tutor groups also attend a weekly year assembly, usually devised and led by one of the groups, other days beginning with prayer in tutor time. Students and staff confirmed inspectors' observation that students participate respectfully. A full programme of liturgies and events reflects the liturgical year, Christmas and Easter celebrations involving large numbers of students and staff and like some other liturgies are open to parents. Many students take advantage of the opportunity to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent, The school promotes the sacrament of Confirmation, the headteacher and chaplain supporting candidates by attending students' Confirmation. Students in Years 7-9 attend either an annual retreat or an awayday with Fr Peter the school chaplain and their form tutor, while a residential retreat is popular among students in

Years 10-11. All students are thought to participate at least once in a significant way in the liturgical life of the school. Many play a greater role, some for example being commissioned as Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist while others join the Spiritual Life Group. Meeting twice a term with the chaplain and members of the Ethos Committee, they contribute to reviews of recent celebrations and help plan forthcoming and future liturgies. Governor and staff briefings and meetings begin with prayer; each staff INSET day begins with a liturgy devised by a different department. Prayer and worship makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual and moral development of students.

**Grade 1**

### **How effectively does the school /college promote community cohesion?**

The school is a fully inclusive Catholic educational community committed to the wellbeing and flourishing of all its members, students and staff alike. Thoughtful activities and opportunities enable all students to support the school community and participate in its very wide range of extra-curricular activities collectively known as 'Horizons', thus contributing to their personal development. In Years 7 to 9 'Footprints' is closely linked to 'Horizons' and enables students to track their extra-curricular achievements and commitments in and out of school and gain recognition for their commitment. Students confirmed to inspectors that the induction programme enabled Year 7 students to feel at home and make friends with older students. Staff members are alert to and share their concerns for students who may be struggling in any way so that the bi-weekly pastoral meeting enables all staff to be aware of and help those who need some support. The emphasis is always on the positive. Among the many opportunities of service are the STARS – Students as Researchers. Two are elected from each year group and meet with the head boy and girl to bring about change for the better of the school community by listening to their peers. Facilitated by the school chaplain, they identify issues, research possible solutions and make proposals. During the inspection an earlier focus, the quality of school catering provision, was reaching its conclusion as school governors together with some STARS assessed presentations and submissions by competing catering contractors.

The school's concern for the disadvantaged manifests itself in many ways: inspectors learned of many examples of students and staff providing often unobtrusive support. Students in a variety of challenging circumstances are also enabled to continue their education as fully integrated members of the school community. The substantial annual commitment to charitable works includes support at Christmas for children and families in straightened circumstances and a Lenten campaign to raise over £10,000 and fundraising on 'SJB Day'. Many charities and organisations are supported, at home and abroad. One such is a school in Malawi, built thanks to over £50,000 raised by 'SJB Africa'. Visits by students, staff and governors established very strong links which are on-going. Practical engagement includes significant participation in the Lourdes diocesan pilgrimage: in 2014 12 staff will be going and 38 sixth form students and 15 Year 10 and 11 students have applied to go as helpers or Redshirts, extensive school fundraising contributing a small proportion of their costs. Five local parishes allow annual appeals in support of the Lourdes pilgrimage fund which exemplifies the good links that exist between school and parish. Relationships between and among students and staff throughout the school are very good. Students said that they felt very safe. Parents spoke positively of the way in which the school keeps them informed and works collaboratively with them to support their children.

**Grade 1**

## Religious Education

### Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Students make excellent progress throughout their school career and consistently achieve very high standards, significantly above the national average in both GCSE and GCE A Level Religious Studies. Achievement at Key Stage 3 is on a par with the best achieving subjects in the school. The three year trend at GCSE is 91% A\*-C and 51% A\*-A with a positive value added figure that is 18% above forecast. The three year trend at GCE is 88% A-C and 40% grade A at AS Level and 91% A\*-C and 38% A\*-A at GCE A Level. In 2013 GCE A Level 86% of students achieved grades A\*-B which is 30% above the national average.

Students with learning disabilities, those for whom English is not their first language and other vulnerable students all achieve consistently in line with whole school achievement.

Students gain knowledge, skills and understanding steadily and so become religiously literate.

This is demonstrated for example by the excellent understanding of the significance for Catholics of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick by students in Year 10.

Students told inspectors that learning was significantly enhanced by the variety and challenge in lessons. Behaviour in lessons is outstanding overall.

**Grade 1**

### Teaching and learning in Religious Education

Based on lessons observed and the school's detailed records over time, teaching is outstanding. A comprehensive bank of digital resources has been developed that covers the whole curriculum. Teachers make very good use of this and informed by their accurate understanding of their students and of their own subject knowledge, provide lessons that are highly effectively planned and well-executed which enable students of all abilities to make excellent progress. Outstanding lessons observed demonstrated an aspirational drive for excellence on the part of the staff that motivates all students to respond enthusiastically to the imaginative range of learning activities. Excellent use is made of ICT in all years, with activities specifically making use of students' tablet computers in Years 7 and 10. Innovative forms of integral assessment for learning complement clear and direct communication by teachers so that students strive to give of their best. In one such lesson Year 11 students demonstrated an excellent understanding of the reasons why Catholics should promote racial harmony using key biblical references and Church teaching to illustrate their views. Classrooms are hospitable places of learning, enhanced by excellent displays that complement and reinforce active learning. Students confirmed to inspectors that they knew their actual and target level or grade and what they need to do to make further progress.

**Grade 1**

### Quality of the Curriculum

The religious education curriculum is matched to the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools and Colleges 2012* and responsive to local needs. It is reviewed annually in the interest of clarity and of student engagement and progression. The Key Stage 3 curriculum provides a systematic grounding in the Catholic faith and is complemented by flexible learning opportunities as envisaged in the last inspection report including through PSHE which is 'owned' by the religious education department. In Key Stage 4 students study for two Edexcel Catholic GCSE papers, Roman Catholic Christianity and Religion and Life based

on a study of Roman Catholic Christianity. In the Sixth Form, general Religious Education is timetabled as Spiritual Development lessons. The GCE A Level Religious Studies is appropriately timetabled and consistently attracts more than ten students.

The curriculum time devoted to religious education is unchanged since the last inspection and the action point relating to curriculum time has been addressed. In the Sixth Form, spiritual development lessons constitute 5% of curriculum time. At Key Stage 4 religious education has 10% of curriculum time in Year 10 and 11.7% in Year 11 and thus meets or exceeds the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. At Key Stage 3, timetabled religious education falls short of this requirement but inspectors are satisfied that teaching and activities that form part of the *Curriculum Directory*, including elements of the area of study on Revelation such as humanity created by God, and The Church such as the Church's role as witness in society, regularly and routinely take place as part of PSHE. Inspectors also noted that the curriculum presence of religious education in Key Stage 4 is currently being reviewed. The issue of 10% of curriculum time for religious education at Key Stage 3 must engage leadership going forward.

**Grade 1**

### **Leadership and management of Religious Education**

The consistently excellent standards of teaching and pupil achievement are testimony to the outstanding leadership and management of the subject. The head of department shares a strong sense of the spiritual purpose of religious education and leads a cohesive team of specialist teachers who successfully strive to ensure that students maximise their academic achievement in the subject and become religiously literate young people. Morale is very high. Rigorous monitoring and self-evaluation within the department, in line with school procedures, ensures a culture of constant improvement of teaching and learning. Professional development takes many forms and is embraced by staff members. The excellent digital resources are very well managed, developed and shared to support outstanding teaching. Thorough assessment and tracking procedures support teachers in promoting the achievement of all students. The inclusion of all students is a core belief of the school and fully reflected in all religious education teaching. Six well equipped and appointed specialist rooms centrally located in the school, provide an excellent teaching environment. There are very good links with parents and local parishes and the diocese. The subject is appropriately funded. The acting deputy headteacher line manages the head of department and a link governor enables the Governing Body to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

**Grade 1**