



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## Section 48 Monitoring Visit

### ST JAMES CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Leach Heath Lane, Rednal, Birmingham B45 9BN

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Inspection date 16<sup>th</sup> June 2014  
Reporting Inspector Mr Joseph Skivington

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	210
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Chris Gibbs
Telephone number	0121 453 2538
E-mail address	enquiry@stjamescatholicprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	September 2009
DFE School Number	330 3358
Unique Reference Number	103450

**Headteacher Mrs Angela Backen**

Previous inspection:	1
This inspection:	1

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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE





10<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Diocesan Education Service,  
Don Bosco House,  
Coventry Road,  
Coleshill,  
B46 3EA

Mrs A Backen  
St James Catholic Primary School  
Leach Heath Lane  
Rednal  
Birmingham  
B45 9BN

Dear Mrs Backen

### **Section 48 Monitoring inspection: 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014**

Thank you for the welcome you, your staff and pupils gave to me when I inspected your school on the 30<sup>th</sup> June and for the information you provided both before and during the inspection. I am grateful for the time given by all including the parish priest in speaking with me.

The inspection was a “light touch” monitoring inspection because your school was judged at the last section 48 inspection to be an outstanding school and because it is now five years or more since you last received a diocesan inspection.

The purpose of the inspection was to assess the quality of the school’s self-evaluation and improvement planning for Catholic life and religious education. In order to make this judgement I read school documents, including a summative self-evaluation, interviewed senior leaders, governor representatives, the parish priest, the subject leader for RE, and pupils, conducted a learning walk, and looked at a sample of pupils’ written work. In addition, I gathered evidence of some of the outstanding practice in the school as part of a diocesan wide survey of good practice in Catholic life and religious education.

### **Catholic Life**

In its self-evaluation, St James School judges its overall effectiveness as a Catholic school to be outstanding. This appraisal is fully justified based on the evidence gathered during this inspection, which validated the school’s own judgement as accurate and dependable. The pupils’ contribution to the Catholic life of the school and collective worship, is outstanding, evident in their outstanding engagement with the rich opportunities for prayer and worship. Pupils in Year 5, for example, become prayer friends for Reception, and ask questions for the younger ones who find it difficult. A most impressive whole school assembly on Pentecost saw the whole school assembled in a circle around a column of tongues of flame and the recently confirmed Year 6 sharing with the whole assembly what the gifts of the spirit meant to them in their lives. This was a colourful, inspiring experience with deep significance for everyone. They did not go out in classes, but had the opportunity to stay and pray or reflect, and left quietly when they were ready, with no intervention from the staff. Pupils’ engagement also takes the form of frequent pupil audits and feedback on liturgies and assemblies, both on their own assemblies, which are excellently planned and presented, but also on those taken by staff. Their feedback might be something simple like unable to read the hymn words, or the Gospel reading is too long and the message not getting through. The growth in confidence of pupils preparing their own liturgies, from scratch, are duly documented, such as how the teething problems of giving ownership to the older pupils were overcome.

Staff are also challenged in this process, with questions such as ‘What would you expect children to take forward from this experience?’ plus opportunities across key stages to experience best practice. Similarly pupils are invited through questionnaires to reflect on questions such as: ‘What makes our



school Catholic, and how do you know?' Or 'What is God's plan for you, and how do you know?' The answers are remarkably mature and reflective, varied and striking in their conviction. Detailed records are kept on every event and provide leadership with a very clear grasp of the impact provision is having, and how it can be improved.

Governors and senior leadership play a very hands-on part in nourishing and enabling a vibrant Catholic ethos. All the processes for feedback from pupils, parents, and staff are then fed into the school improvement plan, which is very much a live, working document constantly being re-shaped and updated. The link governor for RE, in particular, is a proactive and effective animator in monitoring and nurturing the spiritual life of the school, as well as facilitating the parish youth liturgies. A full school mission re-energising exercise is planned for next year on top of the ongoing spirituality audit, the Catholic ethos audit, the collective worship audits by children and staff, and the above mentioned Catholic life questionnaire. Staff pray and meditate together, and provide the crucial modelling which inspires the pupils to emulate. It is these rigorous processes which are the surest touchstone for the reliability of the school's self evaluation.

### **Religious Education**

The school judges provision for religious education as outstanding, including the impact of teaching, assessment, and the curriculum. The reason it knows this is because of the outstanding leadership of the subject, which has embedded robust processes for monitoring the quality of the impact of teaching on learning, which crucially elicits feedback from the pupils. Teaching over time is consistently good with much that is outstanding. Lesson observations and work scrutiny during the inspection confirmed this judgement. The use of art is a particularly fruitful strategy, as is the forest school experience for the younger children. As a result, the achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, across both key stages, consistently meets, and for a significant number of pupils, exceeds expectation. The evidence from lesson observations and work scrutinies amply bear this out. Pupils very readily contribute to their own learning by their real enjoyment of the subject, regardless of their faith background, and can question their teachers to get clearer answers that are relevant to their lives. This feedback in turn enables teachers to re-shape the lesson learning objectives to meet the pupils' learning needs. Monitoring and assessment enable staff to review their practice and its impact. Pupils receive fruitful feedback, with targets set in child friendly level indicators. Marking makes an effective driver of progress. The curriculum and schemes of work are constantly being reviewed. School and parish work jointly, pray and celebrate weekly Mass together, with the pupils taking an active part in the liturgies.

St James is an inspiring exemplar of an outstanding Catholic school, which has the capacity to maintain and deepen its commitment to its mission, guided by its inspirational leadership.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Skivington  
Diocesan Inspector