

DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

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

URN: 138335

St Cyprian's Greek Orthodox Primary Academy

Springfield Road

Thornton Heath

CR7 8DZ

Inspection date:	13th June 2025
Acting Chair of Governors:	Andrew Mantilas
Interim Headteacher:	Mr Gareth Thomas
Inspectors:	Mrs Samantha Gower Mrs Colette Doran-Hannon

EDUCATION SERVICE

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

Tel: 01689 829331

Director of Education: Angela Cox OBE

Key for inspection grades

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

FULL REPORT

Information about the school

St Cyprian's Greek Orthodox Primary Academy is in the Local Authority of Croydon and is the only Greek Orthodox Primary Academy in Great Britain. Established in 2000 under the auspices of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain. His Eminence, Archbishop Nikitas is the head of the church and serves as a trustee and a member of the trust. The principal parish which the school serves is St Constantine & St Helen in Upper Norwood. The directors promote the Greek Orthodox religion, language, culture, tradition and ethos.

The school takes pupils from 3 - 11. The number of pupils currently on roll is 257 which is a result of a falling roll. With an admissions number of 60, it is currently operating with one form of entry with two mixed year group classes.

The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is just below average. The proportion of children with SEN is above average with the number of EHCPs just below.

The proportion of curriculum time allocated to teaching the Greek Orthodox faith and other faiths is 10% in Key Stage 1 and in Key Stage 2.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Cyprian's is a good school of faith because:

- St Cyprians is a caring, inclusive Greek Orthodox community with a committed staff. Leaders and governors are clear about the strengths and areas for development of the school and are determined to ensure improvements are made.
- Pupils and staff are kind to each other and ensure a warmly welcome environment. They are keen to support those in need, engaging in charity work.
- Excellent quality displays and artefacts ensure the Greek Orthodox faith of the school is clear and accessible to everyone in the school.
- Pupils love RE lessons. They participate fully and work hard, responding positively to the range of tasks they are presented with.
- Collective worship is good. Pupils lead acts of worship. The liturgical year is celebrated in various ways and pupils engage and participate in a range of worship experiences. There is a strong relationship with the parish priest.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Teachers need to ensure lessons are adapted to ensure the needs of all children are met, particularly so there is sufficient challenge for the more able.
- The assessment system needs to be developed so teachers are able to identify not only attainment at the expected level but also at greater depth and measure progress over time.
- Leaders need to develop clear systems to secure consistently high standards in RE across the school from planning to monitoring and evaluating.

Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing a faith education.	2
Religious Life	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the religious life of the school.	2
The quality of provision for the faith life of the school	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the religious life of the school.	2

Religious Education	2
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	2
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	2

Collective Worship	2
How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship	2
The quality of provision for Collective Worship	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	2

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Religious Life of the school is good.

- The behaviour of pupils is consistently good; they are kind and respectful to one another.
- Pupils love their school. They talk with confidence about the 'St Cyprian way' being to love and care for one another. They understand that if they make mistakes, they are forgiven and are supported by adults to make amends.
- Pupils take an active role in the religious life of the school, willingly accepting responsibilities that are part of their faith community and participating enthusiastically in charity and community work. An example of this is the Macmillan Coffee morning and Pink Breakfast.
- Time and attention is given to ensure all children are cared for and both pupils and parents are proud of how the school supports vulnerable children.
- Pupils are keen to take on leadership opportunities, taking on roles to support the younger children, setting up the hall for events and supporting adults at lunchtime. As a result, pupils feel they can use their skills in different ways across school life.
- Pupils are often chosen to give tours of the school and can talk with confidence about their faith community, particularly the importance of the prayer focal areas and icon libraries.
- Pupils say they are happy in school and school adults make them feel safe and listened to.
- Everyone in the community, of Greek Orthodox faith or not, show respect and value the rich culture and traditions of the faith. This is seen in how pupils participate fully in all areas of school life, demonstrating their 'buy-in' to the school ethos.

The quality of provision of the Religious Life of the school is good.

- The school mission statement, "I am strong through Jesus Christ to be the best that I can be' is known and lived by staff and pupils at St Cyprians.
- Excellent relationships and the close cooperation of and shared vision of the whole school team are key strengths of the school.
- There is a clear sense of community in the school, where they feel like 'family'. This is evident in all relationships across the school and is reinforced regularly such as when the school is blessed at the start of every year by the parish priest
- In the school environment there are plentiful opportunities to engage with the faith, starting with the small chapel at the front of the school. Mirroring the Three Hierarchs, it is a small model chapel, made from materials obtained from Cyprus, which

symbolises that you are entering a sacred or special space. Many of the statues and icons are from Cyprus or Athens.

- To enhance the Greek orthodox experience, pupils learn the Greek language as their modern foreign language and study Greek history and culture in their wider curriculum study.
- Parents are happy with their children attending the school and talk about the school as a 'family'. They know what to do if they have a difficulty and know who they would approach to discuss concerns. They report that problems are rare. One parent said, "I love the strong religious ethics/values of the school."

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Religious Life of the school is good.

- Leaders and governors show a clear commitment to the mission of the school. They act as good role models for the Greek Orthodox faith. There is a strong sense of inclusivity with leaders sharing, "We are not one. We are all together and together we can make a difference."
- Governors recognise the importance of the school as the heart of the faith community saying, "this school has brought children to the path of the orthodox church."
- All staff are treated with respect and dignity, resulting in a highly motivated and committed staff team.
- Staff induction to the school involves training about the Greek Orthodox church, this continues at least termly so all staff, especially non-orthodox staff, have a good understanding and respect for the faith traditions and practices.
- The school is overseen by His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas who ensures the schools is upholding the expectations of the church. He is a keen supporter of the school, calling it 'critical to have a beacon of light in London'.
- Inclusion is an important part of the school, and all people are welcome. This was explained well when a governor said, "on a hand we have fingers that are not the same but yet together they work to make beautiful things."
- As the only Greek Orthodox primary school, the school maintains excellent relationships with other Greek schools globally, the Greek embassy and the wider Greek Orthodox church.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is good.

- Pupils engage positively in Religious Education lessons, settling quickly to tasks and demonstrating a clear desire to succeed. They say that they love their RE lessons. As a result, children show good learning.
- Pupils respond well to the supportive classroom environment, where teachers regularly praise their contributions in discussions, helping them feel valued and confident. This results in them being keen to participate, even if they are not sure of the response.
- Questioning is generally effective in promoting participation, though there are missed opportunities to extend pupils' thinking to a deeper level.
- Although teachers work hard to ensure they have enough knowledge to teach the lessons, on some occasion's gaps are evident and CPD given should be targeted to address this.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively, providing targeted support that enables all pupils to access the learning
- In Early Years and Key Stage 1, activities are well thought out to engage children. This was seen in Reception when the children flocked to the RE independent activity during choice time. There are lots of opportunities for repetition and questions are used often to check recall.
- In Nursery, the children were learning about the Holy Spirit. Visuals were used effectively to support children's understanding. The children were then given an electric tea-light in flames they had made the previous day. This sparked such a great sense of awe and wonder, and the children all whispered excitedly about how they were holding the Holy Spirit, showing great reverence and respect.
- In KS2, post- it notes are used often to capture the children's thoughts and answers to questions. In the best examples of this, pupils were encouraged to explain their ideas fully. To enhance this further, teachers should think about how to use this to develop and extend thinking further.
- Pupils in the older classes showed confidence in using the Bible to find scripture passages and many children were confident to read from the Bible, even when the text was challenging.
- Books demonstrate that RE is a high priority to pupils and staff. There is plentiful work with a variety of tasks. They are regularly marked, following the policy, with each child being given a question to extend thinking.

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

- Teachers plan and teach lessons following the Pistevio (I believe) a scheme of learning which is based on educational publications of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. Staff are aware that the resource is limited so in the best lessons, lessons are adapted to be more engaging and increase demand.
- Vocabulary is identified for each lesson. This is then introduced to the children and explained to ensure understanding.
- A variety of task types, for example role play and freeze frames, are used to engage the children. This results in highly motivated learners.
- There is an expectation that all staff teach one lesson following the RE scheme and the other lesson is about a saint or other faith. Saints are an important part of the Greek orthodox tradition and there is a feast day most weeks which the children are expected to learn about.
- The school uses the Croydon SACRE to teach other faiths, taking time to study a broad range of beliefs from Buddhism to Humanism to other Christian denominations.
- Largely, lessons are pitched to the middle attainers and, although support is in place for some children through the use of additional adults, there is not enough challenge to extend more able learners. Thought needs to be given to ensure there is progression across the school as books showed similar tasks across year groups.
- Current assessment uses the 'I can' statements to identify who is working at the expected level, based on who has achieved them. The assessment system needs to be developed so the school is able to identify not only attainment at the expected level but also at greater depth and measure progress over time.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is good.

- Governors have a clear commitment to the school and are ambitious for the future. They have a realistic view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, particularly in terms of the RE and are determined to ensure improvements are seen.
- RE is always on the agenda at governing body meetings. As a result, governors are well informed by the headteacher and RE lead.
- There has been a significant amount of work done this year, since the appointment of the interim headteacher to raise standards in RE, and this can be seen clearly. Leaders are committed to ensuring this continues moving forward.
- The RE leader works hard to ensure teachers have the tools they need to teach RE. She has created a bank of resources that teachers can use to enhance lessons, this is particularly helpful for non-Orthodox staff as it supports their subject knowledge.

- This year there has been CPD to develop teacher's understanding of assessment and how to develop more creative working. There is evidence in classes that this is being developed, although leaders recognise it is still in its infancy and requires greater consistency.

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

- Pupils have a role in leading worship. They lead the prayers and prepare the altar. They will often select items from the many faith focal points in the school, including the icon libraries, and bring them into collective worship.
- Pupils feel that their contributions to prayer are valued. This was seen in an assembly led by the priest, who after discussing the concept of the Holy Trinity, asked the children to share their understanding. Many children were keen to respond, even if they were not sure of the answer.
- Pupils visit the church at least once a term and the parish priest is a regular visitor at the school to lead collective worship, particularly on feast days. This results in a strong relationship between the school and parish.
- Pupils stand for prayer at least three times a day: at the start and end of the day and before lunch, as well as before RE lessons. They show a good understanding of the importance of prayer from the Early Years. A Nursery child showed the inspector how to hold three fingers together and then where to place it on the body when praying.
- The school hymn is known to the children and is a lovely expression of prayer at the end of acts of worship.
- Pupils of all faiths and none, respect the prayer life of the school and participate with enthusiasm.
- Pupils sing beautifully both in English and Greek, this is joyful. Their school song, The St Cyprian's Way, is a particularly uplifting opportunity for the community.

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

- The liturgical year is used to shape the prayer life of the school. There are three main faith celebrations as part of this these are; Christmas, Easter and Pentecost including the life of the saints.
- The Easter assembly is the most important event in the school calendar and is well attended, not only by families, but also the wider Greek Orthodox community.
- Prayers are in both Greek and English with many children being able to recite the Our Father in Greek.
- Prayer is a central part of the provision at St Cyprian's. Every opportunity to use prayer as a means of communicating with God is given to children.
- Displays in the corridors throughout the school are dedicated to prayer and encourage children to write personal prayers and offer them in petition or thanksgiving.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good.

- Governors attend assemblies, talk to parents to hear their thoughts and ensure they have links to the parish. As a result of this communication between school, home and parish is strong.
- Governors are supportive of the prayer life of the school. They are pleased that when children leave the school for their next stage in education, that the ability to pray in a meaningful way is a life skill that children take with them.
- The prayer life of the school is extended to the parish; links are meaningful, and long lasting, with pupils continuing their prayer life long after leaving the school.
- Governors are aware that while not all staff are practising the Greek Orthodox faith, there is an expectation that staff support the prayer life of the school and induction processes address this. Teachers accept that it is their duty to be the best they can be in all things through Jesus Christ.
- Prayer is a high priority for governors, leaders and staff.