

JESUIT PUPIL PROFILE

Attentive & Discerning

What is this?

This is a briefing note for staff on the virtues of the Jesuit Pupil Profile that we will be using in school this half term. It is intended to provide a little background to help you.

Pupils in a Jesuit school are growing to be **attentive** to their experience and to their vocation; and **discerning** about the choices they make and the effects of those choices.

Jesuit schools help their pupils grow by promoting the practice of **attentive** reflection and **discerning** decision making: in teaching, in the *examen*, prayer and retreats; and through the practice and example of school leaders and staff.

If being grateful is the starting point in the spirituality of St Ignatius, then being **attentive** to your experience is its foundation. In the months Ignatius spent convalescing from the wounds he received at the battle of Pamplona (May 1521), he began to pay attention to his experience in a very systematic and reflective way.

Sometimes, we wake up and wonder where the years have gone and whether we have made the most of our lives. We ask whether we have made the best choices and given time and energy to the people and things that matter. Being attentive takes practice. It is much easier to allow ourselves to be swept along in the tide of everyday life, from one thing to the next, taking little time to notice anything.

Ignatius tells us that we should take time to notice the big and the small things of each day; we need to be aware of and understand the responses of other people; we need to be attentive to the stirrings in our hearts and to the preoccupations that thread their way through our lives. In this way, we become much more sure-footed in coping with the things that life and other people throw at us.

Once we develop the habit of being attentive, we can begin to discern what is good for us and what is not; and what God calls us to be, and to do (our *vocation*). Being attentive brings the possibility of taking back control of our own lives.

Teaching children the practice of attentiveness is a great gift that we can pass on to them from the Ignatian tradition. Learning to be attentive and reflective will make a big difference to their lives.

The art of **discernment** is perhaps the most distinctive feature of St Ignatius' spirituality. Christians, and good people of all walks of life, have always sought ways to make better decisions with integrity.

How do you know the right thing to do? How do you know the good thing to do? Sometimes it is obvious, but often it is not. Discernment is a way of approaching decisions by being attentive to my lived experience, by noticing the impact my past choices have had on me and others, and then seeking the better way forward. Discernment is about choosing the better over the good.

Is there some way that I can give *greater* glory to God and contribute *more* to the common good? This is the *magis* of Ignatian spirituality – always seeking the ‘more’, the better, that which is deeper, and is more worthwhile.



“God has created me to do him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I have a part in a great work.”

St John Henry Newman (1801-90)



For the Christian, discernment is about taking the time, and making the effort, to notice when

and where God calls. And God does always call. Maybe so gently that we barely notice. In the Lord’s Prayer we say, ‘Thy will be done’ but go off without really believing that God has a will for me. But he does. By being **attentive** and **discerning**, I can discover God’s will and unique calling for me.

Questions for reflection . . .

1. Are opportunities built into the school day/week which allow pupils, and staff, to be **attentive**? Is the *examen* used?
2. Do pupils have opportunities to learn the art of **discernment**?
3. Is the Ignatian practice of reflection and **discernment** used by teachers, school leaders and governors to make important decisions?

loving hopeful
attentive curious
faith-filled learned wise
generous prophetic grateful
eloquent **discerning**
intentional compassionate
truthful active



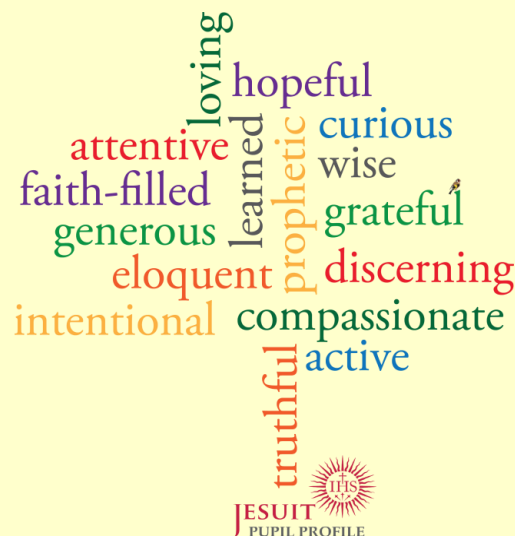
Jesuit Pupil Profile

What is the Jesuit Pupil Profile?

The JPP consists of eight statements, each containing two key virtues or characteristics. These virtues come from the gospels and from the Ignatian spiritual tradition on which Jesuit schools are founded. Many other Catholic schools have seen in the JPP a tool which they can adopt and adapt to articulate their own values and virtues. The values are not, of course, unique to Jesuit or to Catholic schools – these words come from our tradition but are fundamentally human virtues shared by all human beings. They express what it is to be a good person living a virtuous life.

Where does it come from?

The JPP grew out of reflection and work done in the Jesuit schools to try to articulate the values and virtues the schools were aspiring to develop in their pupils. The JPP is what the school proposes to each of its pupils: We think this is what a well-educated and good person who can make a difference to the world looks like. What do you think? What kind of person do you want to be?



How do I use the JPP in the classroom?

The JPP works when teachers and other staff are attentive to and notice pupils' positive behaviour. When a child does or says something that reflects one of the virtues of the JPP, the teacher comments on it (either publically or privately) and, by doing so, encourages and reinforces that behaviour. In this way, young people learn virtue and grow into the kind of people we hope they will be, and God calls them to be.

Why focus on one pair of virtues this half-term?

Schools have found it helpful to focus on one pair of virtues each half term but this must always be done against the background of promoting all the virtues, all the time – don't put being compassionate and loving on hold because you are doing intentional and prophetic this half-term!

Where can I find out more?

There is a booklet which will give you a lot more information about the JPP. It is called *Jesuit Pupil Profile: Virtue and Learning in the Ignatian Tradition*. Your Headteacher or Chaplain will be able to give you a copy. You can also search the Jesuit Institute website: jesuitinstitute.org