



# St Aloysius Catholic Junior School

Aldenham Street, London NW1 1PS

Date of inspection: 4 June 2014

## A. Classroom Religious Education

**What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?**

**Overall Grade 2**

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education (RE) in developing pupils' religious literacy is judged to be good. The school takes the teaching of classroom religious education very seriously and makes great effort to provide all pupils with a good standard of religious education. The head strives at all times to ensure the best for all pupils and is passionately committed to inclusion. He is ably assisted by the deputy head who is also the RE subject leader. Leadership and management is very good overall. All teaching in the school is at least good with some very good lessons also seen. The achievement of the pupils overall is judged to be good and very good in Year 6. Pupils enter the school broadly in line with national averages and leave either at or above the national average therefore progress is judged to be equally good. One very noteworthy feature of this school is that pupils of all abilities, including pupils with special educational needs, and the pupils of other faiths are all very well catered for. Teaching assistants are highly effective in classrooms helping pupils to learn. The school is not yet outstanding because pupil achievement and the quality of teaching across the school are variable in many classes. Monitoring of the quality of teaching in the classroom needs reviewing to ensure greater rigour and consistency of judgements. Behaviour during lessons is mostly very good and pupils are keen to learn in most classes. The school needs to look at its ICT provision and ensure that there is greater creativity offered during lessons and more opportunities for independent research. The school self-evaluation is a good and thorough document and identifies some key areas for school improvement. An experienced governing body are kept well informed and have the expertise to ensure that the school continues to prosper.

## B. The Catholic life of the school

**What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?**

**Overall Grade 1\***

The Catholic life of the school is quite simply outstanding in all key areas. This is because the head, staff and governors have a shared vision of what they want for the school. The head is greatly valued and respected by the whole school community. The prayer and worship seen, enhanced by outstanding music provision, is of a very high order. Pupils share with great pride and knowledge their work on the Common Good and social justice and are very well informed. The UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools initiative (RRS) has clearly had a major impact in this area. Parents of all faiths are full of praise and gratitude for the work of the school and are justifiably proud that their children attend this Catholic school. Commitment to full inclusion for every pupil is quite outstanding and in many ways exemplary. The school faces major challenges in developing the Catholic life of the school and is doing a very fine and praiseworthy job in rising to meet these challenges and promoting the Catholic life of the school for all its pupils in such an effective manner.

## Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent 1 day in school, visited 8 lessons and 1 assembly, and carried out 5 interviews 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.

The Inspection of St Aloysius was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

## Inspection Team

Mr Sean Flood	Lead Inspector
Mrs Lisa Barton	Associate Inspector

## Description of School

The school is a two form entry Catholic Junior school in the Local Authority of Camden and the locality of Somers Town. The school serves the parish of St Aloysius' Catholic Church, Somers Town and the area formerly covered by St Anne's, Laxton Place. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 66%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 14% and from other or no Faiths declared is 20%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 75%.

There are 228 pupils on roll, and 8 pupils with a statement of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is also well above average. There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals. 65% of pupils receive the Pupil Premium. The mission statement of the school states: "Through Jesus we learn, love and grow together".

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DFE Number:	202 3400
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Headteacher:	Mr J O'Shea
Chair of Governors:	Mrs M Moran

Date of previous inspection:	23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2008
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<b>Key for inspection grades:</b>	<i>Grade 1*</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
	<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Very Good</i>
	<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Good</i>
	<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Requires improvement</i>
	<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Causing Concern</i>

## **A. Classroom Religious Education**

*How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?*

### **What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?**

The key issue highlighted in the previous inspection has been fully addressed. The Mission Statement is now very well known by all pupils and underpins the work in the classrooms. Other significant improvements have been the greater focus on scripture and investment in new bibles for every class. The school has also introduced the use of the Hebrew language to further enhance pupil's religious knowledge.

### **How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?**

#### **Grade 1**

The content of the religious education curriculum fully meets the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. The curriculum is well planned for by the religious education leadership team. The school uses the units of work provided by Margaret Carswell as its core curriculum. There is some evidence to show creativity in the teaching and learning of RE and also some evidence to show the use of ICT in the curriculum but this needs to be developed further. Pupils are being well taught about other faiths, especially Judaism in a comprehensive and imaginative manner. The school has invested heavily in the last few years in a wide range of resources linked to the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*, this ensures that there is a three year cycle of learning which provides opportunities for progression across the key stages. The structure, planning and content of this school's religious education curriculum and in lessons, are mostly very good and include links to the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools initiative (RRS).

### **Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education**

#### **Grade 2**

Pupil achievement overall is at least good in every class with some very good achievement seen amongst the older pupils in the school. Achievement overall is variable ranging from good to very good. It is not yet outstanding because in some classes tasks do not always challenge groups of pupils appropriately. Where it is very good pupils show a real understanding and knowledge of, for example, Lent, and are given time to write independently. The teaching of other faiths, especially Judaism, was of high standard in all classes. ICT was seen in the school but is not being widely used to aid pupils' research and creativity. Targets are being set and some pupils are benefitting from this while others are less clear of their tasks and unsure of what the key words they have learnt actually mean. Behaviour of pupils during lessons is mostly very good and the school has effective systems in place to deal with any low level disruption. Pupil enthusiasm and engagement for learning during lessons is mostly good and was especially so when the work was well matched to the pupils' abilities or stimulated their creativity, such as when art was very well used in two Year 4 lessons. Presentation of work is quite good in most classes and very good in Year 6. Displays seen in classrooms and around the school are of a good standard and every class has a prayer focus area. Pupils' work is assessed termly using the National Levels of Attainment. The school has engaged with other schools in Camden in moderating pupil attainment and the subject leader has attended diocesan moderation. Marking and feedback of pupils' work is good in almost all classes. Pupils enter the school broadly in line with national averages and leave in Year 6 achieving generally above the

national average, therefore progress is deemed to be good in the school. The initial work seen at the start of the year in Year 3 on the topic of Creation was very neatly presented and was of a high standard. Steady progress in every year is evident by work scrutiny and by talking to the pupils about their use of, and understanding of Scripture. Progress is especially good in Year 6. The achievement, standards and progress of those large numbers of pupils who are not Catholic is equally good or even very good and this is a commendable aspect of this school.

## **The quality of teaching**

### **Grade 2**

The quality of teaching across the school is at least good in every class with some very good aspects also evident in several classes. Teaching is at its best when tasks set are challenging for all pupils not just the higher ability pupils. Teachers clearly enjoy teaching religious education and there was mostly a real enthusiasm for the subject evident among all teaching staff. Most staff did use interactive whiteboards to focus pupil's attention but there was very little other use of ICT seen to further capture pupils' imagination and enhance creative learning or aid research. The best lessons seen used art and music very well, such as in one Year 3 class, both Year 4 classes and in one Year 6 class. Some teachers provided very good opportunities for reflection for the pupils by linking the work to the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools initiative (RRS). The behaviour and engagement of pupils in some hour long lessons was of a very high order and pupils were on task for almost the whole time and learning was mostly good. In other lessons seen, pupil response was negligible and engagement equally so because the tasks set were either too ambitious or equally too mundane, such as copying out sentences. The subject leader monitors quality of classroom teaching once a year and the senior management team monitor RE work termly. The quality of teaching is not yet outstanding because the direct monitoring of the quality of teaching in the classroom is not yet developed sufficiently and needs to be reviewed to ensure greater rigour of judgements. Marking is developing very well across the school and is being used effectively to help pupils understand how to improve their work in a wide range of classes. For example in Year 6 classes pupils are now responding to teachers' comments and marking. This is a noteworthy area that the school has developed very well this year. Teaching and learning assistants were very effective in nearly all lessons seen and played a vital role in the school to help the pupils focus, behave appropriately and learn. A large number of pupils with special needs are being very well supported in all years and this is a major strength of the school. Marking is mostly thorough and has clearly developed very well this academic year and is now of a good quality. A small number of parents in a questionnaire asked for extra homework to be provided in religious education. The school does provide homework and is keen to provide even greater opportunities in the future.

## **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education**

### **Grade 1**

The leadership and management of religious education is very good. The headteacher is very highly regarded and respected by the local community of Somers Town. His vision and passion drives the school forward and this was evident in a whole school assembly seen. He clearly displays a genuine commitment to the educational mission of teaching the Catholic faith. He is being well supported by a keen and enthusiastic religious education subject leader who is also the deputy head. The governing body has very good capacity to support the school in its educational mission and secure school improvement. Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because the school's monitoring of the achievement of pupils and especially the quality of teaching needs to be developed further to ensure consistency and best practice. This is a key area for development. There are a wide range of resources within the school and in all classes and the school invests heavily in religious

education resources such as Bibles. The school self-evaluation document is mostly good and thorough and identifies some of the key areas for development within the school.

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

- Ensure that the monitoring of the quality of teaching in the classroom itself is conducted more frequently to help more teachers move towards outstanding.
- Develop the use of ICT more in the school and encourage greater opportunities for independent research and creativity in general in the teaching of religious education.

## **B. The Catholic life of the school**

*How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?*

### **What has improved since the last inspection?**

The key issue identified in this area during the last inspection about seeking the views of parents and carers has been very well addressed and surveys and questionnaires are a regular feature of school life.

### **The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget**

**Grade I\***

10% of curriculum time is devoted to the teaching of religious education in this school. This is planned and monitored for compliance by the headteacher and religious education subject leader. The school views religious education as a core subject in the curriculum and as such, time, money and resources are given in accordance with this high status. A very generous annual budget is allocated to provide extra resources. Teachers have good subject knowledge of religious education in accordance with the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* for England and Wales. Teachers new to the school are well supported in learning about the teaching of religious education and induction processes and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities are plentiful. The accommodation is currently being refurbished and is mostly of a good standard. Displays and prayer corners are also of a good quality and the school clearly places a high emphasis on the Catholic education and Catholic life of the school.

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

**Grade I\***

Prayer and worship in the school is outstanding. The quality of worship is greatly helped by the music provision which is of a very high order. In one shared assembly three pupils signed songs and prayers and the whole school were keen and enthusiastic participants and sang with gusto. Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school and this area is given high prominence. Masses are celebrated regularly in the local parish Church and shared with the infant school. The pupils of the school play an active part in these Masses by, for example reading, in the Offertory Procession and singing. All important events in the Liturgical Year are celebrated such as recently during Lent the Parish Priest led a Reconciliation Service for each class in the school. At Easter and Christmas the children perform plays and conduct diverse liturgies in recognition of the season. School prayers are said every day and in whole school collective worship. Assemblies take place in a small hall but are vibrant and reverent at the same time with eager pupil participation. Classes have books of prayers composed by the children themselves and all classes have prayer areas. The school has identified for future development the idea of a Chaplaincy Group to give pupils further opportunities to plan and lead worship. Prayer is well established at all levels in the school and is a major strength of this school.

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

**Grade I\***

The pupils have a very clear understanding of their call to service through the Gospel and are very eager and keen to discuss all the good works that they do both at home and in the wider world. There are many opportunities to serve in the school through for example the Playground Buddy team. Another team called the Green Team care for the environment and the School Councillors are very proud of their own roles within the school. In a meeting with a group of Year 5 and 6 the pupils were really enthusiastic to share and articulate all that they do. They understood the theology and call of both Jesus and Pope Francis to be of service to those less fortunate in the world. Respect for all diverse cultural backgrounds is well embedded within the school. The talents of all pupils including those with special educational needs are recognised and all pupils are encouraged to share these talents to aid their human flourishing. Leadership opportunities are plentiful and some of the Year 6 pupils in an interview were very articulate and proud to share their work within the school. Catholic social teaching is well established, for example linking to Fairtrade and also links very well to the RRS initiative. The school supports a wide range of diocesan, national charities and also global Catholic charities. There is a long-term sustainable project to link together with two schools in Kenya which the pupils are very aware of. The school also supports among others the NSPCC, Marie Curie Cancer Trust, the Catholic Childrens' Society and CAFOD. The school curriculum and planning reflect the commitment to the Common Good and this area is judged to be outstanding. For the future the school would like to develop a Justice and Peace group

## **Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf;**

**Grade I**

The school is very committed to developing its role as a diocesan school. Partnerships at all level are broad and sustainable. The diocesan adviser is a regular visitor to the school and the subject leader attends all relevant diocesan religious education training courses. The school is a development partner for St. Mary's College thereby encouraging the Catholic teachers of the future and also giving them the opportunity to teach in the inner city. The school has strong links with neighbouring Catholic schools both primary and secondary, and with its local infant school. There are also fruitful links with Catholic and non-Catholic schools outside of London such as a school in Andover, Hampshire and another in Berkhamstead. The pupils attend the Good Shepherd Mass and the Carol Service organised by the Catholic Children's Society as well as other liturgies and services within the Diocese of Westminster. Links with parents are also very strong and the recent questionnaires showed that the vast majority of parents are very pleased indeed that their children attend this Catholic school. They all greatly value the drive and commitment of the headteacher in seeking school improvement. Links with the local parish are also very strong and the new parish priest is looking to develop ever closer ties in the near future. The Wednesday Word is distributed to parents in order to encourage them to further promote their children's involvement with the Mass. Partnerships are strong and the school is constantly seeking ways to further enhance these links.

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

**Grade I\***

The headteacher has a strong vision of where he wants the school to be. His commitment, especially to inclusion, is very laudable and is highly successful in this multi-faith school where 34% of the pupils are not Catholic. All children including those with special needs are being very well cared for and the curriculum is fully accessible to all pupils. Vulnerable groups of pupils are carefully tracked and are also making good progress in developing their experience of Catholic life. Parents of pupils who are not Catholic recognise the positive impact that the school makes on their children's spiritual and moral development. The head is very well assisted by his deputy who is also the religious education subject leader. Staff development opportunities are plentiful all new staff receive good guidance, care and support. The school's Mission Statement has been modified and is now known, as was evidenced by every pupil spoken to during this inspection. The monitoring of the Catholic life of the school is very good and has identified areas for improvement and implemented these where required. Governors are very experienced and are kept well informed about all aspects of the Catholic life of the school and share the head's vision of Catholicity being at the centre of school life. Because of this shared and living culture evident within the school the effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is judged to be outstanding.

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

- Implement the school's own key aspiration identified to establish a Justice and Peace group to further serve the Common Good and enable pupils to further engage in action for social justice.
- Establish a Chaplaincy group to further enhance the prayer and worship in the school.