



Diocese of Westminster

INSPECTION REPORT

St Aloysius Catholic Junior School

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DCSF Number: 202/3400

Headteacher : Mr Jim O'Shea

Chair of Governors: Mrs Margaret Moran

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: 23rd September 2008
Date of previous inspection: 12th January 2004

Reporting Inspector: Mrs Pamela Brannigan

Description of School

St Aloysius is a two form entry junior school in Somers Town in the London borough of Camden. The school serves the parish of St Aloysius from which most Catholic pupils come and the adjacent parish of St Anne's. There are currently 226 pupils on roll of whom 94% are baptised Catholics. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is, at 33%, well above the national average. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and a majority have English as an additional language. Many are at an early stage of language acquisition. There are 12 teachers in the school of whom 9 (75%) are Catholics. Five teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS) qualification or equivalent. The school's mission statement informs the life of the school and is prominent in the entrance area. A wide range of extra-curricular activities including a breakfast club and after school club are available for pupils. The school has the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards and Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St Aloysius is an outstanding Catholic school. Pupils make good progress, teaching is very good and assessment is thorough. Religious education is at the heart of the curriculum and is well planned, monitored and evaluated. Prayer and worship underpin the Catholic life of the school. Pupil behaviour is very good. Pupils and parents speak highly of their school and value the sense of being part of a Christian community where people care for each other. Spiritual, moral and social development is well addressed through religious education and other curriculum areas and permeates the wider life of the school. A range of charities including the Catholic Children's Society, CAFOD, Jeans for Genes, Mission Together and Shelter are supported throughout the year. The headteacher leads the school very well and has shared his vision with everyone in the school. He is very ably supported by his deputy, senior leadership team which includes the religious education subject leader, all staff and governors.

Grade 1

Improvement since the last inspection

Issues from the last Section 23 inspection in 2004 have been very well addressed through a thorough action plan. Pupils are now challenged and inspired more by the inclusion of an extensive range of differentiated tasks. All relevant people are now included in the self-evaluation process and greater consideration is given to the areas for development. ICT is now used extensively to support the religious education curriculum. Pupils needing extra support are identified at an early stage and given the help they need to achieve their potential. The headteacher and religious education subject leader share the responsibility for monitoring lessons each term to ensure high standards are maintained. In addition, the subject leader monitors books and planning on a regular basis. There is much evidence that the school constantly strives for improvement and places a strong emphasis on staff development at all levels.

Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

The school has an excellent capacity for improvement and development. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection and there is much evidence of shared good practice and support for new teachers. The headteacher has instigated developments in the wider life of the school which focus on the learning process. He has reinforced a shared vision for improvement and fostered a culture of teamwork which has led to high staff morale. All staff and governors are fully committed to maintaining and developing the wider life of the school. All curriculum areas are reviewed annually as part of the school's self-evaluation process. Staff and governors show a strong commitment to improvement and demonstrate a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school has been able to appoint good Catholic teachers in recent years and there is a stable staff. The religious education budget is generous and resources are good. New staff, including teaching assistants, are encouraged to undertake relevant training. The school places a high emphasis on induction. The self-evaluation documentation is up to date and accurate.

Grade 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the mission statement is better known and understood by the whole school community.
- Include opportunities for parents to comment on the Catholic life of the school in the annual questionnaire to give greater opportunities for views to be expressed.

The Catholic Life of the School

Leadership and Management

The school is very well managed. The headteacher demonstrates excellent leadership of a Catholic community and is ably supported by his deputy, the senior leadership team and all staff. The governing body includes members who know the community really well, have a wide range of expertise and who understand their role in promoting the Catholic identity of the school. Governors frequently spend time in school, visiting classes, attending assemblies and liaising with staff. They participate in diocesan and local authority training and are also invited to relevant staff training. A recent joint INSET day with staff, some governors and the staff of St Aloysius Infant School had spirituality as the focus. The priest from St Aloysius parish is on the governing body, acts as chaplain and visits the school every week for class masses. The religious education subject leader regularly attends governors' meetings to inform members of new developments. Governors are involved in the self evaluation process and monitor the Catholic life of the school. There is a good programme of induction for new governors. High expectations are part of the ethos of the school and there is a clear vision for good quality care and education which is shared by everyone. Pastoral care is a strength of the school and the provision of before and after school clubs and many sporting opportunities is highly valued by the whole community. Spiritual and moral development is promoted by all staff. Good relationships with home and parishes are promoted effectively through meetings, newsletters, questionnaires and invitations to school and parish events.

Grade 1

The Prayer Life of the School

Pupils are provided with very many opportunities to develop in the understanding and growth of their faith. Prayer and worship are integral to the life of the school and pupils are given time for meditation and reflection. Pupils are also given opportunities to write their own prayers and

examples were seen during the inspection. School and parish work very closely on sacramental preparation which takes place in the school building. Families are invited to join pupils for weekly class masses in school and other liturgies and celebrations throughout the year. On special feast days there is a joint celebration of mass in the parish church with St Aloysius Infant School. Many altar servers come from the school and pupils appreciate the strong links between home, school and parish. A policy for prayer and liturgy forms part of the religious education documentation and assemblies are of a very high quality often enhanced by gospel readings, singing, music and drama. During the inspection a powerful assembly led by the headteacher celebrated the school's mission statement, 'By looking to Christ as our model our mission is to create a loving and caring Christian community embracing all members of our school and parish in which we seek to share our experience of the Catholic faith thus preparing the children for active Christian life.' The assembly explored the concept of 'mission' through singing, readings, prayer and music. Singing is of a very high standard and, aided by the school choir, enhances the experience of worship for the community. Each class has a beautiful prayer table with age appropriate bibles, artefacts and pictures. High quality display boards using pupils' prayers and reflections are prominent throughout the school.

Grade 1

How effectively does the school promote community cohesion?

Community cohesion is considered part of the school's Christian vision. This vision is widely shared and understood by the whole community which is welcoming and fosters a sense of belonging. Leaders promote respect for difference, value diversity and ensure equal opportunities for all regardless of background. Termly workshops in the core subjects enable parents to understand and support the school and the headteacher meets parents of year 2 pupils prior to their children entering the school. The wide range of pupils' community backgrounds is celebrated by the school during International Evening, Black History Month and Refugee week as well as by invitations to professionals to lead assemblies. Pupils are able to express their identity with pride and demonstrate concern for the weak and vulnerable within and beyond their own community. There are close links with other local schools including St Aloysius Infant School and the secondary schools to which most pupils transfer at the end of Key Stage 2. St Aloysius' choir has performed at the Courts of Justice and St Pancras station at the arrival of the first Eurostar. The school takes part annually in the local Business Challenge and won the award in 2007. The school has CVA volunteers from two local businesses providing extra reading support to pupils who will benefit. Parishioners also assist in this area which has resulted in improved levels of reading. Partnership with the parish is strong, particularly through sacramental preparation, and the school premises have been used recently for the Camden Spring Festival of Learning which involved pupils from other local schools. The range of extra-curricular activities recognises the variety of interests and abilities in the whole school family.

Grade 1

Religious Education

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education

Good progress is made by most pupils and by the end of Year 6 standards generally meet and sometimes exceed diocesan expectations. Work is of a high quality and it is evident that at least 10% of curriculum time is spent on religious education. Pupils' workbooks show evidence of coverage, differentiation and a wide range of activities. Written work is generally well presented and marking is positive with areas for development highlighted. The assessment process is well developed and enables staff to plan effectively. The school is using the new levels of attainment

to level, target and plan ahead to meet the needs of individual children in religious education. The good quality of education and focus on assessment and tracking ensures that standards are likely to improve further. The spiritual development of pupils is given a high priority and is rooted in the teachings and beliefs of the Catholic Church. Workbooks and conversations with pupils indicate that there are many opportunities for reflection on the links between the life and teachings of Jesus and their own lives. Older pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of liturgy and the structure of the mass. Behaviour is of a high standard and pupils show respect for each other and themselves. They value the opportunities given through the School Council, Monitors, Playground Friends and other school systems to make a positive contribution to the life and well being of the whole community. The school provides a good atmosphere for social and moral education and conversations with pupils indicate that this has an impact on behaviour and attitudes demonstrated by a strong sense of service. Parents and families are given opportunities to become involved in their children's religious education through homework, newsletters, consultation meetings and annual questionnaires.

Grade 2

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. The lessons observed during the inspection were outstanding or good and enabled pupils to engage in interesting and challenging tasks. One lesson on the theme of understanding what God is like enabled pupils to reflect on the different occasions when they see God. They explored this by reflecting on a gospel reading and, led by their teacher and teaching assistant, identified ways in which God shows his love for us. Another lesson used the psalms as an aid to help pupils understand that God is always present in our lives. Again, the lead given by the teacher and teaching assistant helped the children to reflect on the occasions when we recognise that God is always with us. In the lessons observed teaching assistants were very well used and many cross curricular links were evident. Teachers have high expectations and pupils respond with enthusiasm. Written work is generally good and well presented. Homework is used to develop independent study skills and aid new learning. Assessment is effective and marking is positive and affirming. Parents and carers are sent regular newsletters with details of the curriculum and suggestions for helping their children. Parents spoken to expressed a high level of satisfaction with the religious education provided by the school and the very good level of communication offered by all members of staff.

Grade 2

Quality of the Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. At least 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education which follows the 'Here I Am' programme. All staff work very hard to ensure the subject has a high priority. Planning is very good and shows evidence that teachers are building on prior attainment and experiences. ICT is used very well and the school has a good range of resources in this area. Other faiths are taught well and pupils have visited places of interest including the Jewish Museum. During 'Other Faiths' week pupils are encouraged to share their knowledge of community religions with each other. The curriculum supports the personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and they are encouraged to use their talents to benefit the school and each other. The good quality of assemblies, liturgies, masses and sacramental preparation all help pupils to understand and value their faith. Attendance at the Westminster 'Good Shepherd Mass' and the Carol Concert at the Cathedral enable pupils to see themselves as members of the wider church. All staff are encouraged and enabled to attend diocesan training and any other training which supports the religious education curriculum.

Grade 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education

There is outstanding leadership and management of religious education. The subject leader is experienced, effective and hardworking. The headteacher and senior leadership team support her and give a high priority to the subject. They ensure high standards are maintained and new staff well supported. Planning, lessons and workbooks are monitored. The subject leader works closely with the local parish to ensure a wide range of appropriate liturgies involving pupils is a feature of school life. She supports staff by demonstration lessons and leads INSET sessions. She supports the governing body; most recently to aid their understanding of the new assessment materials. The religious education governor is parish priest of St Aloysius and liaises closely with the school. He is frequently used as a resource in the delivery of religious education and gives the school a great deal of support. All staff are fully committed to the highest standards in religious education.

Grade 1