



# Diocese of Westminster

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## St Aloysius College

30 Hornsey Lane, London N6 5LY

Telephone: 020 7561 7800

e-mail address: enquiries@sta.islington.sch.uk

DFE Number: 206/4651

URN Number: 100459

Headteacher: Mr T Mannion

Chair of Governors: Mr A Ollennu

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**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**

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Date of inspection: 4-5 July 2012

Date of previous inspection: 7-8 November 2006

Reporting Inspector: Mr P Ward

## Introduction

The inspector would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspector spent two days in school, visited five lessons and two assemblies, and carried out sixteen interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, 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 College, Highgate was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspector is appointed by 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.

## Description of School

The school is a six form entry in the London Borough of Islington and the locality of Highgate. The school serves the parishes of St Joseph, Highgate and St Gabriel Archway and the Islington Deanery. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 69%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 18% and from other Faiths 13%.

There are 1012 pupils on roll, with 22 pupils with statements 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 well above average. There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals.

### Key for inspection grades.

*Grade 1\*: Outstanding;*  
*Grade 1: Very Good;*  
*Grade 2: Good;*  
*Grade 3: Satisfactory;*  
*Grade 4: Causing Concern..*

## **A. Curriculum 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?*

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

**Grade [1]**

The Religious Education scheme of work is very well matched to the Curriculum Directory in all key stages. In Key Stage 3 the curriculum is based on 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' series of textbooks, adapted in places to address topics of particular concern to the student community and ensure very good coverage of the Curriculum Directory. For example, in Year 8 pupils study significant Christian denominations in England, and in Year 9 study the history of the Catholic Church in England. In Key Stage 4 pupils are prepared for the Edexcel Catholic Christianity GCSE Religious Studies papers, but the curriculum is adapted when appropriate. During the Inspection pupils were exploring the links between religious belief and the Olympic and Paralympic values as part of the 'Release Peace' programme. Sixth Form General Religious Education is assessed by means of a National Open College Network qualification. GCE Advanced Level Religious Studies will be introduced in September 2012.

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

**Grade [1]**

Progress and attainment in religious education is very good. School data shows that at Key Stage 3 pupil progress and attainment is comparable to that in English. In Key Stage 4 there has been a steady improvement and narrowing of the gap with English over the last five years. Year 10 GCSE module tests in 2011 indicate that both these trends will continue in 2012. General Religious Education attainment is very good. Pupils are increasingly aware of the National Levels of Attainment and GCSE grade requirements and strive to make use of them to improve their learning. Most pupils make very good progress both in terms of Levels and GCSE grades and in religious literacy.

**The quality of teaching**

**Grade [1]**

As a result of teaching that is generally very good and often outstanding, most pupils are making very good progress. Teachers display very good subject knowledge and confidence, and their creative approaches to engage the individual needs of pupils promote their learning. Teaching consistently challenges pupils' knowledge and understanding, which is regularly checked during a lesson. Teachers work hard to encourage pupils to take personal responsibility for their learning. Outstanding lessons are very well planned and resourced, clearly and accessibly taught at a good pace with a variety of activities, which enables pupils to reflect spirituality and think ethically and theologically. This was demonstrated when Year 10 pupils reflected on the significance of "the tree in the middle of the garden"[Gn3]. All lessons are based on a clear scheme of work which includes powerpoint displays. Classroom displays, including celebrations of pupils' work, contribute to the positive learning environment. Pupils' work is regularly assessed with feedback so that pupils know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve.

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

**Grade [1]**

The leadership of the subject is very good. There is a clear and informed vision and lively commitment at all levels to the promotion of Religious Education as part of the educational mission of the Church. Leadership and management of the specialist staff team are very effective. There is a strong collegial approach to developing resources and improving assessment for learning and teaching in order to promote pupil learning. Formal and informal lesson observations are a particular feature. Professional development is encouraged. All teachers contribute to the comprehensive scheme of work with its appropriate resources, including video clips and they respond positively to the freedom to adapt them to best suit the particular needs of the pupils they teach.

## **What has improved in curriculum religious education since the last inspection and what should the school do to further improve in curriculum religious education?**

There has been considerable development in Religious Education since the last Inspection and the action points of the previous Inspection Report that relate to Curriculum Religious Education have been addressed. The schemes of work in Years 7 and 8 has been revised in the light of the new edition of the textbook used, and the new modified Year 9 scheme will be implemented in September 2012. GCSE Religious Studies papers have been reviewed and a new scheme of work adopted for the new Sixth Form. National Levels of Attainment have been embedded in Years 7-9 and staff and pupils understand and use them with confidence. Assessment strategies have also been reviewed and revised for GCSE in Years 10-11. Reliable assessment data has facilitated effective implementation of pupil tracking. Departmental self-evaluation has also been introduced and helped drive these and other developments.

To sustain the rate of improvement the school should broaden the remit of the earlier action point and establish a process of rigorous self-evaluation of Curriculum Religious Education in order to maximize the achievement of each pupil.

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

**Overall Grade: [1]**

The overall efficiency of religious education is very good in the following ways:

- Pupils attainment in religious education is very good and they are increasingly well aware of the Levels of Attainment and GCSE Religious Studies grades and how they might make progress;
- Teaching is very good and most pupils are making very good progress due to the high expectation of staff;
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge which enables them to make it accessible to pupils of different abilities;
- Staff work collaboratively, encouraged by a common vision and mutually supportive systems and procedures;
- The leadership of the subject is very good with the subject leader displaying excellent management skills in planning and supporting staff and encouraging their continued professional development;
- The completed departmental self-evaluation demonstrates an awareness and knowledge of the school's curriculum religious education;
- The centrality and significance of religious education in the life of the school is evidenced by the quality of the leadership of the subject, the commitment to high standards and the enthusiasm and motivation of all staff.

## **B. The school as a Catholic Community**

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

### **The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum - time, resources, budget**

**Grade [1]**

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum is very good in that:

- it receives the 10% curriculum time at K.S.4 and 5% at K.S.5 as required by the Bishops' Conference and as close to that requirement as is possible in KS3 with timetabled lessons augmented by 'drop-down' days; the Governing Body is aware that curriculum time in K.S.3 is below that required by the Bishop's Conference and the situation is kept under active review;
- it has a very good budget in line with the curriculum present funding rate of other Core subjects;
- staff allocation and accommodation are very good with the three specialist teachers each having his/her own classroom;
- Governors and leadership team offer strong support in developing and reviewing the quality of religious education and are actively involved in its development. The link Governor has good links with the department and regularly attends its meetings.

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

**Grade [1\*]**

Prayer and worship are absolutely central to the life of the school. Every day begins with pupils participating in prayer either in assembly or tutor group. All lessons pause at midday when staff lead pupils in saying the Angelus. During the Inspection a pupil loaned his school diary, which contained the Angelus, to the Inspector. Mass is celebrated regularly at key points in the school year. Parents accept invitations to attend such occasions as the Year 7 Mass of Welcome. Holy days of obligation are marked by school Mass in the local parish church which is also attended by parishioners. The sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated in Advent and Lent. Adjacent to the hall is the school Chapel where an increasing number of pupils attend weekly prayer and reflection during the lunch break, led by the chaplain. During the Inspection the focus for this reflection was the rosary, and the focus changes to reflect the liturgical cycle. Another example of pupil engagement is that during the year four Year 11 pupils were commissioned as Eucharistic Ministers and participated in school Masses. One spoke eloquently to the Inspector of the impact of contributing on Ash Wednesday. The school strives to support the faith development of all members of its community. Working with the Religious Education department, the chaplain is developing a well-planned and wide range of opportunities for pupils to experience the richness of Catholic prayer and worship in harmony with the liturgical year.

Staff briefing begins with prayer. Muslim pupils and staff are very appreciative of the provision made that allows them to celebrate Friday Prayers in the headteacher's office, and of the privilege of attending Mass and of other opportunities to grow in faith.

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

**Grade [I\*]**

The school's commitment to action for social justice is outstanding. Pupils actively engage in acts of service and understand the theology underpinning their actions. School systems and provision encourage respect for and support every member of the diverse school community. Pupils feel safe and valued and say that there is no bullying or discrimination. Staff are pro-active in supporting pupils, for example, by their presence in the local community, including at bus stops, to ensure their safety at the start and end of the day, and facilitating attendance by maintaining close relations with parents and carers. In school, the Learning Support Centre is a valuable and greatly appreciated facility, open to all. The school's mission statement, reflecting the tradition of St John Baptiste de la Salle, "encourages students to respect and support others" is lived out in many ways. In school, one example is being a reading buddy. Locally helping in various schemes, singing carols in the Whittington Hospital and working to set up Safe Havens in Archway illustrate the wide scope. Funds are also raised for a wide range of community and Church projects at home and abroad, particularly during Advent and Lent. A new initiative, rooted in the established prayer group, which engages pupils in contemporary moral issues, is participating in London Citizens.

**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\*]**

Partnership and collaboration underpins the school's self-understanding and its way of working with parents and carers, the local parish and the diocese. The school works closely with parents and carers in their common educational endeavour. They are invited to a range of school events, including Mass and social events, and over 90% regularly attend meetings with teachers. There are excellent relations with the local parish, St Joseph Highgate, and significant and growing links with nearby St Gabriel Archway, where a joint choir with Mount Carmel Technology College, sings. Outreach support to six local Catholic primary schools is another example of partnership working. The school works in partnership with its Diocesan Adviser and staff at all levels regularly participate in and contribute to deanery and diocesan events and professional development.

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

**Grade [I\*]**

The school's leadership at all levels is committed to the Church's mission in Education. The Catholic vision of the school is manifest to all through its values, structures and procedures. This was demonstrated in an outstanding fashion during the Inspection when it was learned that the son of a staff member had been very seriously injured while serving in Afghanistan. The care and concern shown by the headteacher and senior staff as the news broke, was exemplary. The next day pupils and staff were informed and all prayed for the soldier and his family at morning prayer and at the Angelus, and by the end of the day pupils and staff had spontaneously committed to providing significant financial support to the family. The school clearly proclaims its Catholic character with a cross and statue in the entrance area and crucifixes and posters throughout the school. The school constantly reflects upon its achievements, and its self-evaluation is a rigorous review of all aspects of its Catholic life that informs future strategy. Governors share the school's understanding of and vision for Catholic education and make a significant contribution to the work and the Catholic character of the school. They employ their considerable expertise and knowledge to appropriately challenge and support the leadership of the school with a vision of discipleship for life.

**What has improved since the last inspection and what should the school do to further develop the Catholic life of the school?**

There has been considerable development in the Catholic life of the school since the last Inspection. The action point of the previous Inspection Report relating to the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural cross-curriculum provision have been addressed. A school Chapel was included in the recently capital building project. The school chaplain appointed at the beginning of the year has re-introduced a retreat programme for Year 7 and will be extended to all year groups next year. Curriculum time devoted to Religious Education in Key Stage 3 continues to fall short of that required by the Bishops' Conference and Curriculum Directory.

**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 overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school is very good with several outstanding features because:

- Religious education is valued as central to the core of the curriculum and significant to the life of the school as it seeks to implement fully the Bishops' Conference requirements for the allocation of curriculum time; resources, staffing and accommodation are very good and in line with the amount of curriculum time;
- Worship and prayer are at the heart of school life and offer pupils wide experiences of the richness of the Catholic tradition; the celebration of the Eucharist and other sacramental celebrations are offered at key times of the school year; provision for prayer and opportunities for spiritual development for those of other religions is admirable.
- Links with parents, parishes and Diocese are of a high order to demonstrate the school's commitment to partnership and also express its clear identity as a Catholic school within the Diocese;
- The leadership of the school reveals a vision of education that inspires and influences every aspect and dimension of the school's life with a Christian perspective. Governors make a highly significant contribution to the work and Catholic dimension of the school. They provide confident high levels of challenge to religious education and discharge their responsibilities with expertise and energy.
- Leadership demonstrates a very strong vision of Catholic education and ensures that all aspects of school life are inspired by this belief. Governors employ their very good expertise for the good of the school and contribute significantly to the school's vision of itself as a Catholic school. They are fully involved in developing and enhancing religious education.