

Report of the Denominational (Section 48) Inspection of
Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

St Alban's Catholic Primary School

DfES No: 873 3360

URN: 110841

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia

Chair of Governors: Mr Mark Broadbent

Headteacher: Mr Joe McCrossan

Denominational Inspector: Mrs Marion Betts

Date of Inspection: 9th July 2010

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

St Alban's Catholic School is a one form entry primary school for pupils from 4 to 11 years. There are 213 pupils on roll, 96% of whom are Catholic. The school which is located in the city centre, serves the parishes of Our Lady and English Martyrs and St Philip Howard. It is maintained by Cambridgeshire Education Authority. The school receives pupils from a range of social backgrounds, with a significant number from advantaged professional families. The school population has pupils from a diverse range of minority ethnic backgrounds and most speak English fluently.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL.

Grade: 1

St Albans' School is an outstanding Catholic school. The extremely strong Catholic identity permeates the daily life of the school. The committed leadership of the headteacher and governors is instrumental in effectively promoting a strong spiritual purpose and developing the Catholic ethos. Prayer and worship are of pivotal importance in the school's life. Staff are committed to the very high profile given to religious education.

Relationships within the school are very good and reflect Christian respect and concern for others. Staff create an environment where pupils are respected, listened to and where learning is fun. Pupils are very proud of the school and appreciative of the numerous enrichment opportunities. The pupils' personal, spiritual and moral development is outstanding and this is reflected in their behaviour and positive attitudes. A pupil explained "The school is filled with love and everyone is happy here". Very good progress is made by pupils in religious education.

The self evaluation of the school is accurate and comprehensive. The headteacher has a good overall view of the school's strengths and development needs. The school is rigorous in its pursuit of the best possible Catholic education for its pupils. The development issues from the last inspection have been fully addressed and the school has continued to improve. The school regularly seeks the views of staff, parents and pupils on all aspects of their Catholic vision. All staff are committed to the success of the school and are willing to improve their skills through training opportunities. The school has a very good capacity to improve.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

- Devise a child friendly phrase to accompany the school's mission statement so that pupils gain an understanding of the school's core purpose.
- To further develop RE assessment to ensure consistency of judgements by moderating work across the school and to record the criteria by which the judgement was achieved.

PUPILS. How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups. Grade 1

The extent to which pupils benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. Pupils display respect towards each other and to adults. They willingly undertake responsibilities and show concern for the well-being of others, the older pupils acting as buddies to the younger ones. Pupils value the real sense of community created within their school, especially when demonstrating their skills and celebrating their successes with each other. Pupils' achievements are recognised, praised and valued. Pupils praise the friendly, caring attitude of the teachers. Their views and ideas are sought and taken into account through the School Council. They appreciate the variety of enrichment activities of clubs and trips provided for them. These effectively stimulate pupils' personal growth.

Pupils respond very well to the prayer life of the school. They understand the importance of prayer and participate with ease and respect. They know and use a variety of Christian prayer styles. Pupils create their own prayers as part of their religious education learning and are able daily to share their own intentions. They respond sensitively and maturely to the theme of the worship. For example the assembly observed challenged them to respond to whether the true nature of our treasure lies in money or in God's gifts and pupils answers demonstrated depth of thought comparing the Catholic view with a more secular society's choice. Pupils value highly the reflection time given during worship to apply the theme to their own lives and experiences. Pupils' participation through high quality singing, instrument playing and performing arts skills, greatly enhances worship. Worship contributes extremely well to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Pupils make very good progress in religious literacy during their time in the school. They achieve age appropriate levels of attainment and many exceed this. Most pupils enjoy their religious education lessons especially those linked to practical activities and to the opportunities for reflection and discussion of their own views and opinions. Pupils have a positive attitude to learning and work together very well. Their spiritual and moral development is outstanding. Pupils take a pride in their religious education work and the books are well presented and evidence a good coverage of the curriculum. Extra special RE work is recognised and inserted into a class book.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS. How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the school? Grade 1

The headteacher powerfully promotes the Catholic life of the school. He communicates a clear vision for the Catholic ethos which inspires all in the school community. The school mission statement contains the words - the school is "a living Catholic community". The pupils do not know this mission statement or the school's expectations of them within it. However this mission pervades all that the school does. Very attractive displays around school confirm the Catholic identity. Leadership promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development very well. The very high quality of performing arts skills contributes to pupils' spiritual development. The school has very good links with parents and strong links with the parish through the close involvement of the parish priest.

The religious education subject leader, with strong support from the headteacher ensures this subject has a high profile across the school. A clear direction for improvement has been set. All aspects of religious education teaching and learning are monitored well and formal feedback provided to the staff. The religious education subject leader has led training and provides support and guidance to teachers. The school has invested in many new materials and now religious education is well resourced.

Governors fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities. They are very supportive and pro-active in the school. They are well informed about the work of the school through the headteacher's regular report. Some are able to visit the school regularly. Governors do not at present formally monitor prayer, religious education and the school's Catholic life but plans are in place for them to do this in the future.

The school is a welcoming inclusive community where all members are respected and valued. Diversity is celebrated and parents and pupils share their traditions during multi-cultural days. Pupils show compassion for others by the extent of their charity work for Cafod. The school has built links with a local home for the elderly and participates in some local events. The school has excellent links with other faith schools within the town. A transition project linked to the secondary school is based on liturgical worship. Provision for spiritual development effectively provides opportunities for pupils to link the theme with their own experiences. The school invites parishioners and parents to share celebrations. Pupils learn about other world religions. They have visited a mosque and invited visitors into school to promote this learning. The governors and headteacher are instrumental in promoting the possible building of another Catholic school needed to accommodate all Catholic pupils in the area.

PROVISION. How effective is the provision for Catholic education: Grade 1

Worship, prayer and personal reflection are integral to the life of the school community. There is a progressive prayer programme and different styles of worship opportunities, including a weekly meditation and reflection session. Well chosen music, a prominent prayer focus and carpets enhance the calm, worshipful atmosphere. Worship is well planned following the liturgical year and the RE programme. During worship, Catholic ritual is well established with Bible passages, visual presentations, topical events and stories all used very effectively to engage learners' interest and develop their thinking. Worship makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual and moral development of pupils. The attractive prayer table in each classroom effectively provides a focus for prayer. Mass is celebrated regularly by the whole school and by each of the older pupils' classes. Pupils participate in leading these and are also involved in serving during mid-week parish Masses. Liturgical services take place for the younger children. The parish priest makes a significant contribution to the sacramental life of the school and hears confessions in school during Advent and Lent.

The quality of religious education lessons overall is good with some outstanding lessons being observed. Teachers' knowledge is sound and they plan thoroughly with clear learning intentions made explicit to pupils. During the best lessons, teachers inspired pupils to be interested and motivated to learn by the use of practical activities, pupils' own artefacts, and the selection of excellent examples to model the activity. Visual presentations and open questioning were also effectively used.

Pupils of all abilities make progress in lessons through well differentiated activities and by extra support given. Assessments takes place regularly and are linked to national levels of attainment. Teachers use the data to differentiate activities and plan future learning. Teacher moderation of judgements is a planned future development. All work is marked giving appropriate praise and comments with questions suggesting future improvements.

The quality of the curriculum is very good, and suitable for the age and abilities of the learners. It fulfils the requirement of the Bishops' Conference. 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education following the "Here I Am" programme. The school has trialled part of the new "Come and See" Catholic programme. Pupils are encouraged to become aware of the demands of religious commitment and the care of the environment. Religious education is creatively linked to other curriculum areas such as literacy, art, drama, poetry, science,

geography, song and information and communication technology (ICT). The significant contribution of the parish priest is effectively used as an extra resource for learning. Other faiths are studied. The curriculum contributes very well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Attractive religious education displays around school which are also often placed in the church, give added value to this core subject.

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20th July 2010

Dear Pupils

Diocesan Inspection of St Albans Primary Catholic School, Cambridge

Thank you for making us so welcome at your school. Thank you to all those pupils who spoke to us especially the group from year 5. We were very interested in your views of your school. We enjoyed being present with you in Reception, Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, Year 4, and Year 5 for part of your Religious Education lessons. Though Year 6 were out on their residential trip we were pleased that we were able to see their RE books. It was a great privilege for us to be present for your assembly and to hear the high standard of your instrument playing. Well done to everyone involved.

Here are some of the things we especially liked:

- The strong Catholic ethos of your school that provides many opportunities for prayer and worship.
- You are friendly and considerate to each other and are well cared for by your teachers.
- You are encouraged to think deeply in a calm quiet atmosphere.
- The school provides very good opportunities for you to develop personally, spiritually and morally.

We have asked your teachers and governors to consider devising a short phrase that will encapsulate all that you do for God in your school. You may have some ideas for this to share with them. We were impressed with the RE assessments that your teachers plan for you and how they record your achievements. We have asked them to look at RE work across all year groups and ensure that their judgements of the level you are achieving are consistent throughout the school.

Thank you again for your help. We wish you the very best for the future,

Yours sincerely

Mrs M. Betts and Rosemary Barker

Diocesan Inspectors