



DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on
behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

URN 101801

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School

Portnalls Road

Coulsdon, Surrey

CR5 3DE

Inspection date: 19th October 2022

Chair of Governors: Mrs Jana Horrigan

Headteacher: Mr Diarmuid Skehan

Inspectors: Mrs Rufina Ebenebe

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EDUCATION COMMISSION

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Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Aidan's Catholic Primary is a one-form voluntary aided school situated on the border of Croydon and Surrey in the Croydon Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark.

It is part of the Croydon Catholic Primary Schools Umbrella Trust and the principal parishes which the school serves are St Aidan's (Coulsdon), St Mary, Help of Christians (Old Coulsdon). The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years and the number of pupils currently on roll is 217. The proportion of pupils receiving pupil premium grant is 7.4%. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is 10%.

The proportion of pupils who are baptised is 98%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is 10%, respectively.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS



St Aidan's is an Outstanding Catholic school because:

- A strong Catholic ethos permeates every aspect of the school community thereby creating an enriching faith-filled environment. The school's mission statement summarised as "Living and Growing in Christ" is at the heart of school life. Pupils and staff know and live it out. There is a sense of 'visual faith' everywhere you go.
- Senior leaders and governors have a shared vision for the school and for excellence in Catholic education. Pupils see themselves and others as 'part of God's family.' Parents feel part of the school community and strongly value the Catholic education it offers
- The extent to which pupils contribute and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is exemplary. Pupils are enthusiastic to serve others and are active in supporting a wide range of charities. They are courteous and kind and always look out for each other. Pupils know they have a part to play in making the school a warm, happy and family community.
- Collective worship is reverent and respectful, with a clear message for pupils to take out into their own lives. Prayer is central to school life. Pupils are familiar with the traditional prayers of the Church and are at ease with composing and contributing their own prayers. The school has excellent relationships with its local parishes and the parish priests are very supportive and regular visitors to the school.
- St Aidan's offers an exceptional religious education experience for all pupils. Pupils demonstrate passion and commitment in their learning in religious education and view it as one of their most important lessons.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- To continue to develop a breadth of teaching styles that will fully engage all pupils in religious education lessons.
- To embed the use of big questions in religious education so that all pupils deepen their religious knowledge and understanding.
- To continue to build on the strong partnership between home, school and parish.

Overall Effectiveness



How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.	1
Catholic Life	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	1
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	1
Religious Education	1
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	1
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.	1
Collective Worship	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship.	1
The quality of provision for Collective Worship.	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	1



The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- Pupils appreciate, value and actively participate in the Catholic life and mission of the school. They enthusiastically embrace the demands that being members of the school community requires. The school's mission statement, summarised as 'Living and Growing in Christ' is visibly on display through very high-quality art work produced by pupils.
- All pupils participate actively in those activities that promote the Catholic ethos of the school. Each year-group has a 'faith door' leading into the class, adorned with quotes from scripture and faith related artwork. Displays of pupils' work around the themes of the universal church such as the Year of St Joseph, the Year of the Family and Catholic Social Teachings creates an environment of visual faith.
- Pupils show a deep respect for themselves and others as made in the image and likeness of God. As a result, they look out for each other during play times to ensure that no one is left out. The friendship committee made up of volunteers from Reception to Year 6 pupils actively work to make sure everyone has someone to play with at break time or lunch
- Some pupils in Years 5 and 6 serve as Prayer leaders. They sometimes lead Gospel assemblies for the whole school and have been at the centre of rewording the school mission statement in pupil-friendly language. The prayer leaders have also created a school prayer that classes now recite regularly. They encourage all pupils to put their faith in to action by keeping records of examples of kindness that they see in the playground.
- Pupils use their knowledge of Gospel values and Catholic Social Teaching to look beyond the school community in supporting others less fortunate than themselves. They raise funds for Macmillan cancer research, the homeless shelter, Purley food hub, Save the Children and CAFOD. A parent remarked, "The school allows pupils to be involved and therefore aware of how we reach out to the suffering and marginalised people in the community".
- All pupils deeply value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school. Pupils in each year group study the saint of their class. Pupils from different year-groups enthusiastically shared their knowledge and understanding of their class saints and one pupil explained: "We need to know about them because we are all part of God's family."
- All pupils are confident in expressing pride in their own religious and cultural identity and beliefs. Pupils gave thoughtful responses to questions on the meaning of faith



posed during the collective worship observed as part of this inspection. Pupils' works in 'my response' books attest to their personal expression of their religious beliefs.

The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The school environment reflects its mission and identity through concrete and effective signs of the school's Catholic character through artefacts and art work. Prayer areas in the classrooms and the school hall, faith designs, scripture references and quotes on each class door of faith invite prayer and reflection. The interactive religious display in the school hall, Faithful Bible Inspectors (FBI) challenges all to link the visible artworks to stories from the Bible.
- All staff promote high standards of behaviour and are exemplary role models of mutual respect and forgiveness for pupils. According to a parent, "Forgiveness is a hallmark of the school and this permeates through to the children, teachers build strong relationship with the children that go beyond teaching".
- All staff are fully committed to the implementation of the school's mission of 'Living and Growing in Christ'. Staff pray daily with pupils and there are a wide range of activities which bring the school community together in prayer such as religious education days, visits to the prayer garden, assemblies and class Masses. There is a strong sense of community at all levels, evident in the high-quality relationships between staff, pupils, parents, governors and parish priest. Pupils have the opportunity to learn more about the Catholic faith and other issues of personal importance through the big question discussions with the parish priest during his regular visits to the school.
- Behaviour around the school is exemplary because the school communicates clear and consistent expectations to all pupils. In the words of a parent. "St Aidan's promotes a lovely community feel, for the children are very caring and considerate to one another and this is demonstrated through children playing with children within different year groups".
- The Catholic life of the school is further enhanced in the outdoor environment with the provision of a prayer garden and reflection pond area. This contributes to the peaceful and prayerful atmosphere of St Aidan's.
- Pastoral care at the school is supportive and effective. Initiatives such as the friendship bench, worry box, anti-bullying lessons and votes for schools encourage pupils to become better stewards of the earth. The school has previously provided an after-



school wellbeing / mindfulness club for pupils and plans are in place to reinstate this club. Staff have also had wellbeing training sessions.

- Parental questionnaires distributed as part of this inspection were overwhelmingly positive. Almost all parents strongly agreed that the school offers a distinctively Catholic education. A parent commented, 'Really blessed that my boys are growing in faith through the teaching in this school.'

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- Governors make a highly significant contribution to the Catholic life of the school and are actively involved in its evaluation and are ready to challenge the school leadership as well as providing support where necessary.
- The very effective work of the governing body is evident in their understanding of the detailed evaluation and monitoring of Catholic life across the school. They are frequent visitors to the school and play an important role in its Catholic life. Governor visits and reports from the headteacher and religious education leader form the basis for discussion and planning for improvement.
- The school works in partnership with parents, establishing clear lines of communication and ensuring that they feel part of the school community. Parents are kept informed of the school's Catholic life through the weekly newsletter, Twitter and the school website.
- Teachers and governors have studied units from the diocesan 'Firm Foundations' suite of courses.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is outstanding.

- Pupils are confident learners and relative to their age and capacity are religiously literate. They use their knowledge, understanding and skills effectively. For instance, during a lesson observed as part of this inspection, Reception pupils were using religious vocabulary beyond the age-related expectation.
- Pupils produce work of a consistently high quality, demonstrating excellent presentation and creativity. They show pride and respect for their written work which is evident from their religious education books
- Groups of pupils are supported and challenged to enable them to progress well. A parent wrote, 'St Aidan's provides an extremely supportive and caring environment for our children.' Some pupils said they enjoy responding to the 'big questions' which are a regular feature in lessons. However, this needs to be fully embedded to enable all groups of pupils to benefit and deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils use their knowledge, understanding and skills effectively to reflect spiritually and to relate their learning to everyday life. When asked why they study the different class saints, a pupil commented that 'they set good examples for us'.
- Pupils are confident about what they have learned in religious education and they use key concepts and subject-specific vocabulary. In lessons observed, pupils made links to previous learning in their response to questions in the lesson. For instance, a Year 5 pupil likened our call to serve as us being modern day ambassadors for Jesus just as the apostles were in his time.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good.

- Teachers ensure pupils are consistently involved in evaluating how well they are achieving through their regular feedback, evident in pupils' books and orally and in lessons observed.
- In the lessons observed across the school teachers were confident in their subject knowledge. They have a good understanding of how pupils learn and have good relationships with their pupils. The use of scripture in lessons across the school is a strength.



- The pace in lessons was very good but this needs to be monitored to ensure all pupils are included and make progress. Pupils would also benefit from more collaboration in lessons with their peers.
- Achievement and effort in religious education are celebrated in line with whole school policy on displays, assemblies and awards.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding.

- Leaders and governors ensure that religious education has full parity with other core curriculum subjects in terms of budget allocation, resourcing and professional development.
- School leaders have chosen the 'Come and See' programme of religious education. Additional materials are used for improving the understanding of other faiths and their festivals through personal, social, health and economic education 'Votes for Schools' units.
- Religious education is led by a highly committed, member of staff. She has an inspiring vision of outstanding teaching and learning and a high level of expertise on the subject. She has developed 'the Big Questions' used across the school in order to encourage pupils' deeper thinking in their response books. The excellent religious education displays around the communal areas of the school attests to the subject leader's commitment to make religious education prominent and visible to members of the school community and visitors.
- The subject leader supports teachers in planning the curriculum, through team teaching and frequent staff training on the teaching of religious education to ensure increased teacher confidence and subject knowledge in the subject.

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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.

- St Aidan's is a prayerful school where collective worship is integral to school life. The Catholic liturgical year, seasons and feasts are confidently understood and celebrated. For example, the feasts of St Aidan, the patron of the school, and all the class' saints, namely Mary, Francis of Assis, Joseph, Bernadette, Theresa (of Calcutta), Peter and Paul are celebrated by whole school and individual classes, respectively.
- Pupils plan and lead their class act of worship and work with the parish priests where their ideas are incorporated into class liturgies.
- In the whole school assembly on the theme of faith observed during this inspection, pupils entered the assembly hall quietly and respectfully. They confidently expressed their opinion on the question of 'what is faith?' From their responses, it was evident that pupils have a deep understanding of this theological virtue. One pupil said that faith is 'When you haven't seen something but you believe in it'. All pupils participated actively in the question and answer part of the assembly.
- The experience of living and working in a faithful, prayerful community has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of many pupils. Prayer Leaders, mainly Year 6 pupils, understand the role they have in developing the prayer life of the school and support the younger children in their prayer and in answering any questions they may have.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.

- Gospel teachings are explored in the timetabled weekly collective worship and are a feature of the prayer and liturgy policy.
- Each class has prayer focus areas that reflect the liturgical year and themes studied in religious education. These provide a focus for class prayer and are age-appropriate. For example, some classes have prayer trees from which prayers are read at the start of lessons.



- Pupils participate in a range of liturgies throughout the year which develop their understanding of the liturgical seasons. In Lent for example, there is a Lenten service led by Year 5 through which they lead all pupils to reflect on the Passion of our Lord.
- Although the school has an overwhelmingly Catholic community, the very small number of families of other / no faith are very much encouraged to participate in school life, and do so with enthusiasm.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.

- St Aidan's policy on prayer and liturgy is carefully formulated and fit for purpose and is useful as a reference point for staff when preparing prayer and liturgy and when supporting pupils to do so.
- Leaders and governors ensure that opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist are regularly offered to the whole school community, particularly at key times in the liturgical year and at significant moments within the life of the school. For example, the celebration Mass of the feast of St Aidan.
- Leaders and governors place the highest priority on the school's self-evaluation of collective worship with regular reviews of school performance. The link governor for religious education monitors the quality of collective worship through regular attendance at liturgies and through parent and pupil conferencing.
- All staff of St Aidan's keep up to date with developments in the liturgical rhythm of the wider Catholic community through formal and informal training.

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