



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

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

URN 101801

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School
Portnalls Road
Croydon
CR5 3DE

Inspection date: 10 March 2015

Chair of Governors:	Fr Josef Doetsch
Headteacher:	Mr Tim Hallett
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EDUCATION COMMISSION

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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

St Aidan's Catholic Primary is a voluntary aided school situated in the Croydon Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Croydon Local Authority. The principal parishes which the school serves are St Aidan's, Coulsdon and St Mary, Help of Christians, Old Coulsdon. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 92%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in Key Stage 1 and 10% in Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 198. The proportion of pupils receiving pupil premium funding is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average. Half the pupils are of White British origin, so the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is larger than average. Very few pupils are learning English as an additional language.

Date of previous inspection:

09/03/2010

Overall Grade:

1

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1 Outstanding
Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Requires improvement
Grade 4 Inadequate

St Aidan's is outstanding as a Catholic community which encourages everyone to feel valued and to strive for personal excellence. Its welcoming atmosphere extends to staff, pupils, parents and visitors. The Headteacher provides strong leadership and clear direction. He is supported by a cohesive and committed staff team. Governors are highly effective, fully understand their role of support and challenge and are very much part of the school community. Links with local parishes are excellent. Both parish priests are regular visitors to the school. They play an important role in school life as well as providing support and guidance at many levels. Pupils are proud of their school. They care for one another and are happy to take responsibilities offered to them as part of school life. Their behaviour is exemplary. Standards in Religious Education are high. Pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well. Attractive displays relating to Religious Education promote the school's Catholic identity and enhance the learning environment.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and appreciate the Catholic education it offers. One wrote, "A fantastic school, which really helps the children to deepen their understanding of God's love for them. In every aspect of school life it is clear to see the Gospel values being celebrated and lived."

Recommendations made by the last inspection have been addressed.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- Develop the use of questioning in Religious Education lessons to explore and deepen understanding for all pupils and particularly with regard to higher attaining pupils.

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school

Pupils have a strong sense of belonging to a Catholic community and relate the summary of their mission statement 'Living and Growing in Christ' as central to the life of the school. They value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and are happy to participate in all aspects of Catholic life. The school maintains excellent parish links, working in partnership with both parishes which the school serves. Pupils are encouraged to promote the school's Catholic ethos in the wider community. They support a number of local, national and international charities, showing an awareness of the needs of others and their responsibilities towards those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils are confident in expressing their own views and beliefs whilst understanding the need to respect those of others. They are able to refer to the teachings of Jesus and the importance of these in their own lives. They respect and care for one another. Parents recognise and appreciate how older pupils look after the younger ones. One commented, "The school nurtures the children very well and the older children have lovely relationships with the younger ones. There is a family feel to this school."

The school's environment reflects its Catholic identity and shows the importance of Religious Education, prayer and worship in the school. Examples include the entrance hall display featuring the 'Journey through the Church Year' and the interactive display 'Our Prayer Path' where pupils could add their own prayers to the footsteps.

Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development. These include enrichment activities such as the school journey and the school's many clubs as well as numerous opportunities for spiritual development including prayer and reflection. During the inspection, Reception pupils enjoyed the experience of a guided reflection focussing on meeting Jesus and talking to him.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

Standards in Religious Education are very high. Pupils make very good progress and achieve well, with significant numbers attaining the higher levels. Pupils are attentive and thoughtful in Religious Education lessons. They are able to speak confidently about their learning and demonstrate high standards of knowledge and religious literacy. They enjoy their Religious Education lessons and appreciate the relevance of Religious Education to their own lives. Pupils with Special Educational Needs are effectively supported and encouraged. Teaching assistants demonstrate a high level of skill in the support they offer pupils, encouraging them to talk about their learning as well as supporting them academically.

Differentiation is evident in lesson planning and the excellent standard of pupils' work and attainment indicates that pupils are being appropriately challenged. Greater use of higher level questioning in lessons would encourage pupils to further explore and deepen their understanding in Religious Education.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

The act of Collective Worship observed was of a very high standard. Pupils showed

interest, behaved reverently and sang joyfully. They were prayerful and reflective and an excellent example of a community coming together in worship. Pupils speak enthusiastically of the many celebrations in the school and their participation in these. They enjoy their involvement in class and whole school Masses and are confident in taking part in spontaneous prayer as well as the traditional prayers of the Church. Art, music, dance and drama are effectively used to enhance the school's Collective Worship and to interest and encourage pupils. During the act of Collective Worship observed, pupils enacted the first four Stations of the Cross as part of the school community's Lenten journey. 'Spiritual Journey' books provide a beautiful illustration of pupil's personal prayers and important events.

A feature of the school is the high quality focal areas in each classroom and around the school. These are beautiful examples and serve as an aid to personal prayer and a focus for class prayer as well as highlighting the Religious Education topics studied.

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How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leaders and managers are deeply committed to the Catholic life of the school, working in partnership with parents and the parishes which the school serves to form a warm and welcoming community which nurtures the spiritual development of the pupils. A parent wrote, "There is a strong and friendly Catholic community in which my children can develop their faith."

The Catholic life of the school is part of school improvement planning. The school is continually evaluating its provision and seeking to improve it. Recent developments include developing an outdoor area in which to celebrate Mass and offering opportunities for staff prayer and reflection.

Governors monitor and evaluate the Catholic life of the school on a regular basis. They are active in their participation and conscientious in their monitoring role. The school places a high priority in developing all aspects of the school's Catholic life to provide an all embracing Catholic community for all. Monitoring and evaluation is well established and robust. Development priorities are clearly identified, together with steps to implement these. Progress is regularly discussed by the governing body.

Staff and pupils understanding of the school mission is clear. They share a sense of common purpose and support and promote it at all times.

How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leaders and managers use a comprehensive range of monitoring activities including lesson observations, learning walks and book scrutinies. These identify strengths and weaknesses and inform school development planning as well as the effective sharing of good practice. Assessment in Religious Education is well established. Moderation, both external and internal, takes place on a regular basis to validate teachers' judgements. The school maintains an excellent portfolio of moderated work samples which provides useful exemplars of levelled work. The Headteacher, as Religious Education Co-ordinator, has ensured that the 'Come and See' programme of Religious Education has been effectively embedded in school practice and that appropriate training and resources have been provided. Standards in Religious Education are subject to the same rigorous monitoring and evaluation as other academic subjects. As a result, standards are high and match those in other subjects. The link governor for Religious Education is active in her monitoring role. Religious Education is a regular agenda item at governing body meetings. School self-evaluation is accurate and reflective. Leaders and managers are able to identify areas for further development and the strategies needed to address these in the constant drive towards school improvement.

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

Four lessons were observed as part of this inspection. These were from three Key Stages, Early Years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. In the lessons observed, teaching was securely good and in some cases had outstanding features. Religious Education lessons were clearly a special time. All included prayer and offered opportunities for reflection. Candles, music and pictures helped to create a special atmosphere and set the scene for the lesson. Religious Education lessons included pupils' own experiences and they were encouraged to relate the theme of the lesson to their daily lives. Teachers showed good subject knowledge and used resources to enhance their teaching. Talk partners were used effectively. In the best lessons, open ended questioning engaged pupils and encouraged them to think more deeply. This good practice should be extended throughout the school to maximise challenge, particularly for higher achieving pupils.

Pupils enjoy Religious Education lessons are enthusiastic in their responses. Pupils' work is regularly marked, providing them with detailed feedback. Marking is developmental and gives pupils suggestions on how to improve their work as well as questions which form a dialogue between pupil and teacher. Achievement and effort are celebrated.

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning

The school follows the 'Come and See' programme of Religious Education and meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. All pupils are enabled to access the curriculum and receive support to do so if appropriate. Lesson planning includes differentiation for pupils as appropriate. This should now include an increased level of higher order questioning to provide challenge for higher attaining pupils. Pupils from all groups achieve well, including disadvantaged pupils. Standards of attainment are high and match those in other subjects. The standard of written work in pupils' books is excellent. Pupils enjoy talking about their work in Religious Education and know it is important to them. This is evident to parents, who commented, "Religious Education is at the heart of school life."

The excellent relationships between pupils and their teachers enables difficult concepts in Religious Education to be explored in class. For example, in Year 6 the topic of change relating to loss and death was dealt with sensitively and with understanding by both teacher and pupils.

The school is an active member of the Deanery cluster of Catholic schools, working with other local schools to share good practice and improve provision in Religious Education. It also has good links with the Diocese; staff and governors regularly attend Diocesan training and events.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school. Pupils and parents enjoy the many and varied worship opportunities and appreciate the spiritual development the school offers. A parent wrote, "The fruits of the Catholic life are seen at home, when my child comes home talking about the Catholic celebrations she has been part of and singing the hymns. As a parent I have also got a lot out of being part of these Catholic events which

make me reflect on my own spirituality.”

The liturgical life of the school is well planned and incorporated into the school year. Celebrations include parents and governors. Parental attendance at these celebrations is excellent. Class Masses and class assemblies are led by the pupils. These are greatly enjoyed by pupils and their parents. Attractive displays around the school encourage pupils in their prayer life and focus on the current events in the liturgical year. Pupils willingly participate in the school’s Collective Worship and enjoy coming together as a worshipping community.

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