

St Aloysius' College

Hornsey Lane, Highgate, London N6 5LY

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 20 -21 May 2021



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- The content of the curriculum fully meets all the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory
- Curriculum design is creative and engaging, topics are revisited leading to opportunities for pupils to progress and develop depth to their learning.
- Over the last three years there has been a strong upward trend in pupil achievement in RE. In GCSE the percentage of pupils achieving the higher grades (7-9) has improved significantly.
- Teaching is consistently good in RE lessons, with some examples of outstanding lessons, that ensure pupils make good progress and achievement over time.
- RE teachers in the department have consistently strong subject knowledge and as a result inspire confidence in pupils that contribute to their good progress.
- A significant strength of RE teachers is that they have cultivated positive relationships with their pupils, this empowers pupils to ask questions with confidence and leads to high standards of behaviour.
- The quality of leadership and management of RE is outstanding. The subject leader for RE has a clear vision and strong determination for high quality RE.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- There is a need to further improve teaching by increasing the level of challenge for all pupils.
- Pupil progress can be improved by ensuring consistency of teacher feedback.
- Further enrichment opportunities within the RE classroom and beyond are required.

B. The Catholic life of the school is good

- The school has made excellent strides to support and develop the place of RE.
- St Aloysius is an inclusive, welcoming Catholic community and this is reflected in the prayer and sacramental life of the school.
- The school's commitment to the common good is palpable. Staff nurture their pupils to develop and celebrate their gifts both as individuals and as part of the community.
- The school enjoys strong parental support. Parents are appreciative of the school's efforts to work in partnership, particularly during the lockdown.
- The newly appointed headteacher is highly ambitious for the school, and alongside the governors and leadership team, is fully committed to the Church's mission in education and demonstrates this in a consistent way.
- There is nothing in the school that inspectors saw that was less than good, and inspectors are confident that the school is making excellent progress towards being an outstanding Catholic school.

The Catholic life of the school is not yet outstanding because

- Systems that further develop the Catholic life of the school need to be embedded.
- The prayer life of the school needs to be improved further by developing formation and resources to support pupils and staff in regularly leading prayer.
- Relationships with Catholic feeder primary schools need to be further developed.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

The previous diocesan inspection report noted several improvement points, focused around, the quality of teaching and learning, and the need to strengthen the leadership and management of the RE department. The department has worked hard to address these action points and has clearly had success in making the necessary improvements as evident in the report that follows.

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The content of the curriculum fully meets all the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. The programmes of study and schemes of work provide a systematic study of God, the life and teaching of Jesus and the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold and the relationship between faith and life. At GCSE, Catholic Christianity is studied as well as Judaism in line with the diocesan bishops' requirement. At A level, students study three options, Christianity, ethics and philosophy of religion. The programme for Core RE at Key Stage 5 uses a range of modules to develop depth in students' understanding of religion and life, for example the module on Buddhism challenges pupils to engage with the concept of karma and the consequences this has for a believer.

The curriculum plans illustrate where, when and how key aspects of the content is taught and assessed and allows for progression and development. The curriculum demonstrates clarity regarding conceptual development, and it has a strong narrative to support pupil understanding. Curriculum design is creative and engaging, topics are revisited leading to opportunities for pupils to progress and develop depth to their learning. Resources for curriculum implementation are effective and provide staff with the tools to plan creative lessons to stimulate learning. In a Year 9 lesson on the design argument for the existence of God, effective resources supported the development of pupils' skills in evaluation.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Over the last three years there has been a strong upward trend in pupil achievement in RE. At GCSE the percentage of pupils achieving the higher grades (7-9) has improved significantly. Compared to national averages for boys' performance at GCSE, the RE GCSE results are above average and show improvement over time. In comparison to other subjects within the school, the RE department is performing well. There are robust systems for assessment which enable the department to effectively track the progress of pupils so that challenging targets can be set to support pupil achievement. The department is committed to external and internal moderation of pupil work, with the result that the department is confident in judgements made about pupil progress. The department has re-established the A level option with a small group in Year 12 and should continue to encourage students to study A level Religious Studies. Pupils' attitudes to learning in RE are consistently positive and are having a good impact on their progress. To improve further the achievement of pupils, the RE department should increase enrichment opportunities within the RE classroom and beyond.

The quality of teaching is good

Teaching is consistently good in RE lessons, with some examples of outstanding lessons, that ensure that pupils make good progress and achievement over time. Teachers have high expectations, plan and teach lessons that deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding of the RE curriculum. In a lesson on popular piety with Year 10, the lesson was characterised with detailed planning that enabled all pupils to engage in the learning. RE teachers in the department have consistently strong subject knowledge and as a result inspire confidence in pupils that contribute to their good progress. In a Year 11 lesson on relationships and family life, the teacher displayed high levels of patience and sensitivity in explaining complex Catholic teaching that promoted effective pupil progress. A significant strength of

RE teachers is that they have cultivated positive relationships with their pupils, this empowers pupils to ask questions with confidence and leads to high standards of behaviour. The well-pitched quality of questioning by teachers to check pupil understanding and support class discussion was evident in lessons observed. In a lesson on different Jewish interpretations of Mitzvot the questioning led pupils to consolidate as well as extend their learning. Effective teaching resources supported the scaffolding of learning for all pupils, for example in a Year 10 lesson on Catholic social teaching, pupils were guided to draw out the practical significance of key themes for the everyday lives of Catholics. There were opportunities in some lessons for pupils to be challenged at a greater depth and this can lead to higher levels of achievement for all. Pupils are clear about how to improve their work, as teacher marking provides effective feedback. Consistency of teacher feedback to pupils in marking will further improve pupil progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education

is outstanding

The quality of leadership and management of RE is outstanding. The subject leader for RE has a clear vision and strong determination for high quality RE. The strategic leadership is strongly evident in the department improvement plan as well as in the department self-evaluation form. The subject leader has an excellent grasp of the needs of the department and has a clear plan for continued improvement. The subject leader for RE has a strong understanding and appreciation of the centrality of RE in the mission of the Church and its impact in the daily life of the school. The creativity of the RE curriculum to meet pupils' needs is excellent and given further time to embed, will ensure pupils achieve at higher levels. There are highly effective systems in place that support teachers to meet pupils' needs. The progress trackers on pupils' exercise books are a good example of these systems. The subject leader, with members of the leadership team, have relentlessly focused on improving teaching and learning. As a result, teachers have had clear support resulting in significant improvement in pupil achievement and the quality of teaching since the last inspection.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Further improve teaching by increasing the level of challenge for all pupils.
- Improve pupil progress by ensuring consistency of teacher feedback.
- Increase enrichment opportunities within the RE classroom and beyond.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The previous diocesan inspection report identified three action points. Firstly, to 'formalise arrangements for reporting and evaluating the Catholic life of the school so that governors and leaders can check the accuracy of their judgements and the impact of their actions'. This action point has been successfully achieved through a range of measures including regular reporting to governors at committee meetings, clear targets within the school improvement plan and the annual review of the school's diocesan self-evaluation form. The second action point was to 'help all pupils to understand the theology underpinning their actions to help others.' This has been addressed, however there is still work to be done to embed this. Thirdly, the report suggested that the school mission statement was reviewed to make it accessible to pupils. This action point has been successfully achieved as the mission statement has been simplified and is now highly visible. Pupils could speak confidently about the values that underpin their school.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum is outstanding

The school has made excellent strides to support and develop the place of RE. Recent appointments to the RE team have indicated the commitment to add capacity for further improvement. The RE curriculum meets the Bishops' Conference requirements for 10% curriculum time at Key Stages 3 and 4, as well as 5% curriculum time at Key Stage 5. The RE department is well resourced with five dedicated classrooms and a generous budget. The governors and leadership team provide strong and effective support for the department. RE is at the heart of the school and influences and enhances the quality of Catholic education offered.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community is good

St Aloysius is an inclusive, welcoming Catholic community and this is reflected in the prayer and sacramental life of the school. The liturgical year is reflected in the celebration of Mass and Reconciliation which is at the heart of the school's provision and a great deal of effort is put into making the celebrations important. During lockdown, the school used live streaming of weekly Mass, assemblies and prayer to support the prayer life of the school to good effect. The newly appointed part-time chaplain, a priest from a local parish, is well known and trusted by pupils and staff alike and works hard to support the Catholic life of the school. The chaplain has worked with pupils to ensure that they are involved in the planning and preparation of eucharistic celebrations and liturgical assemblies. Pupils are also given the opportunity to participate in liturgical ministries, such as altar serving and reading. Pupils and staff from other faith traditions are very positive about how much they are valued and feel a part of the school community and experience understanding and respect for their religious tradition and beliefs. There is support for tutor time prayer, however there is scope for further formation and resources for pupils and staff so that they develop more confidence in regularly leading prayer. There is also scope for improving systems that monitor and support the effectiveness of daily prayer.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice – is good

The school's commitment to the common good is palpable. Staff nurture their pupils to develop and celebrate their gifts both as individuals and as part of the community. As one pupil in Year 10 recognised, 'this is a great school to come to and be part of a community that is trying to be good'. Pupils and staff recognise the value of the individual and the need to respond to the Church's

call to action as evidenced by its support of a wide range of charities from the Passage, the Catholic Children's Society, CAFOD and Bakhita House. Pupils can talk enthusiastically about the work they have done to raise funds for these groups and how they try to support the local community as well. Pupils are rightly proud of the positive relationships between each other and between pupils and staff; the behaviour of pupils is very good in and out of lessons. The achievements of the pupils are recognised on a regular basis through the school's reward system, cards and letters home. With further time to embed new systems, it is clear to inspectors that this aspect of the Catholic life of the school will quickly become outstanding.

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

is good

The school enjoys strong parental support as evidenced by the parent's questionnaire that was completed online prior to the inspection. Parents are appreciative of the school's efforts to work in partnership, particularly during the lockdown. As parents have noted: 'the school provides our sons with the opportunity to grow in faith while excelling academically', 'I am proud that my son is an Aloysian'. Parents are appreciative of the changes made over the past year by the new headteacher and the positive impact they have had on their children. The Sporting traditions of the school are significantly enhanced by use of the nearby playing fields owned by the Playing Fields Trust (a group of Old Aloysians). The school has an exciting sports partnership with Islington Panthers to develop a basketball academy. The chaplain has developed strong links with the local parishes. Parishes have supported the school through the provision of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and providing space for retreats. The school can further develop the relationships it already has with feeder primary schools. The school has continued to develop its positive relationship with the Diocese. Regular visits have been made by the RE Advisor who has identified the clear steps that the school has made to improve.

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

is outstanding

There has been a systematic renewal of the Catholic identity of the school, with the clear aim of making this an outstanding Catholic school. The revised mission statement, focused on the values of learning, justice, respect and community makes a significant contribution and impact on the life of the school. Through the school council, a new house system has been implemented with six new house saints. There has been a recent improvement to the visible signs that this is a Catholic school. Several religious artefacts have been restored to highly prominent positions in the school. The newly appointed headteacher is highly ambitious for the school, and alongside the governors and leadership team, is fully committed to the Church's mission in education and demonstrates this in a consistent way. Leaders have a very accurate picture of teaching and learning; they are fully aware of the strengths and areas for improvement where they have put in very strong support. The governing body share in the strategic leadership of the school with energy and enthusiasm. They provide highly effective support and challenge to the leadership of the school. There is nothing in the school that inspectors saw that was less than good, and inspectors are confident that the school is making excellent progress towards being an outstanding Catholic school.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- Embed systems that further develop the Catholic life of the school.
- Improve the prayer life of the school by further developing formation and resources to support pupils and staff in regularly leading prayer.
- Further develop relationships with feeder Catholic primary schools.

Information about this school

- The school is a 6 form entry Catholic voluntary aided school in the locality of Islington.
- The school serves the parishes of St John the Evangelist, Highgate; St Joseph's, Copenhagen Street; St Joseph's Highgate; Blessed Sacrament, Tollington Park; St Millitus, Holloway; The Most Sacred Heart, Holloway; Our Lady of Hal, Camden; St Aloysius, Somers Town.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 48%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 16% and from other faiths is 21%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 35 %.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 5.
- There are 13% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 1.6% have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average at 90%.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average at 62%.
- There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals at 37%.
- 54% (381) pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

Department for Education Number	206/4651
Unique Reference Number	100459
Local Authority	Islington
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Male 11-16; mixed 16-18
Number of pupils on roll	708
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Lasok
Headteacher	Ms Paula Whyte
Telephone number	0207 561 7800
Website	www.sta.islington.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@sta.islington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2-3 November 2017
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Requires improvement
The Catholic life of the school	Good

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 15 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended one assembly and a number of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Mr Matthew Dell

Lead Inspector

Ms Catherine Bryan

Associate Inspector

Mr Nick Kehoe

Associate Inspector

Information about inspection

The purpose of Diocesan inspection is to report to and advise the Archbishop on the quality of classroom religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The inspection report is also used to inform parents and carers, and the wider Catholic community. Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools. It also assists schools in the work of self-evaluation and improvement, and enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

This report is published by the Diocese of Westminster and is available at:

<http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

Vaughan House
46 Francis Street,
London
SW1P 1QN

T: 020 7798 9005
E: nancyconoboy@rcdow.org.uk
W: <http://education.rcdow.org.uk>