

St Aloysius Catholic College

30 Hornsey Lane, London N6 5LY

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 2–3 November 2017



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has not ensured that pupils make good progress in religious education. This is because the coaching programme for teachers is currently underdeveloped.
- In 2017, the proportion of Year 11 pupils who achieved high quality passes in GCSE examinations in religious education was below the national average.
- Pupils from different backgrounds, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make some gains in their religious literacy.
- Staff do not always set sufficiently challenging work so that the most able pupils achieve their best.
- The religious education department's self-evaluation of its performance is overgenerous.

Classroom religious education has the following strengths

- Religious education teachers have good subject knowledge and relationships between staff and pupils are positive.
- The religious education programmes of study take good account of the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. This helps pupils to understand their Catholic faith.
- Leaders and governors are committed to supporting the development of high quality religious education, so that pupils achieve well.
- All pupils are taught to respect other faiths and cultures. This helps them to gain a clearer understanding and appreciation of the Church's global mission.

B. The Catholic life of the school is good

- The school meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales regarding the teaching time allocated to religious education.
- The celebration of the Church's liturgical year is at the heart of the school's work. Prayer and worship are woven into the school day and provide good opportunities for spiritual growth.
- Partnerships between the parishes, the diocese and parents are effective. Senior leaders and staff regularly attend diocesan conferences. Governors make regular informal visits to evaluate the work of the school.
- The school's commitment to the Common Good is strong. Pupils are generous in serving others more vulnerable than themselves.
- Leaders and governors are committed to the Catholic education mission of the Church.

The Catholic life of the school is not yet outstanding because

- Pupils do not always have a clear understanding of the school's mission statement and how it impacts on their lives.
- The informal arrangements for reporting on and evaluating the Catholic life of the school do not enable leaders and governors to check the accuracy of their judgements and the impact of their actions.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

The last diocesan inspection report identified only one improvement point in relation to classroom religious education. This was to sustain the rate of improvement in the school by establishing a process of rigorous self-evaluation of classroom religious education in order to maximize the achievement of each pupil. Since that time staff and governors have attended a variety of diocesan training events, including inspection training. Leaders have established successful partnerships with local Catholic schools to moderate pupils' work and to share ideas. However, rates of progress in religious education have slowed in comparison with previous years.

The content of classroom religious education is good

The commercially published scheme meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). Through regular training and development opportunities, the head of religious education and teaching staff have ensured that lesson planning is cross-referenced to the RECD. The religious education curriculum helps pupils to understand their Catholic faith. All pupils are taught to respect other faiths and cultures where everybody matters. This helps pupils gain a clear understanding and appreciation of global issues. However, further work is needed to develop creative approaches to the delivery of activities so that they are more relevant to pupils' learning needs, particularly the most able.

Pupil achievement in religious education requires improvement

Achievement in religious education (RE) requires improvement because pupils are not making good progress. Pupils enter the school with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age and ability. In 2015 and 2016, the proportion of Year 11 pupils gaining a grade A*–C in GCSE examination in religious education, was average when compared with their peers nationally. This represents satisfactory progress given their prior attainment. However, in 2017, there was a significant dip in the GCSE examination results. Leaders stated that this was due to staffing changes and a challenging cohort. Pupils from different backgrounds, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make some gains in their religious literacy. However, teachers do not always set sufficiently challenging work to enable the most and least able pupils to deepen their knowledge and make the best possible progress. Currently, there are no religious studies examination classes in the sixth form. Leaders hope to re-introduce A level next year.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

Teaching and learning in religious education are too variable and require improvement. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Teaching often lacks challenge, and does not consistently make pupils think hard and deepen their knowledge and understanding. Although pupils receive regular guidance about their work, not all teachers provide pupils with sufficiently clear and precise advice, relating to their religious literacy, to enable them to know exactly what they need to do to improve their work. Evidence from pupils' books shows that while there is some effective marking overall, practice across the department is not consistent. Where teaching is effective, the pace is good, activities are varied, and pupils' enjoyment is evident. This was seen in a Year 11 lesson in a 'word loop' activity where pupils displayed good knowledge and understanding of key words. In less successful lessons there is insufficient challenge, the pace is slow, the delivery is unimaginative and there is a reliance on teacher-led activities. Teachers have good subject knowledge.

Relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves are positive. Nevertheless, sometimes pupils are over-reliant on teachers to support and guide their learning.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education requires improvement

The leadership and management of religious education require improvement. Following a period of staffing instability, the department is now fully staffed. During this time, staff have taken on additional duties and worked closely with the head of department to ensure that the department runs smoothly. Nevertheless, the quality of religious education teaching has not ensured that pupils make good or better progress. The school's self-evaluation of the success of curriculum religious education is over generous and would benefit from a more accurate appraisal of its current performance. Also, formal systems for the sharing of good practice to accelerate pupils' rates of progress are currently underdeveloped. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching in religious education regularly. However, they have not yet made the best use of the staff training and coaching programme to ensure that its effect on the teaching and the pupils' progress is maximised. For example, following lesson observations, leaders do not always identify precisely enough the areas for improvement to move teaching more rapidly to the next level. Information from unannounced informal lesson observations is not collated or analysed to enable the best possible feedback to be given to staff. The introduction of a new marking policy is a positive step in the right direction in establishing greater consistency in assessment practice. However, it is too early to judge its full impact in improving pupils' outcomes.

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

- Improve the teaching and learning still further by ensuring that teachers:
 - provide pupils with clearer advice on how to improve their work
 - set work at the correct level so that the most and least able are able to achieve their best
 - enable pupils to become less reliant on adults to support their learning.
- Strengthen leadership and management still further by ensuring that:
 - the coaching programme is improved so that good practice is shared among the department it has the best possible effect on the quality of teaching and the pupils' progress
 - departmental self-evaluation is accurate and reflects the department's current performance.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The last diocesan inspection report identified only one improvement point in relation to the Catholic life of the school, which was to increase the curriculum time devoted to religious education in Key Stage 3 which fell short of that required by the Bishops' Conference and RECD. This has recently been rectified and the school now meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and RECD at all key stages. In addition, a serving staff member has recently been appointed as part-time chaplain, who brings a breadth of experience to this role.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is good

The Bishops' Conference requirement for 10% curriculum time for RE is met for Key Stages 3 and 4, and with 5% for post-16 students. With the introduction this month of a compulsory taught revision programme for Year 11 pupils, the curriculum will exceed the Bishops' requirements. Staff allocation and accommodation are good. The curriculum budget for RE is broadly in line with other core subjects. In addition, activities such as retreats, travel and curriculum development initiatives are supported from the school's financial resources. Staff are given support in their professional development. They regularly attend training opportunities offered by the diocese. Performance management is used to reinforce this. Leaders and governors are committed to supporting the review and development of high quality religious education, so that pupils achieve well in religious education.

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

is good

Leaders have ensured that prayer and worship are part of pupils' daily experience. The celebration of the Church's liturgical year is at the heart of the school's provision. In addition to the celebration of Mass for major feasts and on other occasions, there is a voluntary Mass celebrated weekly which is well attended and gives pupils the opportunity to be involved in liturgical ministries. Nevertheless, there is scope for teachers to provide more opportunities for pupils to plan, prepare and lead acts of worship. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered fortnightly and is also well supported by pupils. The whole school community prays the Angelus at noon each day. Retreats are planned for all year groups this academic year. These along with the annual pilgrimages to Walsingham and Lourdes help pupils to develop a growing sense of spirituality. One third of pupils are from other Christian denominations and other faiths. Provision is made for these pupils, and similarly for staff, to pray during the school day and to be fully included. As a result, pupils show an increasingly mature understanding of different religious traditions, so that all pupils in the school community feel valued and respected.

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

is outstanding

Pupils are very generous in helping others less fortunate than themselves. They offer practical help as well as prayer for those who experience difficulties in their lives. They form extremely positive relationships with each other and with staff, which enables them to support many local and national projects. Within the school, pupils demonstrate their many talents well by taking on posts of responsibility and leadership in the service of others. There are very good examples of how pupils are given opportunities to serve those in the wider community. For example, pupils have raised funds for national and international charities such as the Peramiho Girls School in Tanzania and the Grenfell

Tower appeal. Last year there was a concerted effort to provide practical help to the local community by distributing Christmas food hampers to the elderly. Pupils are consistently encouraged to respond to the call of the Gospels and to serve the poor. However, while most pupils who were interviewed could articulate why they should be generous, there were others who were unsure of the theology behind their actions.

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 has developed effective partnerships with the parish and with parents. Parents are invited to formal and informal school events, have daily opportunities to meet staff and are encouraged to join whole-school celebrations both in the school and at the local church. Parents and carers respond positively to this approach by their high attendance at pupil conference evenings, curriculum meetings along with some liturgical celebrations. Links with the nearby parish, St Joseph's, Highgate are strong, and parishioners appreciate the pupils' respectful behaviour when they attend Mass in the parish. The sacramental life of the school is supported by the Passionist community. The school has an increasingly active sense of its role within the diocese and regularly hosts events for other Catholic schools in the deanery as well as providing outreach support for six local Catholic primary schools. Senior leaders and staff regularly attend diocesan conferences and participate in deanery moderation meetings. Leaders also represent the school by attending the Islington Schools' Catholic Inclusion Network.

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

is good

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is good. The expression of Gospel values by the leadership and management of the school is effective in promoting implicitly its Catholic ethos. This is specially the case regarding the day-to-day relationships in the school, where a vision of positive service and respect between staff and pupils is clearly evident. Pupils are also made aware of the social issues and injustices in the world and the Christian response we are called to make. The written self-evaluation submitted to inspectors is overgenerous. However, one governor demonstrated a more accurate and realistic appraisal of the school's current performance. At present, informal arrangements are in place for the monitoring of the Catholic life of the school. More formal procedures would ensure a much more 'joined-up' and objective approach to self-evaluation. This aspect of governance could be strengthened still further by establishing a governors' sub-committee to monitor the effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school. When interviewed, pupils showed little knowledge or understanding of the school's mission statement. Leaders and governors need to ensure that the school's mission statement is fully embraced and understood by all members of the school community. Effective procedures are in place to support all staff, especially those who are new to teaching.

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

- 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.
- Help all pupils to understand the theology underpinning their actions to help others.
- Review the school's mission statement so that it is accessible to pupils.

Information about this school

- The school is a six-form entry Catholic school. It caters for boys aged 11–16 and admits girls into its sixth form, which is part of the Islington Sixth Form Consortium, in the locality of Islington, north London.
- The school serves the parishes of St John the Evangelist, Highgate; St Joseph's, Highgate; Blessed Sacrament, Tollington Park; St Millitus, Holloway; The Most Sacred Heart, Holloway; and St Aloysius, Somers Town, Euston.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 66%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 17% and from other faiths is 14%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 42%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is seven.
- There are 32% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 17 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.
- 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.
- Five hundred and thirty-eight pupils receive the Pupil Premium (49%).

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	1097
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ashitey Ollenu
Headteacher	Mr Tom Mannion
Telephone number	020 7561 7800
Website	www.sta.islington.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@sta.islington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 July 2012
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Outstanding
The Catholic life of the school	Outstanding

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 18 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended two assemblies 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 Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

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