

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

***St Alban's RC Primary School***

Lensfield Road, Cambridge. CB2 1LS

URN: 110841  
DfES No: 873/3360

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Mr M. Broadbent

Headteacher: Mr J. McCrossan

Denominational Inspector:

Mrs Marion Betts

Dates of Inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> March 2007

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## **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 189 pupils on roll, 97% of whom are Catholic. The school serves the parishes of Our Lady and English Martyrs, St Philip Howard and Our Lady of Lourdes in the village of Sawston. 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 26 different nationalities. 5% of pupils have English as an additional language. 1.7% of pupils are entitled to free school meals and 7.2% of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. These proportions are well below the national average.

### **Key for Inspection Grades**

Grade 1 Outstanding; Grade 2 Good; Grade 3 Satisfactory; Grade 4 Unsatisfactory

### **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school.**

**Grade 2**

St Alban's school has a strong Catholic ethos with committed leadership from the headteacher, governors, Religious Education subject leader and teachers who are instrumental in effectively maintaining and improving the school's Catholic identity. Prayer has a very strong central role in the school's life. The school provides a safe, caring, purposeful environment where each person is valued, respected and listened to. The school promotes well the pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good. Religious Education (RE) is led and managed well by the subject leader. Good progress of knowledge, skills and understanding in Religious Education is made by the pupils throughout their school life.

### **Improvement since last inspection (Nov 2002)**

**Grade 2**

The last diocesan inspection report described the school as a successful school. Key areas for improvement were concerning planning tasks for different abilities of pupils; marking to help pupils improve their work; providing Religious Education displays and prayer foci; and ensuring 10% of curriculum time was allocated to RE lessons. The school has made a good response to the majority of these issues. Training on differentiation has been undertaken and when appropriate, different tasks are given and different learning outcomes expected. The standard of marking is inconsistent throughout the school, but the majority evidenced that improvement strategies were suggested. Attractive prayer tables are in all classrooms and used well as a focus for prayers. Some Religious Education work was on display. Timetables have been monitored in past years to ensure 10% is given to Religious Education but this year's timetables do not reflect this.

### **The capacity of the school community to improve and develop**

**Grade 2**

The school's capacity to improve is very good. The headteacher and Religious Education subject leader have a very good overall view of the school's strengths and development needs. All staff and governors, including the parish priest, were involved in the self-evaluation process of the Catholic life and Religious Education. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and comprehensive. Formal monitoring by the RE subject leader and RE governor ensures that areas for development are identified and will feed into the next whole school improvement plan. Staff are committed to the success of the school.

### **What the school should do to improve further.**

- Improve the monitoring of Religious Education teaching and learning by including lesson observations by senior staff as well as by the subject leader and by providing individual feedback to teachers.
  - Improve the quality and quantity of resources for both Religious Education teaching and learning to enhance pupils' enjoyment of the subject and for reflecting, by attractive displays, the Catholic life of the school.
  - Ensure that 10% of curriculum time is allocated to Religious Education by monitoring this at the start of every year.
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## **The Catholic Life of the School**

### **Leadership and Management**

**Grade 2**

Leadership and management are strongly focused on maintaining and improving the school's Catholic identity. The mission statement describing the school as "a living Catholic community" is known and understood well by the pupils and pervades the daily life of the school. Governors actively support the school's Catholic mission. Pupils feel valued and special especially during achievement assemblies. They appreciate the caring, encouraging attitude of the staff who listen to them and help with any difficulties. Pupils described the school as "well-organised" especially since the new headteacher arrived. They welcome the extra responsibilities given them recently and respond to these in a very confident manner. The school leadership promotes well pupils' spiritual and moral development. For example the range of pupils' visits and visitors during Science Week enhanced pupils' knowledge and wonder of the world around them. Good links exist with the parishes. RE work is displayed regularly in the churches. The headteacher is committed to further strengthen these links. Partnership with parents is good with many parents involved during science week. The pupils regularly organise and raise money for charities. There is an active school council.

### **The Sacramental and Prayer life of the School.**

**Grade 2**

Eucharist and worship are central to the school's life. Mass is attended by the whole school on feast days and by older pupils on a termly basis. Every pupil is involved in some way in delivering class Mass. Services of Reconciliation, with confession opportunities, are held twice a year. Prayer is an integral part of each school day. Pupils are given a variety of experiences using traditional prayers and joining adult led prayers. Their suggestions for prayer intentions are used. Pupils compose their own prayers for worship as well as during Religious Education work. Prayer tables in each classroom are well presented. Worship makes a good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. Opportunities are given for pupils to reflect on the message. During worship observed, music and an attractive prayer focus were used well to create a calm atmosphere. Pupils participated by reading and by their contribution of ideas. Worship engages learner's interest and they listened attentively. Pupils' sing enthusiastically. Classes lead assemblies to which parents are invited. Formal monitoring of worship is planned for the future. The chaplaincy provision is very effective in supporting the staff, pupils and families.

## **Achievements and Standards in Religious Education.**

### **How well do the learners achieve?**

**Grade 2**

Pupils make good progress in the school. They have a secure understanding of the life and teachings of the Catholic Church and are able to apply this to their own lives and experience. Standards are overall good although they are very good in Foundation, Key Stage 1 classes and in the sacramental preparation class. Pupils achieve age appropriate levels of attainment and many exceed this. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and this is reflected in their behaviour and attitudes. The quality and amount of written work varies considerably between classes. The religious education curriculum is fully covered in the younger pupils' classes. The pupils enjoy their religious education lessons especially those linked to learning about other religions and involving practical activities. In lessons observed the children were very attentive, keen to answer questions and behaved very well.

### **Quality of Teaching and Learning in Religious Education**

**Grade 2**

Teaching is overall good with some outstanding aspects. The lessons observed were well planned; the learning objective was made explicit; the teachers were confident with the subject and the pace was lively. Teaching used visual material to stimulate interest and the tasks chosen to consolidate the learning motivated the pupils. Differentiation seen was by outcome and extra support given. Teachers make formal assessments for each topic and these are used to inform future planning. They are not yet used to record all pupils' progress. Marking was variable throughout the school and usually gave praise to effort and ideas. The best marking seen led pupils to know how they could improve and these improvements were evidenced. Parents are regularly informed about Religious Education topics and how they can support this learning at home.

### **Quality of the Religious Education curriculum.**

**Grade 3**

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory and suitable for the ages and abilities of the learners. Religious Education follows the "Here I Am" programme and extra learning, based on the Church's liturgical year, is added. The parish priest and the church are used as a resource for learning. At present all pupils are developing understanding of the Stations of the Cross. The correct amount of time for Religious Education is not allocated on the timetable but is supplemented by intensive work during Mass preparation and learning linked to worship. The pupils also learn about other faiths. RE learning is sometimes linked to other areas of the curriculum such as science, literacy, drama, art and information and communication technology (ICT). The curriculum in RE makes a contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils.

### **Leadership and Management in Religious Education**

**Grade 2**

Leadership and management of Religious Education are good. The experienced Religious Education subject leader manages the subject well. She is supported by the new headteacher and governors. She supports the teachers effectively by leading training. Formal monitoring of planning, assessment and books with clear feedback ensures that these areas of Religious Education are evaluated. She has not yet observed lessons. Action plans for improvement result from the monitoring but do not focus strongly enough on consistency of standards throughout the school. The RE governor meets regularly with the RE subject leader and reports back to the governing body. Equality of opportunity is promoted very well, and any discrimination is viewed seriously and tackled immediately. Funding for Religious Education is low and resources for delivery of the curriculum are limited.