

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

***St Alban's Catholic Primary School***

DFES No: 873/3360

URN: 110841

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Mr Mark Broadbent

Headteacher: Mr Joseph McCrossan

Denominational Inspector:

Mrs Marion Betts

Dates of Inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> May 2016

Date and grade of previous inspection: July 2010. Grade 1

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL**

St Alban's Catholic Primary School is a one form entry school for pupils from 4 to 11 years. There are 210 pupils on roll, 96% of whom are Catholic. The school has had a stable staff for the last four years with 55% of teachers Catholic. It is located in Cambridge city centre, and serves the parishes of Our Lady and English Martyrs and St Philip Howard. The school receives pupils from a range of social backgrounds, with a significant number from advantaged professional families. The school population has pupils from a diverse range of minority ethnic backgrounds with most speaking English fluently.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL.**

**Grade: 1**

St Alban's School is an outstanding Catholic school. The extremely strong Catholic identity permeates the school's daily life. Pupils develop a deep understanding of their faith through the richness of their experiences of the Catholic traditions of worship, prayer and service. The powerful leadership of the headteacher, senior staff and governors is instrumental in very effectively developing the school's Catholic identity; in inspiring and empowering staff to fully fulfil their roles; and in fostering pupils' growing awareness of their Catholic faith and their understanding of how to live this out in their lives. Relationships within the school are excellent and reflect Christian respect and concern for others. Pupils are proud of their school describing it as a place "where everyone is friendly to everyone else". Pupils' personal, spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding and this is reflected in their very good behaviour and positive attitudes towards school life. The Catholic ethos is tangible around school with many vibrant and attractive Catholic and religious education (RE) displays. Staff are committed to the high profile given to religious education. Pupils make good progress throughout their school life in knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and other religions.

### **What the school needs to do to improve further?**

- Embed the new RE assessment format so continuing to monitor RE curriculum coverage and pupils' progress so that any attainment gaps recorded can be actioned, monitored and rectified.
- Continue to moderate pupils' RE outcomes within the school and along with other Catholic schools to raise teachers' confidence in their judgements.
- Increase pupils' involvement in planning worship by providing opportunities for groups of pupils to prepare and present short acts of worship within their class setting.

### **PUPILS. How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups.**

**Grade 1**

The extent to which pupils benefit from the school's Catholic life is outstanding. Pupils know the school's motto which is intrinsically linked to the school song. They understand well the mission statement and can explain the values the school holds, and the impact these make on their behaviours and attitudes. Pupils are enthusiastic to celebrate the wide range of religious experiences and value the enrichment opportunities that the school offers them. Pupils show respect for the cultural diversity of others within the school community and outside it, resulting in the school's achievement of the national "Equality award". Pupils display a concern for the well-being of others as demonstrated by the support for fund-

raising activities for charities, and by older pupils supporting the younger ones. Pupils appreciate the regular opportunities given to them to express their own views and ideas and are confident that these are followed up and action taken. Pupils' achievements are recognised, valued and celebrated. Pupils praise the friendly attitude of the teachers and teaching assistants who are kind and caring, listen to them, encourage them to achieve, and help solve any problems.

All pupils respond well to worship, and the prayer life of the school. They listen attentively, and participate respectfully and with ease. Pupils have a good understanding of the liturgical year and enjoy experiencing its celebrations. The school choir's high quality of the singing of parts of the Mass enhances the atmosphere and reverence of the liturgy. Pupils' own prayers are valued and regularly prayed. Worship contributes very well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupil chaplains are involved weekly in preparing and presenting a meditation and pupils enjoy taking an active part in the daily assemblies. Class Mass and liturgy are organised by teachers with contributions from the pupils. Involving more of the older pupils to prepare and present their own acts of worship in small groups to their class, could extend this valuable learning opportunity to a greater number of pupils.

Pupils know RE is an important subject and through it develop a sound knowledge of the Catholic faith. They achieve age appropriate RE levels of attainment and many exceed the national expectations. Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons especially when given practical tasks such as designing prayer mats for Muslims using many motivating and varied materials. They enjoy opportunities to discuss and share opinions with each other. For example halfway through the task of writing as if they were a Muslim child about different aspects of Islam's religious practices, pupils shared their work with others receiving helpful suggestions and comments and so improving the outcomes. Pupils are keen to learn about other faith traditions and say it helps them to respect other cultures. Experienced teaching assistants give good support to groups of pupils. Work is presented well and demonstrates a range of interesting tasks. Pupils' responses in lessons and in their RE books show evidence of the increased opportunity they are given for reflection and this promotes their growing depth and maturity of thought and opinions.

## **LEADERS AND MANAGERS. How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the school?**

### **Grade 1**

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are deeply committed to their vision for promoting a strong spiritual purpose and developing the school's Catholic ethos. The school mission statement "Believe, Achieve, Succeed" is clearly communicated and understood by all and inspires the school community. Since the last diocesan inspection the school has not remained complaisant but continued to develop further. The school's rigorous monitoring of RE lessons, pupil opinions and data and the many opportunities given to staff to develop their skills of working within a Catholic school, are key factors of their success. The school motto "Christ be our Light" was devised by all stakeholders and it is known and understood by the whole school community. Therefore this development issues from the last diocesan inspection has been fully achieved. The vibrant Catholic displays and interesting educational environment very effectively promotes the school's caring ethos, and celebration of the faith. The school is a welcoming inclusive community where all members are respected and valued. Parents are very positive about the school and its provision of Catholic education. They receive Christian literature weekly and seasonally to use together with their children. Governors fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities. They are very supportive and regularly review and evaluate the work of the school. Together with the headteacher, governors are instrumental in promoting Catholic education to a wider community by pressing for the building of another Catholic school in the city; by devising "Footprints of

Faith” trails used by other church schools; and by being willing for this school’s staff to support another Catholic school leadership. The school has strong links with the church.

Religious education is well supported by the school leadership, hence ensuring this subject has a very high profile in line with other core subjects. The religious education subject leader effectively guides and supports staff to deliver quality lessons; to improve their skills through training opportunities; and to develop RE assessment procedures in line with diocesan directives. All aspects of religious education teaching and learning are monitored rigorously and a clear direction for improvement has been set. Since the last diocesan inspection the school has continued to develop RE assessment further and a new system has been introduced which highlights very well gaps in class coverage and individual’s progress within each attainment target strand. Action is being taken and extra support given as a result of the analysis of outcomes using this assessment system. Moderation of pupil assessments is being undertaken within school and through collaboration with the local Catholic partnership. The improvement issue from the last diocesan inspection has therefore been fully completed. The school plans to involve pupils more in knowing what they need to do to achieve a high outcome. The RE governor is committed to her role, supports pupils’ knowledge of liturgy and regularly monitors pupil achievement data, pupil perceptions and planned RE developments. The RE budget is generous and in line with that given to other core subjects. Religious education is very well resourced. Visits are undertaken to other faiths’ places of worship and visitors invited to share their expertise. For example on the inspection day a Muslim shared with pupils his knowledge and practices of Islam.

### **PROVISION. How effective is the provision for Catholic education: Grade 1**

Worship, Mass and prayer are central in the school’s life. Pupils’ liturgical formation is extremely well planned to ensure the widest possible experiences of the richness of the Catholic tradition of prayer and worship. For example responding to this “Year of Mercy” each class planned, designed and had made a door for their classroom linked to a gospel value and parable. The worship observed by the inspector very effectively used visual presentation, pupils’ individual skills and talents, and open questions with time given for pupils to reflect on their response. Worship themes are well planned. A calm reflective atmosphere is created daily for worship. Attractive prayer tables are used well as a focus for prayer. The parish priests make significant contributions to the sacramental life of the school. Reconciliation services take place at key times of the liturgical year. Pupils regularly attend Mass and liturgy in school and in the church. For example young children were appropriately led by a priest through the praying of the rosary.

The quality of religious education lessons overall is good with outstanding features observed. The best teaching very effectively used visual presentation and a lively pace with interesting activities that motivated pupils to achieve well. Teachers demonstrate sound subject knowledge and are supported by skilled assistants. Marking is thorough with appropriate praise and constructive feedback that effectively enable pupils to extend their learning. Self Improvement Time (SIT) is given before this extension learning is completed. This has led to a deeper and more thoughtful response from pupils with the result that they achieve a higher quality of outcomes.

The school’s religious education curriculum meets all requirements of the Bishop’s Conference. At least 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education following the diocesan scheme using additional resources to enhance certain areas of learning. Other faiths are studied three times a year. Tasks often have cross curriculum links with other subjects for example Art, Craft Drama, ICT, and Literacy. Pupils are strongly encouraged to become aware of the demands of religious commitment and hence the curriculum contributes very well to pupils’ spiritual, moral and social development. Governors have

devised an RE entitlement document which is used during their monitoring and in this way ensures quality religious education is delivered to all pupils. Attractive religious education displays give added value to this core subject.

The inspector wishes to thank the headteacher, governors, staff and children for their very warm welcome and for contributing to her enjoyable and interesting visit.



## **EAST ANGLIA DIOCESAN SCHOOLS' SERVICE**

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### **Letter to pupils explaining the findings from the Diocesan Inspection**

23<sup>rd</sup> May 2016

Dear Pupils

#### **Diocesan Inspection of St Alban's Catholic Primary School**

Thank you for making me so welcome at your school. Thank you to all those pupils in the choir who sang so beautifully, to the pupil chaplains who led a very thoughtful meditation and to those who came to speak to me during the afternoon. I was very interested in your views of your school. I enjoyed being present at each class' Religious Education lesson. Well done to everyone involved.

Here are some of the things I especially liked:

- The strong Catholic ethos of your school that provides many opportunities for a wide range of prayer and worship activities.
- You are friendly and considerate to each other and are well cared for by your teachers.
- The school provides very good opportunities for you to develop spiritually, morally and socially.
- Your enthusiasm as you compare Catholicity with the practices and beliefs of other world religions.

I have asked your teachers to consider giving the older children opportunities to plan and lead in small groups their class worship sessions. I have also asked that after you have done an RE assessment, your results will provide you with information as to how well you are doing and what you need to do to reach the next level. Your teachers will also check from these that you are fully covering the RE curriculum.

Thank you again for your help. I wish you the very best for the future,

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marion Betts  
Diocesan Inspector