

St Aloysius' Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123218
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	340309
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Iain Johnson
Headteacher	Tom Walker
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 June 2007
School address	143 Woodstock Road Oxford Oxfordshire OX2 7PH
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Fifteen lessons were seen and nine teachers were observed. The inspectors held meetings with governors, staff, parents and carers and groups of pupils. The school's work and a wide range of documentation were reviewed. This included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the improvement plan, leaders' monitoring records and pupils' work. Questionnaires from staff and pupils and 90 from parents and carers were analysed and their responses taken into account.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether Year 6 pupils are on track to meet their targets and the strength of learning across Years 3 to 6
- whether inconsistencies in teaching and learning found in the previous inspection have been removed
- the strength of the provision for mathematics and science
- whether the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures have improved since the previous inspection.

Information about the school

St Aloysius' is an average sized primary school. Almost all the pupils live in the north Oxford area and are baptised Catholics. The school has one class of pupils for all year groups other than in the Reception Year of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 3 where there are two classes of pupils. About three quarters of pupils are of White British heritage and there are a few from a wide range of other backgrounds. The proportion of pupils that have special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly moderate learning disabilities, is about half the national average. The school has a high turnover of pupils. This is mainly because many come from a range of different countries for a short period of time while their parents attend Oxford University. For example, of the current Year 6 class, fewer than two thirds of the pupils have been in the school since the Reception Year.

The school has a breakfast club which is managed by the school's governors and was part of this inspection. In addition, there is an after-school club which is privately managed and is subject to a separate inspection. The school has gained Healthy School status and the Sports Activemark.

Following the retirement of the previous headteacher in August 2009, the school had a temporary headteacher until Christmas 2009. A new substantive headteacher took up his post in January 2010.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good and improving school. The recently appointed and highly effective headteacher has already made a positive impact in strengthening leadership and building on the many positive features found at the previous inspection. Senior staff have carefully identified the priorities for further improvement based on rigorous evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are systematically, and speedily, tackling these issues. Improved progress, particularly in mathematics and science is due to the hard work of all staff and governors who share the senior leaders' values and ambitions for the school. Consequently, the school has a good capacity to improve. As one parent, reflecting many positive views said, 'The school has experienced a lot of change since the last Ofsted visit and has come through some uncertainty over the headship. The new headteacher is excellent. He has a clear vision for improvements and is very effective.'

Pupils' attainment is rising and their progress is accelerating, particularly in mathematics and science, due to the increased rigour in assessing and tracking their progress. Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are above those typically found. Recent improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage provision now ensure that children make satisfactory progress in the Reception classes. This results in almost all achieving the expected goals on entry to Year 1. However, at present, both the indoor and outdoor learning spaces are not sufficiently well organised to enable the children to access resources for themselves across all six areas of learning. In addition, insufficient use is made of assessments to ensure that future tasks provide challenge for all groups of children.

In Years 1 to 6, historically, attainment in English is high at the end of Year 6 and the strongest subject. Even though attainment in mathematics and science has been above average, progress in these subjects has not been as strong. However, this is not the case now. Pupils make good progress across the board because teaching is consistently good. The recent and thorough attention paid to strengthening the curriculum for mathematics and science has accelerated progress in both subjects. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to meet their challenging targets. Attainment in science is high. Staff create attractive classrooms with imaginative displays and to provide a positive learning environment. Teachers provide pupils with interesting and engaging tasks. They generally ensure that work is matched well to pupils' needs and make skilful use of questioning to probe their understanding. Learning is good because lessons generally move along at a good pace and keep pupils interested. Even though some inconsistencies in teaching remain, most have been eliminated.

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There is a positive and inclusive atmosphere across the school which stems from the school's Catholic ethos. This results in pupils' good levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are too few opportunities provided for pupils to take responsibility or for them to make a positive contribution to the school or the local community other than that associated with the church. In addition, too little attention has been paid to ensuring that the pupils have a better appreciation of community cohesion across the United Kingdom and globally.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the opportunities provided for pupils to contribute more effectively to the school and develop the school's effectiveness to promote community cohesion.
- Quicken progress and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that better use is made of the indoor and outdoor learning environment to support children in initiating activities for themselves
 - making better use of assessments to ensure that future activities are challenging for all groups of pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

There has been an improving trend in attainment since the previous inspection. Pupils leave Year 6 with attainment that is above average overall and is high in English and science. Many Year 5 pupils already attain the expected level for pupils at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. In most lessons observed, particularly in Years 1 and 2, and in Years 5 and 6, pupils made good progress and sometimes learning was excellent. For example, in an outstanding Year 6 science lesson, pupils were bursting to talk about the exciting and interesting things they had discovered when investigating aspects of light. Pupils enthusiastically measured and created tables to show how many images they could see of a plastic soldier when using two mirrors at different angles. They ingeniously managed to ensure that their investigation was fair. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are carefully identified and they are supported well, mainly by skilled teaching assistants, both in the classroom and when withdrawn for individual and/or group work.

Pupils' good behaviour makes a valuable contribution to their learning. They have a keen sense of right and wrong and a good awareness of social responsibility. This is not fully reflected in levels of attendance which, despite the school's good arrangements, are average. This is largely due to the higher than normal proportion of pupils who take extended holidays. Both parents and carers, and pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are keen to adopt a healthy lifestyle. For example, they thoroughly enjoy the wide range of physical activities provided. Even though pupils relish responsibility, they have limited opportunities to demonstrate initiative and to

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make decisions.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good and sometimes outstanding teaching was observed. Most lessons are planned well with a clear focus on what pupils are expected to learn. Relationships are good because teachers manage pupils well and all classrooms present a calm and purposeful atmosphere though, on occasion, some pupils' loud voices distract others. However, some inconsistencies remain and there are relative weaknesses within this strong and still improving picture of teaching. Sometimes teachers spend too long introducing lessons which drops the pace of learning so that pupils do not move on as quickly as they might.

The curriculum successfully helps pupils to develop their knowledge and skills. Good provision is made in English and is reflected in the pupils' consistently good progress in this subject. Pupils have ample opportunities to develop their oracy skills and for them to develop their writing. There are particularly good opportunities provided for pupils to write across the curriculum. This year, improved opportunities for pupils in Years 1 and 2 to write extended pieces have raised attainment in Year 2. In mathematics and science, provision has improved and is accelerating pupils' progress. The school is appropriately establishing more opportunities for pupils to develop quick mental calculation skills in mathematics and to use and apply their mathematics and science skills in problem-solving.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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Good provision is made to support pupils with special educational needs/and or disabilities and for vulnerable pupils. Strong and effective links are established with external agencies and these are used well to support these pupils when necessary. The school is a caring community, where pupils’ welfare is given a high priority. However, the school’s strategies to boost attendance have not been fully successful. Parents and carers are justifiably confident that their children are well looked after at school. A number of parents and carers commented favourably on the good quality breakfast club that provides support for families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The strong partnership within the senior leadership team is sensitive to the needs of the pupils and the headteacher has built on the effective leadership of the interim headteacher. Their recent, but well-established, direction for the work of the school has already enabled significant progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, attainment and progress have strengthened in mathematics and science in particular.

Staff work closely as a team and morale is high with the adults valuing the senior leaders’ open approach. The deputy headteacher’s and assistant headteachers’ monitoring and evaluation skills have been strengthened due to good quality training. They have relished the headteacher’s strategy of distributing leadership to senior and middle managers. Subject leadership has improved considerably and has made a positive impact on pupils’ progress and learning in science and mathematics. Well-conceived action plans, which focus well on priorities established are as a result of methodical and thorough monitoring of provision. This has resulted in a good quality school improvement plan that sets out priorities over the short term before a longer term strategic plan is established. The governors bring a wide range of skills to their role as critical friends. They hold the school to account by requesting explanations and challenging decisions.

Arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are satisfactory with all regulatory requirements being met. Many parents commented on the recent improvements in ensuring that the site is secure. Leaders are successful in promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination. All pupils are valued and supported to achieve their best because the school has successfully removed barriers to learning. Opportunities that develop pupil awareness of other faiths and cultures

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are satisfactorily developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are above those levels typically found particularly in their communication skills. They make satisfactory progress and almost all attain the expected learning goals with many exceeding them. Progress is limited to satisfactory because scrutiny of teachers’ planning reveals that too much time was spent on adult-directed activities and children’s opportunities to learn through play were subsequently limited. This was the case in both the indoor and outdoor learning areas. Although this weakness has been recently addressed and children now have more opportunities to initiate their own learning, it is too early to measure the impact of this on children’s progress particularly in the outdoor learning space. Indoor learning areas have been changed and the zoning of rooms enables a much greater use of child-initiated activities to occur. The children are well cared for and their welfare has a high priority. Relationships are warm and help the children to quickly feel safe and secure.

Although staff note down children’s achievements and progress methodically, these assessments are not sufficiently well used to inform future activities. In particular, assessments are not sufficiently well used to ensure that opportunities for writing and mark-making are challenging. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. There has been a positive impact in changes made since the start of the school year and staff are determined to improve provision and progress further.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about their children’s enjoyment of school and are unanimous in saying that the school keeps their children safe. In addition, a very large majority are happy with their children’s experiences at the school. However, a minority of parents and carers raised concerns about some aspects of the school. These were investigated. Inspection findings show that the school’s arrangements are in line with others in terms of informing parents and carers about their children’s progress and helping them to support their children’s learning. The recent introduction of a 20 minute period at the start of the day during which parents and carers can talk with teachers and review their children’s work is particularly noteworthy. A small minority of parents and carers suggested that the school does not help their children to have a healthy lifestyle. This is not the case. The school has gained the Healthy Schools award which demonstrates its commitment. In addition, school meals are healthy and well balanced and the school’s curriculum includes a suitable focus on both healthy eating and physical exercise. While the school grounds are very limited in space, good use is made of the available facilities to ensure that recommended times for physical activity are exceeded.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Aloysius' Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 90 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 232 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	53	34	38	4	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	43	50	56	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	24	43	48	19	21	5	6
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	31	50	56	7	8	5	6
The teaching is good at this school	30	33	47	52	7	8	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	31	38	42	18	20	4	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	33	40	44	14	16	3	3
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	32	36	46	51	2	2	3	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	29	49	54	9	10	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	27	54	60	6	7	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	31	46	51	7	8	5	6
The school is led and managed effectively	35	39	43	48	7	8	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	45	50	36	40	7	8	2	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

23 June 2010

Dear Pupils



Inspection of St Aloysius' Catholic Primary School, Oxford OX2 7PH

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited you. We enjoyed talking with you when we were finding out about your school. We particularly enjoyed attending your St Aloysius' Day Mass and we realise what an important day 21 June is for you.

Yours is a good school. These are the things that we especially liked:

- You make good progress in your learning so that by the time that you leave the school you attain high levels in English and science and above average levels in mathematics.
- Your behaviour is good and both you and your parents told us that you enjoy school and feel safe.
- Your teachers do a good job. They make sure that you learn well by making your lessons interesting and giving you activities that challenge you.
- Your new headteacher is doing a very good job and he works really well with all the other adults and your governors to make sure that your school gets even better.
- The adults look after you well.

Even in a good school like yours, there are things to do to make it better. We have asked the adults to do two things.

- Provide more opportunities for you to take responsibility and make decisions about some of the ways in which your school works, and help you develop a stronger understanding of how people live across the United Kingdom and globally.
- Ensure that pupils in the Early Years are provided with more chances to choose activities for themselves and that planned activities are just hard enough for the children whether they find learning easy or hard.

We hope that you continue to enjoy your education.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler
Lead inspector

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