



St Aloysius RC Voluntary Aided Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108719
LEA South Tyneside
Inspection number 278033
Inspection dates 10 January 2006 to 11 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Geoffrey Cooper

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Argyle Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Hebburn
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		Tyne and Wear, NE31 1BQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 4832274
Number on roll	235	Fax number	0191 4835457
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Anthony Ford
Date of previous inspection	1 March 2004	Headteacher	Mrs Maria Frazer

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Introduction

When St Aloysius was inspected in March 2004, it was judged to be underachieving because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. The school was subsequently visited on one occasion to monitor its progress. This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Aloysius RC Juniors is an average sized junior school with 235 boys and girls on roll. The school is situated in an area of social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Pupils join the school at the age of seven with skills which are generally above average. The majority of pupils are of white British background and none are learning English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school evaluates its effectiveness as good, whereas inspectors found it to be satisfactory with some well established strengths. The school's previous designation as underachieving no longer applies.

Among its main strengths are:

- a positive ethos strongly encourages learning
- staff work with confidence and optimism
- the improving quality of teaching
- activities planned for pupils are stimulating and motivating, and
- pupils make good progress in their personal qualities; behaviour is exemplary.

Sustained improvement has been made since the previous inspection. All areas of previous strength have been maintained and new strengths are being securely established. This is the cumulative effect of resolute leadership and management, with the enthusiastic cooperation of staff. Inspectors agree with most of the detail of the school's self-evaluation. Morale in the school is high, ensuring a good capacity to improve.

Weaknesses are being dealt with effectively. Although standards are now satisfactory, the school continues to find difficulty maintaining the rate of progress in English, particularly in writing, given pupils' standards on entry. Good school procedures for tracking progress and marking are not always used consistently.

The quality of the care, guidance and support for pupils is good; consequently, pupils' personal development is also good. Pupils benefit from a well planned curriculum which provides stimulating and motivating activities for them. Good leadership and management foster a positive ethos, which strongly encourages learning. Value for money is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

The school should raise standards in English, mathematics and science by:

- improving teaching and learning through increasing the pace of lessons and raising expectations, particularly in writing
- ensuring that pupils have a good understanding of their progress and their own personal targets
- monitoring the quality of marking, and checking that pupils consistently get appropriate feedback about what they do well and how they could improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are average in mathematics and a little above in science but, in English, they have remained stubbornly below average over the past three years. However, although attainment on entry would suggest otherwise, work

seen during inspection indicates improving standards and better achievement in all three subjects, although standards in writing are still not as high as they should be.

Very ambitious targets were set in 2005 and to the school's credit they were met in mathematics but missed in English by a considerable margin. There is a continuing but narrowing gap in English between prior and current attainment. Pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress in English this year and much of their writing is fluent, expressive, imaginative and accurate.

Inspection evidence, supported by detailed tracking of progress, shows that there are no differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils, except more able pupils in English did not achieve as well as they should have in the 2005 national test. Boys and girls achieve equal standards and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of learners are good. Pupils enjoy their work in school and this is reflected in their good attendance. The school provides a safe environment for the pupils. Their behaviour is exemplary and relationships are very good throughout the school, underpinned by its caring ethos. Pupils respond well to school rules and they accept responsibility willingly. As a result of initiatives brought about by the school council, there are 'buddy benches' in the play areas, giving pupils another safe place to go to during breaks.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is good, underpinned by the school's strong Catholic ethos. Whole-school assemblies promote the Christian faith, giving pupils good opportunities to participate. They gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures and religions through personal, social and health education lessons and a range of activities and visitors. One example is the annual 'European Week', when pupils study elements of culture from another country. The sound acquisition of basic skills supports pupils' future economic well-being. Pupils understand the importance of physical fitness, healthy lifestyles and a balanced diet. School meals provide healthy options and pupils make sensible choices at lunchtimes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. The quality has improved well since the previous inspection, resulting in better progress. This has helped pupils to overcome significant past underachievement. Teachers plan work satisfactorily to meet the specific needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Pupils' positive attitudes and excellent behaviour prepare them well for learning. They concentrate well on tasks, getting through a good volume of work. Pupils' attentive

listening and cooperation strongly support their progress, particularly when they work with their talking and writing partners. Pupils understand what they are expected to learn in lessons because they know lesson objectives and success criteria. However, they are uncertain about their longer term targets for improvement.

Teaching is well supported by positive relationships and very effective management of pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use to plan lessons effectively. Consistent use of the school's house point system also encourages the pupils.

Some inconsistencies remain in teaching and learning and weaknesses are being dealt with effectively. The pace of lessons is generally good, but less so in writing. Teachers employ good questioning strategies that clarify what is being learned and move on the pace of pupils' work. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. Although the best marking acknowledges what has been done well and gives guidance about what needs to be done to improve, this is not always the case.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and now matches the needs of most pupils well. Lessons are enriched by visitors and after school clubs as well as a wide range of visits, for example, to local places of interest. On many occasions, top level sportsmen and sportswomen have come into school to inspire and motivate pupils. An annual residential visit is provided for Year 6 pupils and the work from this is well integrated into the curriculum. Changes have been made in the light of the school's self-evaluation. For example, an effective and flexible use of ability groups and paired working is supporting the school's drive to raise standards in English. Pupils now have many more opportunities to practise their writing in subjects other than English, for example, history and geography. Teachers are increasingly encouraged to be creative and imaginative when planning lessons, and this is helping to increase pupils' motivation. The national strategies have been used well in English and mathematics and local authority consultants have worked effectively to support the school's agenda for raising attainment, particularly in English, although the school has some way to go to improve results in this subject.

Resources are generally good, with information and communication technology being particularly well catered for. The local area and facilities are used well to supplement curricular activities in lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Pupils trust the staff and know who to turn to if they have personal problems. In turn, all staff are highly supportive of the pupils in their care and this is underpinned by the Catholic ethos of the school.

Parents and carers are provided with good information in support of their children's progress. The school operates an 'open-door' policy and parents are welcome to come

to school to discuss any concerns they may have. Pupils say they feel safe in school and are free from bullying.

Good transition procedures are in place. The school actively seeks links with the secondary school in addition to the customary transition visits. As a result of Year 5 pupils visiting the infant feeder school, new entrants to Year 3 are made to feel secure because they have a Year 6 pupil that they know as a 'buddy'.

Good use is made of a range of outside speakers to alert pupils to some of the key risks relating to health and safety. A detailed system of pupil tracking has been introduced but pupils are not clear about their long term personal targets. The school has adopted the local authority policies on child protection and staff have received appropriate training. Good procedures are in place to identify vulnerable children. Risk assessments are thorough and up to date, in line with a written health and safety policy.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has successfully led the school through a period of improvement which has done much to put in place strategies that are beginning to eliminate all the underachievement found at the last inspection. In this, the headteacher has been supported well by the other senior managers and subject leaders, which was not the case at the time of the previous inspection. This ensures good teamwork, with everyone committed to driving the work of the school forward.

Leadership and management have brought about good improvements in teaching and learning and enlivened the curriculum, with the result that most pupils make at least satisfactory progress and the school is well placed to make the further, necessary improvements. For example, the school still has some way to go to improve its national test results in English.

The school has good strategies for evaluating its strengths and areas for development. A rigorously watchful eye is kept on planning and the quality of lessons. Regular checks are made on the outcomes of pupils' tasks. Good quality feedback to staff is successful in improving performance, resulting in better quality learning, improving standards and an interesting curriculum.

The work of the governing body is thorough and perceptive. For example, they ensure that for the longer term, the school has valuable strategies for improving its provision through its good development planning. This process involves all staff and governors at an appropriate level. A regular check is kept on the performance of teachers, enabling their strong professional development. However, performance management does not yet extend to other staff.

A wide view is taken of the school's responsibilities, consulting with outside interested parties. This has been an important factor in recent improvement.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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St Aloysius RC Voluntary Aided Junior School

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12 January 2006

Dear Children

Thank you for helping with our recent visit to your school. We enjoyed working alongside you in lessons and having interesting conversations at lunchtime. The discussion held with the school council was particularly helpful.

Your school has a number of good points. The first is that your behaviour is exemplary, which is a very important quality in becoming a good learner. Overall, you get on very well with each other and have some important mature qualities because the adults in the school set you a good example. You show a lot of interest in your work and you get some stimulating and exciting things to do. You show respect for Mrs Frazer and other adults. You are right to do so because they are providing good opportunities for you to enjoy school and do well.

There are three things we have asked your school to do better. The first is for you to make even better progress in writing. The next is to make lessons even more exciting by making them a bit livelier so that you learn even faster than you do now. Finally to make sure that you are sure that you know how to improve your work and know what your own target for progress is. You have a big part to play in making these changes!

Thank you for all your help and friendliness.

Geoff Cooper

Inspector