

# St Louis Catholic Middle School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 124863          |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | SUFFOLK         |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 293132          |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 28–29 June 2007 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Peter Jones     |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Middle deemed secondary  |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Voluntary aided  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 9–13   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 598  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mr Bernard Edge  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mrs Anne Mansfield   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 23 September 2002  |
| <b>School address</b>                     | St Andrew's Street South<br>Bury St Edmunds<br>Suffolk<br>IP33 3PH |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01284 753495   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01284 749387   |

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|--------------------------|-----------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Louis Middle School is the only Catholic middle deemed secondary school in the Diocese of East Anglia. Most pupils transfer to the school from four local Catholic first schools, but the school also admits pupils from a large number of other schools in Suffolk and bordering counties. About three-quarters of the pupils are baptised Catholics. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. About 15% of the pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities, and for about 5%, English is an additional language. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below expectation.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St. Louis Catholic Middle School is a good school with some outstanding features. The school ensures good achievement and above average standards through consistently good teaching, tracking of pupil progress and effective intervention to support learning.

Pupils and staff approach learning as an enjoyable and challenging joint venture, and the school has a very happy atmosphere. St Louis' has an excellent reputation with parents who value the outstanding personal development it provides for their children. The excellent spiritual, moral and social development of the pupils reflects the strong religious and moral ethos of the school. The school gives pupils a good range of cultural experiences, although preparation for life in an increasingly culturally diverse society is not as strong as some other aspects of their personal development.

Pupils' behaviour in classes and around the school is excellent, and relationships between pupils and teachers are very good. Teaching is good and some outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection. There is a good level of expertise amongst the teachers and learning support assistants, and they are good at sharing their expertise with each other. The curriculum is outstanding and successfully meets the differing needs of the pupils including those who have learning difficulties or disabilities. The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of sports, drama and out-of-school visits.

The care, guidance and support the school provides for pupils is good and is a significant strength. Families and pupils are well known to all the adults in the school who provide a good level of personal care and support. There are generally good assessment procedures for monitoring pupils' progress. The use of pupil-level academic data by different subjects and teachers to ensure that all pupils make maximum progress is not yet fully in place, but has improved and is the focus of development work by middle managers.

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and has a very clear view of the characteristics and quality of education for which the school is aiming. She is ably supported by an effective senior leadership team. Leaders and managers at all levels promote high quality of care and education. Governors are involved well in supporting the school. The points for improvement from the last inspection have been addressed. The school evaluates its own performance particularly accurately, and clearly demonstrates that the skills and commitment necessary to improve the school still further are in place.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Further raise standards and achievement by using data more consistently across classes and subjects.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

The standards which pupils attain are above average and they make good progress. Standards at the end of Year 6, as shown by national tests, have been significantly above the national average over the last four years. Pupils leave at the end of Year 8 with standards significantly above expected levels, showing improvement and consolidation of the levels reached at the end of Year 6. In English, mathematics and science pupils reach these standards and in most other subjects they do at least as well, with art, music and physical education being particularly

strong. The targets set by the school in conjunction with the local authority are challenging, and in 2006 the school matched or exceeded the expected standards.

Testing when pupils start at the school in Year 5 shows that attainment on entry in English, mathematics and science is below levels expected for pupils of this age. Results of these tests indicate that science and mathematics are weaker than English. The school does well to ensure good achievement and does so through consistently good teaching, tracking of pupil progress and effective intervention to support weaknesses. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities progress well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The school's strong religious and moral ethos ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Provision for cultural development is generally good, but not enough emphasis is currently given to helping pupils prepare for life in a multi-cultural society. Pupils' preparation for life in an increasingly diverse society is not as strong as other aspects of their personal development. Pupils' behaviour in classes and around the school is excellent. Working relationships between pupils and with their teachers are outstanding and characterised by a high level of mutual respect. A number of pupils have trained as mentors for other pupils and this provides a high level of personal development for both. Attendance is above average. Pupils have excellent attitudes to work and report that they enjoy coming to school. They have a particularly well developed understanding of what is needed to maintain a healthy lifestyle and how to stay safe. The school and its pupils make a very positive contribution to the local community both through the church and by involvement with a range of organisations, such as the local hospital. The skills that pupils develop to contribute to their future well-being are consistently high. This is especially so of literacy and numeracy skills. The School Council is an influential body which makes a strong contribution to pupils' understanding of how a democratic organisation works.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good overall and some outstanding teaching was observed during the inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge; know their courses and schemes of work well. They teach confidently and engage the interest of pupils with skilfully planned, challenging lessons matched to pupils' level of ability and learning needs. Good use is made of teaching resources to enrich the quality of learning. Where teachers teach outside their main area of expertise, they are given good professional support by subject leaders to planning lessons effectively. This ensures pupils are taught well and the momentum of progress is maintained. Teachers are developing the use of targets based on tracking data to make pupils aware of what they have achieved and how to move on to the next grade or level. Not all day-to-day marking is as sharply focused as it needs to be to ensure maximum progress. Homework is used well to support the work done in lessons. Learning support assistants are organised effectively and give well-targeted support to groups and individuals. The pace of lessons is good, and this is helped by the fact that pupils are keen learners who enjoy their work, behave well and show respect for each other and their teachers. The school makes good use of classroom and corridor displays to celebrate and promote pupil achievement.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is extremely well matched to the varying needs of learners, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and the minority who are in the early stages of learning English. Statutory requirements are met, and the subject expertise of teachers is well deployed to provide a broad and balanced curriculum across the four years. Pupils are put into groups according to their ability in English, mathematics, science and French, and this helps to ensure that the curriculum coverage is appropriate to pupils' learning needs. Provision for able, gifted and talented pupils is good, with work that meets their needs and challenges them well and opportunities for extension within a well-established enrichment programme. Annual 'off-timetable' activity weeks enhance the curriculum for all pupils through projects, such as the creation of a fashion show and work with local museums and galleries. Year 7 and Year 8 pupils recently took part in performances and workshops at a local Shakespeare festival for schools. A high proportion of pupils participate in the extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, with a variety of sports, music, drama and out-of-school visits. The range of clubs caters well for pupils' varied interests through, for example, a skipping club, a literary society and a 'global club' to share the cultural backgrounds of pupils and staff.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support of pupils are at the heart of the school's Christian ethos. This is a significant strength of the school. Families and pupils are well known to all the adults in the school who provide an outstanding level of personal care and support. Incidents of bullying or racism are rare and where they occur they are dealt with effectively. Pupils with learning difficulties and those who are in the early stages of learning English are very well supported. The school is successful in providing support for a number of pupils and their families who have recently arrived from Eastern Europe. Secure arrangements for child protection, health, safety and safeguarding children are in place.

There are good assessment procedures for monitoring pupils' progress. The use of the data provided to ensure that all pupils make maximum progress is inconsistent across classes and subjects. Year team leaders have taken responsibility for developing this area of the school's work and improvements are already evident.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. She has a clear vision for the school and has successfully conveyed that vision to the rest of the staff. The management of the school is focused on improvement so that leaders and managers at all levels promote high quality of care and education. Staff are given good opportunities for professional development.

Self-evaluation is accurate, honest and based on a knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The skills of middle managers have recently been enhanced so that year leaders have an oversight of overall academic progress. The school recognises that this is an area for further development. Performance is monitored and evaluated well by senior

staff to set challenging targets for improvement. Leadership and management at the school clearly demonstrate the good skills and commitment necessary to improve the school still further.

The socially inclusive nature of the school is outstanding. Equality of opportunity is actively and successfully promoted so that all pupils are respected and given opportunities to achieve well. There are good links with parents and other agencies, which support the good learning of pupils. Finances are well managed and resources are used efficiently and effectively to secure good value for money. The governing body is effective in discharging its responsibilities, and provides good support for the school.





## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | <b>School Overall</b> |
|---|-----------------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 2   |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | 2   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 1   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | 2   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 2 |

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 2 |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 1 |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 2 |

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 2   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2   |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets   | 2   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 2   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 2   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 2   |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?  | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures?   | No  |
| Does this school require a notice to improve?  | No  |

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

2 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Louis Catholic Middle School, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3PH

Thank you for making us so welcome in your school and for helping us to find our way around. This letter sets out the main points which came out of our inspection.

You are attending a good school which has some outstanding features. You attain above average standards and make good progress because the teaching is good, and some of it is excellent. We found that you enjoy being at the school and take a keen interest in learning. Your parents will be pleased to know that we found your behaviour and attitudes in school to be excellent! We were impressed by the range of after-school and lunchtime activities and clubs you take part in, and you told us that you particularly enjoy the annual activity weeks. We found that the school knows you as individuals and looks after you very well. You receive good support if you have any worries or concerns. The school is led and managed well, and the governors take a keen interest in your welfare. You told us that you like having a School Council, and that it allows you to have a say in what happened at school.

As I said at the start of this letter, your school is a good one. We think that the school could do even better by improving the way it uses information on your progress in different subjects. This will allow all your teachers to judge your progress very accurately so that they can help you achieve even better results.

We really enjoyed being at your school and talking to you. We hope you enjoy your summer holidays when they come and we wish you luck for the future.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Peter R. Jones Lead inspector