

St Aloysius Roman Catholic Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100037
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	307281
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Barnard Payne

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Moran
Headteacher	Mr Jim O'Shea
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2004
School address	Aldenham Street London NW1 1PS
Telephone number	020 7387 9591
Fax number	020 7383 4082

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Many pupils attending this average sized school are from ethnic minority groups and have a first language other than English; around 10% are at an early stage of learning English. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than in most schools. The percentage with learning difficulties and disabilities is also much higher and increasing; these pupils mainly have problems with their behaviour and with speech, language and communication. St Aloysius has the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards and Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. The headteacher has a clear vision, based on extending pupils' opportunities and giving them the skills and confidence to aspire; as he put it in an assembly, 'You need to aim high, if you want to be a doctor or a lawyer...you need to use the talents you have been given by God.'

The pupils make good progress and achieve well because the teachers are very effective in building pupils' skills and confidence. Pupils are loyal to staff and very strong relationships are a major factor in developing positive attitudes to learning. Teachers use a wide range of activities that keep pupils actively involved. They provide clear explanations and use questions effectively to encourage pupils to consider ideas in depth. A parent comments that, 'My daughter is well cared for and has gained lots of confidence.'

Standards have fluctuated over the last few years. Currently pupils are on course to reach average standards in English, mathematics and science. Progress in lessons and work by all groups of pupils is good in English and science and satisfactory in mathematics. Progress in speaking and listening is outstanding. The school has prioritised achievement in reading, writing, speaking, and listening over the past two years, recognising the challenges many pupils have with speech, language and communication. The school has been particularly successful in encouraging boys to read more. The emphasis the school places on the acquisition of literacy skills is a significant factor in the good progress the pupils make but it has more to do to raise standards further in mathematics. The use of practical work, problem solving and investigation in mathematics is increasing but this has not yet had a full impact on achievement. In addition, some of the marking of the pupils' mathematics work is not precise or detailed enough to help the pupils to improve rapidly. Pupils' good acquisition of investigative skills has a major impact on their progress in science.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development reflects the wide-ranging activities the school provides. These include meeting representatives from a variety of professions so that pupils are encouraged to set themselves high personal targets. They make significant contributions to their own school community, taking on responsibilities that improve all pupils' enjoyment of school, such as becoming playground friends and running after school activities. They also have an impact locally, for example liaising with the local community regarding making roads safe for pedestrians. Pupils enjoy school, reflected in their good attendance and positive attitudes.

The headteacher is transforming the school environment, refusing to use the limitations of accommodation as an excuse and making use of every available space. The staff team strongly shares the school's values and sense of direction. The school recognises that systems for monitoring, evaluation and target setting are recent and not yet embedded in its work. It also knows that, while it sets itself challenging targets, its national test results, year on year, do not yet reflect its high ambitions for pupils. Taking account of the significant improvements the school has made in recent years, including increasing levels of challenge for all groups of pupils, more effective use of assessment information and more effective curriculum leadership, the school shows it has good capacity to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed systems for monitoring, evaluation and target setting to ensure pupils make consistently good progress towards their targets.
- Raise standards in mathematics by implementing fully the plans to make numeracy more practical and investigative and through more precise marking that helps pupils to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Due to very effective teaching, pupils make rapid progress in acquiring independence during Year 3 and continue to make good progress as they move through the school. By the end of Year 6, pupils are on course to reach the national average in English, mathematics and science. Progress in raising standards in mathematics is slower than in English because younger pupils are not adept at working independently to carry out mathematics investigations; the school is addressing this as a key priority. Because the school places a strong emphasis on acquiring skills in reading and writing, pupils with a first language other than English make good progress. Pupils' progress in acquiring speaking and listening skills is outstanding. They regularly answer in extended sentences, building and sharing their ideas confidently. Those with speech and language difficulties do well because staff use strategies designed to build their skills in using written and spoken language confidently; for example, teaching assistants lead short, focused sessions with small groups to develop phonics skills, getting pupils to apply their knowledge in familiar contexts. In the most recent tests, fewer than average numbers reached higher levels in English and mathematics, but improved provision for the more able pupils is leading to them also making good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils feel safe and secure because staff are friendly and approachable. They are very proud of their responsibilities and are confident that the school takes their views seriously. The school's Playground Friends scheme ensures pupils always have someone to play with and talk to in the playground, which one pupil says, 'helps to make us happy if we are sad'. Older pupils run clubs for younger pupils, including games activities. Pupils also enjoy working with skilled sports coaches. The school council is extensively involved in improvements, such as drawing up playground rules. Pupils are highly knowledgeable about making healthy lifestyle choices. In science, pupils in Year 3 completed food diaries and drew bar graphs representing types of foods the class eats; these were then analysed in terms of health benefits. The very strong emphasis on developing basic skills prepares pupils well for their future economic well-being. A variety of speaking and listening and teamwork activities leads to pupils having confidence in what they have to say and presenting themselves well. Older pupils recently won first prize in an enterprise initiative, reflecting a high level of business-related knowledge. They have many opportunities to raise funds for charities and empathise with others less fortunate than themselves.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers enthuse and engage pupils and this has a direct impact on their progress. They plan work effectively to cater for different levels of ability and have an informed knowledge of the skills pupils need. Effective teamwork with teaching assistants enables teachers to pinpoint and address the barriers to learning that individuals face. Teachers place a strong emphasis on making literacy and numeracy relevant to pupils. For example, pupils often apply their skills in new contexts, such as collecting and presenting numerical data as part of a science investigation; or using language with precision to help set up an investigation in mathematics. Having targeted literacy skills over the past two years, the school has focused this year on developing teaching and learning in mathematics with an emphasis on practical experience and this is leading to improvements, which are evident in lessons and in pupils' books. This is a more recent initiative than those used in English, which is why progress in mathematics shows less improvement. Classrooms are full of strong messages about language, from displays of pupils' writing to 'working walls' showing work in progress. Teachers assess pupils' work thoroughly and use this to plan future work. Pupils receive clear feedback and guidance and this is particularly effective in English, reflecting the emphasis the school has given to this area. In some mathematics books, marking is too general to provide clear areas for improvement linked to individual pieces of work. Teachers consistently share success criteria with pupils, which enables them to assess their own progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's curriculum reflects the value it places on pupils learning to make choices and acquire the skills to be independent. Pupils receive clear messages about high aspirations and achievement. The school overcomes the limitations of its accommodation to provide a very broad and stimulating range of learning activities. Pupils receive outstanding preparation for their future economic well-being. Many activities are rooted in the acquisition and application of literacy and numeracy skills. Through using its Central London location, the school ensures pupils visit a variety of interesting places and use this as part of their personal development; for example, pupils meet representatives from different professions and significantly extend their understanding of the opportunities available to them. The curriculum ensures that pupils are involved in a variety of ways in learning to make informed choices regarding healthy lifestyles, from surveys of their own eating habits to Year 6 pupils' involvement in planning after-school activities. The school provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop the self-confidence to present themselves and their ideas well; this is due to the emphasis the school gives to developing precision in using language. Excellent singing in assemblies is the result of the high quality of provision for music.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school knows its pupils and their families extremely well. It uses its tracking systems effectively to monitor progress and target support. The school has significantly developed its liaison with external agencies and a systematic approach has been set up to ensure consistent communication to address the needs of individual pupils. The learning mentor also plays a key

role in supporting pupils. For instance, she provides those with behaviour difficulties with effective strategies to resolve conflict. There are clear induction procedures for pupils who start school at different points of the school year. Small group support programmes for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and for pupils that are more able are very well planned, and effectively led by teaching assistants, who make a strong contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils have a good knowledge of their learning targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has inspired and built a cohesive and enthusiastic staff team. As a result, staff feel valued and enabled to carry out their roles effectively. They feel very well supported, due to the positive and supportive approach to monitoring and evaluation. More experienced staff share their expertise well, such as modelling good practice in teaching; this extends the skills and subject knowledge of all staff. The senior leadership team ably supports the headteacher and together they are working with staff to implement sharply focused strategic plans. Their passionate belief in the school's values and their care for pupils is evident in the very rigorous tracking systems and support programmes for pupils across the ability range. School improvement planning has improved significantly over recent years. It focuses clearly on raising achievement, with well-defined action points and expected outcomes linked to standards. The highly effective use of school accommodation, learning resources and flexible staff deployment is enabling the school to bring about improvements rapidly. The leadership team work closely with the governing body, providing comprehensive evidence to enable governors to challenge and support the school effectively.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	1
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

19 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Aloysius Roman Catholic Junior School, London, NW1 1PS

Thank you for making our visit to your school so enjoyable. We really appreciated your politeness and friendliness. You helped us by sharing your thoughts on St Aloysius and we agree with you that it is a good school. This is because you have many opportunities to develop your skills and acquire the confidence to try to reach for high targets. Although the school building and playground sizes are limited, you regularly go out of school to visit new people and places.

We know that you find it difficult to undertake work independently when you first get to the junior school and this makes Key Stage 2 work difficult at first. You soon learn new skills and gain in confidence and this helps you make good progress. We found that because the school places so much importance on reading and writing, even those of you who have recently learned English are confident in using it. You learn to speak maturely and confidently when you express your ideas. The school looks after you well and your teachers are very effective in making lessons interesting and fun. By the end of Year 6, you are well prepared for secondary school and for your future lives. You know a great deal about how to make healthy choices in what you eat and what you do.

Your school continues to improve and it wants you to reach even higher standards in the future. We have asked the school to:

- continue to improve the ways in which the teachers check your progress and set you targets
- raise standards in mathematics by making it real and relevant to you and making sure you always get clear personal targets when work is marked.

You can help by setting high targets for yourself and making sure you know what you have to do to achieve them.

Yours sincerely

Barnard Payne

Lead Inspector