

St Aloysius' RC Voluntary Aided Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108719
Local Authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	324822
Inspection dates	11–12 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Clive Petts

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 (total)	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Richardson
Headteacher	Mrs Carole Godfrey (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2006
School address	Argyle Street Hebburn Tyne and Wear NE31 1BQ
Telephone number	0191 4832274
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Aloysius is a Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided School situated in a residential area close to the centre of Hebburn on the south bank of the River Tyne. Most pupils live in the surrounding area which contains pockets of disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The majority of pupils are from a White British background with a very small number from other minority ethnic groups, but none is at an early stage of learning English. Close to 10% of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is below average. There is an acting headteacher and leadership team which has been in place since the start of the current term.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Aloysius is a good and improving school which gives good value for money. It excels in the personal development of its pupils and the way in which it cares for and supports them and their families. The school has earned the respect and trust of an overwhelming majority of parents. The view of one parent typifies that of many. 'My child is achieving his potential in a very vibrant and stimulating atmosphere where every child is made to feel part of a loving school family'. The school works hard to foster a sense of belonging and achieve high standards within a caring Christian ethos.

Pupils achieve well and they normally reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. More able pupils achieve particularly well in English and mathematics though less well in science. Pupils with particular learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the helpful support they receive. Teaching and learning is generally good. In good lessons challenging questioning demands more complicated thinking and literacy skills are used to enhance the quality of pupils' work. Pupils' achievement has improved since the last inspection because the good curriculum has been adapted to meet their needs and wide interests. The curriculum provides an effective basis for their excellent personal development by providing lively activities, an interesting environment and opportunities for all pupils to boost their self-confidence and take responsibility. Pupils' excellent attendance reflects their high level of enjoyment in school.

Pupils are very aware of the many benefits of adopting a healthy lifestyle. Their experience of other cultures and beliefs prepares them exceptionally well for what life is like in diverse communities. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils continually demonstrate caring and tolerant attitudes towards one another. Excellent care and support are provided for pupils. The school makes sure that all necessary steps are taken to ensure that pupils are safe and their welfare needs catered for so that all can succeed. Parents are delighted with the high quality of care the school provides. They particularly value the many opportunities and activities involving pupils, families and the local community to build positive relationships and boost pupils' confidence and achievement. Exceptionally good use is made of local partnerships and links to augment pupils' learning.

The good leadership of the headteacher is decisive in the school's drive to build on the improvements made in recent years. She is ably supported by acting senior leaders, good quality governance and a hard working, talented staff team. The school demonstrates a good capacity to sustain and build on the good improvements made since the last inspection. The dip in achievement and standards in 2007 tests has been tackled successfully. This is good and careful monitoring and evaluation and effective action is taken to rectify shortcomings. Governors recognise the value of maintaining regular checks on all that the school does to ensure that all pupils do as well as they possibly can.

What the school should do to improve further

- Promote thinking skills to raise achievement and standards in science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter school with broadly average attainment. Results in national tests over the last five years reveal a clear trend of improvement. Typically, pupils make good progress and achieve above average standards. Nevertheless, 2007 test results revealed a slip in achievement and standards. Early indications are that current standards have returned to the previously high level, except in science where fewer pupils reach the higher levels. Considerable improvements in pupils' literacy and numeracy skills have appreciably increased the number who achieved the expected levels in English and mathematics tests. The school has set challenging targets for the current Year 6 and is on course to achieve them. The school's rigorous checking of performance demonstrates that pupils' investigative skills in science are a relative weakness. Effective support provided for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities makes certain they achieve as well as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others and are totally committed to contributing to the success of the school in an atmosphere of trust and tolerance. As a result, their behaviour is excellent and all pupils thrive in happy, safe surroundings. Pupils have a very good understanding of healthy lifestyles. They make sensible food choices and enjoy plenty of exercise. Their excellent attendance reflects the enthusiasm they have for school. Pupils have mature, responsible attitudes because all are expected to join in school and local community activities from an early age. The school council revel in their decision-making role, helping the school to improve. For example, they carefully check the operation of the 'buddy' system they manage and are not afraid to suggest improvements when they think it could work better. Pupils appreciate the many opportunities the school organises to celebrate their success. Good basic skills, pupils' maturity, confidence and their ability to work collaboratively prepare them well for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, consequently pupils achieve well. Teachers are enthusiastic and enjoy excellent relationships with pupils. This has a very positive impact on pupils' level of commitment and attitude to work. The school's careful checking of progress and prompt intervention when progress falters means that increasing numbers of pupils are reaching their challenging targets. Pupils' work is marked regularly and advice given as to how to improve. In the best lessons teachers' questioning requires more complex thinking by pupils to investigate, solve problems and explain what they know and can do. Pupils savour the challenges and are inspired to work even harder. This helps them extend their vocabulary, present arguments and develop their teamwork skills. Occasionally, challenge and pace in lessons slips a little when not enough is done to create small steps for the learning or generate even tougher challenges. Teaching assistants are used effectively to meet the needs of all pupils

but particularly the least able. As a result, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported, engaged and progress well in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum serves all pupils well and a varied range of activities during and beyond the school day provides effective enrichment. This includes music, art, drama and an extensive contribution from sport to inspire and motivate a large number of pupils of all talents to perform really well. For example, the tag rugby team reached the national final last summer. Teachers make good provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Since the last inspection highly successful literacy strategies have led to substantial gains in attainment. For example boys' writing skills are now well above average. Personal, social and health education, with an emphasis on respect for difference, supports personal development really well. The curriculum is enhanced effectively by visits and visitors who help broaden pupils' view of learning. Visits to the local mosque and synagogue and the assistant priest describing what it is like to grow up in Nigeria contribute significantly to pupils' awareness of the world around them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support which reflects the extremely caring ethos underpinned by Christian values. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils and risk assessments are in place. They are thorough and used by all staff. Pupils feel valued, safe and secure in school and this is reflected in their confidence and 'grown-up' attitudes. The school checks pupils' progress rigorously and effectively. It provides an accurate basis from which to set learning targets for pupils. First-rate guidance for pupils on how to improve supports and extends their learning. Only on the odd occasion are pupils not given as much help and information as they need to boost improvements in the quality of their work. The responses from the parent questionnaire demonstrate a high level of confidence in the school to care for and educate their children successfully.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management is good overall. The headteacher, ably supported by acting senior leaders, ensures that the transition from the previous leadership is seamless and sustains the drive for improvement. Effective action is taken to bring about improvements, especially in English, mathematics and personal development and care. Hard work since the last inspection has successfully tackled weakness. School self-evaluation is good. Although occasionally judgements are modest, senior leaders have a secure grasp of the school's strengths and areas where improvement is still required. Teachers are developing their leadership and management expertise as the acting headteacher's ambitions for the school are put into action. Governors bring good support and knowledge to the work of the school. They have a good first hand knowledge of the schools' strengths and are keen to develop their expertise even further. The school's capacity to continue to improve is good.

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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	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Children

Inspection of St Aloysius' RC Voluntary Aided Junior School, South Tyneside, NE31 1BQ

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and appreciated your really warm and friendly welcome. The happy family atmosphere and your keenness to work hard in lessons impressed us. We really enjoyed talking to the members of the school council, seeing you enjoy your Celebration assembly and playing with your friends at playtime. You go to a good and improving school where there are many things which are outstanding.

These are some of the things the school does really well:

- your behaviour and attendance are exemplary and your relationships are excellent
- adults help you all with your learning
- you make good progress because your school makes learning interesting, sets you challenging targets and gives support when you need it. By the time you leave to go to secondary school you reach high standards, especially in English and mathematics
- senior leaders are determined to maintain the improvements your school has made and make sure that you all enjoy your lessons and work hard
- staff care and look after you exceptionally well and provide a range of excellent activities to support your learning.

I have asked your school to improve your education further by making sure you raise your standard of work in science. To do this you will need to think more carefully when carrying out investigations and solving problems.

You all have an important part to play to raise the quality of your work even further. You can help by continuing to listen very carefully to the advice of your staff, thinking carefully about what you are doing and by working as hard as you can.

Thank you for helping us with this inspection. We hope the school will continue to build on its many strengths!

Best of luck

Clive Petts

Lead inspector