

St Louis Catholic Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124863
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	340676
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Graham Preston

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	609
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bernard Edge
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Mansfield
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 22 lessons and spent the majority of inspection time looking at learning. They observed two thirds of teachers, including all full-time teachers. Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders and other staff, governors and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a wide range of school documentation as well as 256 parental questionnaires.

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

- progress of different groups of pupils in all year groups
- the rigour of pupil assessment and tracking data and the extent to which it is understood and used by all staff
- the impact of the strong Christian ethos of the school on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in maintaining staff morale and the momentum for school improvement given the plans for future local reorganisation

Information about the school

St Louis is the only Catholic middle-deemed-secondary school in the Diocese of East Anglia. Consequently it draws its pupils from a wide geographical area including four local Catholic first schools and up to twenty other primary schools. Over 90% of pupils continue their studies in the nearby upper school. Most pupils are of White British heritage with a low proportion of pupils from other ethnic groups. There are a small but significant number of pupils at an early stage of English acquisition. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The school has successfully gained a number of awards including Healthy Schools, Sports Mark and Cultural Champions. It has Extended Schools status and is recognised for the quality of its staff development by the National Association of Professional Teaching Assistants (NAPTA). Under current local authority plans for a two-tier education system, the school is scheduled to close in 2013.

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?**1****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****1**

Main findings

St Louis is an outstanding school. One parent sums up the view of many when she states that "my child is making wonderful academic progress but St Louis offers more than that. He is having an all-round education where he is prepared for a full life of being responsible for himself and others". Another parent talked about the unique blend of compassion for the individual and high expectations of all pupils. To that can be added the wide range of enrichment that make the great majority of pupils eager to come to school. All this is made possible by excellent leadership and the shared commitment of all staff in maintaining a very strong and supportive Christian ethos. Pupils come to the school with above average reading and writing skills though their skills in mathematics and science are slightly below average. Rigorous academic monitoring and good quality teaching and learning ensures that the great majority make good progress. Consequently pupils establish very secure knowledge and skills that enable most of them to achieve high standards.

Their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in pupils showing a great deal of initiative, taking responsibility and showing respect and consideration for others. This is further demonstrated in their excellent behaviour throughout the school. The great majority of pupils really like coming to school and comment that they feel very safe in school. Despite travelling in from other areas of Suffolk as well as Essex and Norfolk, pupils maintain high levels of attendance.

Teaching overall is good with significant amounts of outstanding practice. Lessons are well planned and teaching is well informed and challenging. In lessons, there is an effective balance of whole class, group and individual work so that pupils are fully and often enthusiastically engaged in their learning. Teaching across the school is almost always effective and there is a significant proportion of outstanding practice in, for example, English, art and music. Staff make good use of the interactive whiteboards for presentation but there are too few opportunities to involve pupils in their use. Marking and assessment have improved substantially since the last inspection. Pupils know how well they are doing and some, but not all, are shown how to improve their work. The school makes excellent use of the learning support staff to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well integrated and progress well.

The curriculum is outstanding because of the wide range of enrichment activities across all areas of the school, which are strongly supported by pupils. Creative and innovative practices include having an artist in residence, music performance and recording, a mathematics challenge and regular cross-curricular projects and days. Sports activities are also strong and the school uses its close links with the upper school to gain access

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to better facilities. There is excellent use of information and communication technology (ICT) in some subjects and pupils increasingly make use of ICT in their other curriculum areas. There is also a strong focus on literacy and numeracy across all years, that has enabled the securely good progress of pupils.

The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support is rooted in the very strong and inclusive ethos that emphasises concern for others and personal responsibility. These clear expectations of pupils are constantly emphasised by all staff at all times. Staff are very responsive to pupils' individual needs, which is reflected in the high regard of the local authority for the school's outstanding work with children from vulnerable circumstances.

Very effective leadership has ensured high staff morale with an outstanding commitment and capacity to further school improvement within the context of the future planned closure of the school. Senior leaders and governors work closely in evaluating school provision, a process that now involves all middle leaders. Consequently the school has an accurate, if in some respects an overly modest, picture of itself. The school has rigorous systems for ensuring effective teaching and for tracking and supporting pupil progress. The school invests heavily in the professional development of teachers and support staff. Communication with parents and carers is good though the school recognises that it needs to develop even better ways of reaching parents and carers across a large geographical area. The excellent partnership with other schools, social agencies and a wide variety of local and regional organisations is a key to the school's success.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the best teaching in the school by:
 - ensuring that the outstanding assessment practice evident in some teaching is extended across the school.

■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Good teaching, with a strong focus on numeracy and literacy, enables most pupils to make good progress from their broadly average starting points, so that by the end of Year 6 attainment in the Key Stage 2 national tests are clearly above average in English, mathematics and science.

Progress accelerates in Years 7 and 8 where there is particularly strong teaching and learning across all subjects including humanities, arts and technology. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similarly good or better progress. The few pupils at an early stage of English language acquisition quickly adjust and achieve well.

Pupils say they feel very safe and the great majority like coming to school which is reflected in their high attendance. They greatly enjoy their lessons, particularly when there are varied learning activities. Behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school. They manage to effectively combine an eagerness to participate in lively

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discussion and group work with a respect and consideration for staff and fellow pupils at other times. The outstanding spiritual, moral and social development of pupils is evident throughout the school, reflecting very well the strong Christian ethos. Cultural development is good and the school works hard to provide a wider range of national and international experiences, reflected in much of the pupils' increasing global awareness and support for related charities.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The great majority of teaching is good. About a quarter of that observed was outstanding. Teaching is consistently challenging and well informed because subject specialists either teach or provide support for colleagues across all four years in areas such as art, music, humanities, mathematics and modern foreign languages. The learning support assistants too are well trained and contribute significantly to the progress of all pupils including those with particular needs. The very best teaching provides pupils with a rich variety of experience and activity, makes effective use of ICT and through rigorous assessment and guidance enables pupils to make very good

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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progress. The school recognises the need to ensure that all staff strive for those high standards.

A very high proportion of pupils participate in the wide range of enrichment activities that take place at lunch times and after school. While the school rightly stresses the development of basic skills, the taught curriculum also provides a range of exciting activities, not just in arts, drama and music but also the humanities and science. The curriculum also makes excellent use of local history and the rural economy for residential and other visits.

Outstanding care and guidance underpin the strong and inclusive school ethos. Staff know their pupils well and many parents praise the particularly strong support provided by the class teachers. The school makes excellent use of its close links with the Catholic primary schools and the upper school which help ensure a smooth progression from school to school with no loss of momentum in pupils' progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

All staff and the overwhelming number of parents recognise that the school is very effectively led and managed by an outstanding headteacher and her team. The continuous drive for improvement is typical of their professional commitment.

The school has responded well to the last report and developed excellent systems of monitoring and tracking pupil progress. Teaching is similarly monitored rigorously by both senior and middle leaders and there is considerable investment in staff development of both teachers and support staff. All other aspects of school leadership and management are at least good while the school's links with its different outside partners is outstanding. The Catholic pyramid of schools enables close and constructive planning for the future and smooth pupil transition from school to school. As an inclusive school it actively promotes equality of opportunity for its pupils. The many local community links and initiatives that successfully encourage a concern for others in the world, greatly enrich pupils' learning experience. Excellent relationships with outside social agencies ensure effective child protection and specialist support for particular pupils. Considerable efforts are made to maintain good links with parents including having meetings and one-to-one learning support sessions elsewhere in the county to meet the needs of its large geographical catchment.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
	1
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents have high expectations of the school and the great majority believe they are well met. A number of parents would like to be better informed of their child's progress and better helped to support their child's learning. Many parents comment positively on the good systems of communication with parents. Even so the school recognises it could provide even better information and support to parents through its current plans to develop a much more comprehensive school website. A few parents felt that there could be more support for their children with special educational needs and/or disabilities but inspection evidence showed that most of those children are effectively supported and make particularly good progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Louis Catholic Middle 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 256 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 609 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	117	46	124	48	14	5	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	148	58	105	41	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	105	41	124	48	26	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	108	42	125	49	20	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	121	47	119	46	11	4	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	93	36	127	50	33	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	99	39	138	54	13	5	0	0
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)	97	38	143	56	6	2	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	98	38	131	51	18	7	6	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	104	41	133	52	13	5	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	80	31	152	59	19	7	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	139	54	109	43	8	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	140	55	101	39	13	5	1	0

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 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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 pupil's 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.



Friday 26 February 2010

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Yours is an outstanding school where you are making securely good progress. This is helping you achieve high standards when you move to the upper school. It is obvious that very many of you like coming to school and greatly appreciate the interesting and often exciting learning activities. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour in lessons and around the school and the way so many of you join in discussions and cooperate with each other in your paired and group work. In our talks with you we noticed how well informed many of you were and how concerned you were about the needs of others in this country and elsewhere.

The great majority of your parents are pleased with how well you are doing in school. They value the way the school cares for and supports you. We agree with your parents about the many excellent things the school provides for you in art, music, drama, sports and the range of different clubs and activities. Most of your parents said that the school keeps them well informed about your progress and deals with any concerns quickly. The school plans to develop a more comprehensive website which will help parents to be better informed.

Many of you said that you liked your teachers. Most of you knew how well you were doing in your subjects. Some of your teachers' marking is very detailed and shows you how to improve. We have suggested that this practice should be spread across more subjects. We were pleased to see you using computers in your lessons.

We believe you are fortunate to have an outstanding headteacher and staff who work very hard to make your time in St Louis happy and successful.

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful on our visit.

Yours sincerely

Graham Preston

Lead inspector

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