

# Archdiocese of Cardiff



## Inspection Report

### St Aloysius Catholic Primary School

<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>17 – 18 June 2013</b>
<b>Reporting Inspector</b>	<b>Miss Catherine Power</b>
<b>Accompanying Inspector</b>	<b>Mrs Sheelagh M<sup>c</sup>Cool</b>
<b>Type of school</b>	<b>Primary</b>
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	<b>4 -11</b>
<b>Number on roll</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>
<b>Chair of Governors</b>	<b>Mr Frank Price</b>
<b>School Address</b>	<b>Cedar Way Gurnos Estate Merthyr Tydfil CF47 9PA</b>
<b>Tel. no.</b>	<b>01685 721714</b>
<b>E-mail address</b>	<b><a href="mailto:office@st-aloysius.merthyr.sch.uk">office@st-aloysius.merthyr.sch.uk</a></b>
<b>Parish served</b>	<b>St Aloysius</b>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	<b>February 2001</b>
<b>Headteacher</b>	<b>Mrs Karen Lewis</b>

**Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archdiocese of Cardiff and Inspection of denominational education under Section 50 of the Education Act 2005**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

**Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

**Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?**

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on prospects for improvement.

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice or practise that is both consistent and highly effective.
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The table below shows the terms that Archdiocesan inspectors use and a broad idea of their meaning. It is for guidance only.

<b>Proportion</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>With very few exceptions</b>	<b>Nearly all</b>
<b>90% or more</b>	<b>Most</b>
<b>70% or more</b>	<b>Many</b>
<b>60% or more</b>	<b>A majority</b>
<b>Close to 50%</b>	<b>Half/around half</b>
<b>Below 40%</b>	<b>A minority</b>
<b>Below 20%</b>	<b>Few</b>
<b>Less than 10%</b>	<b>Very few</b>

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Archdiocesan website: [www.rcadc.org](http://www.rcadc.org)

## Context

St Aloysius is a mixed 3-11 voluntary aided school situated on the Gurnos Estate in Merthyr Tydfil. The school serves the parish of St Aloysius and functions under the trusteeship of the Archdiocese of Cardiff.

At the time of inspection one hundred and seventy five pupils were on roll. This was made up of one hundred and ten Catholic pupils and two pupils who belong to other Christian denominations. Sixty three pupils have no faith. No pupils are withdrawn from Religious Education or collective worship.

The school is a single storey building occupying spacious grounds, containing mature trees and shrubs, as well as hard and soft play areas. It provides an attractive environment for all pupils. The school is set in an area recognised as being economically disadvantaged. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation indicates that 84.8% of families live in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. Of these, 83.6% live in the 10% most deprived area.

Pupils represent the full ability range. They are taught in six mixed age classes. Baseline assessment indicates that pupils' attainment on entry is below the national average. Oracy skills are poor, however at the end of KS2 pupils' scores are well above local and national averages. English is an additional language for 16% of the pupils.

The school has received the Healthy Schools Award and Eco Green Flag status.

The school has eight full-time teachers including the headteacher. Two teachers are working towards the CCRS, the headteacher having already gained this qualification. One teacher has attended the CAREC course. The school has ten teaching assistants and receives funding from the local authority for two additional practitioners.

## Summary

**How effective is the school in providing Catholic Education?**

**Adequate**

The school's current performance is adequate because:

- the school is a welcoming community.
- the Religious Education coordinator has a clear vision for the future development of Religious Education at the school.
- prayer and worship are an integral part of school life.
- governors and school leaders are committed to the further development of curriculum Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school.
- partnership with parents/carers and the parish community is good.
- pastoral care systems are strong.

However

- Pupil outcomes in Religious Education are adequate overall.
- Recent developments in curriculum Religious Education are still in the early stages.
- Few pupils have ownership of the school mission statement.
- The use of IT, Welsh and differentiated learning activities in Religious Education are under-developed.
- The process for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school is under- developed.
- Resources to support the Catholic life of the school and curriculum Religious Education are adequate.

**What are the school's prospects for improvement?**

**Adequate**

The school's prospects for improvement are adequate because they have strengths that outweigh areas for development.

- The headteacher, senior leadership team and Religious Education coordinator are committed to improving standards in Religious Education throughout the school.
- Outcomes for pupils are generally adequate and improvements are at an early stage of development.
- Recent developments in the monitoring, evaluation and review of Religious Education are good. However, self-evaluation is not yet embedded in the life of the school.
- Recent developments to learning and teaching in Religious Education, introduced by the coordinator, are having a positive impact on standards but are still in the very early stages.

## Recommendations and Required Actions

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- R1: Develop and implement an annual Improvement plan for Religious Education which links with the shortcomings identified in the annual school self-evaluation document.
- R2: Develop the role of the curriculum leader, ensuring that the monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the Catholic life of the school and curriculum Religious Education are rigorous, systematic and lead to continued improvement in pupil outcomes.
- R3: Improve the pace and challenge of classroom Religious Education, ensuring that interactive teaching strategies, differentiated activities, ICT and Welsh are used, where appropriate, to engage all pupils and raise standards in classroom Religious Education.
- R4: Further develop and embed the archdiocesan initiatives that foster and encourage pupils' leadership of prayer and worship in English and Welsh.
- R5: Involve all stakeholders in the review and update of the school mission statement and produce a child-friendly version.

### What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by the archdiocese.

## Main Findings

### KQ1. How good are outcomes?

**Adequate**

Strengths outweigh areas for improvement.

Outcomes for pupils are adequate. Pupil attainment on entry to the school is below local authority averages. From this low starting-point the majority of children make progress and reach acceptable standards by the end of the foundation phase. Teacher-assessment in Religious Education at the end of key stage 2 indicates that pupils achieve the expected standards.

Most pupils are able to use correct terminology (appropriate to their age) when referring to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The majority of pupils are aware of the need to consider their choices carefully and to understand that all choices have consequences. Most pupils have a clear understanding of "forgiveness," the

link with gospel teaching and can articulate the importance of seeking 'reconciliation' in their lives.

Pupils behave well in class and demonstrate positive attitudes towards Religious Education. In the few lessons where pupil outcomes are less well-developed, tasks lack creativity and imagination and do not engage the children, worksheets are used frequently, limiting the child's response and copying is evident. Pupils would benefit from differentiated tasks to ensure that all are suitably challenged. The presentation of most pupils' work is good.

Pupils' written response to activities selected from the *Here I Am* programme and responses to assessments indicate that the knowledge, skills and understanding of most in Religious Education is adequate. By comparison, standards are higher in many pupils' literacy/ English books.

Self and peer assessment activities are effective, encouraging children to reflect on their response to tasks. They are used well throughout the foundation phase. Most pupils in key stage 2 can either articulate their targets or refer to their written record, as can the majority in the foundation phase, however, stronger links need to be made with the recently implemented pupil tracking system to ensure that pupil targets are sufficiently challenging. Marking is positive and usually indicates the pupils' next step but the policy is not applied consistently throughout the school.

Nearly all pupils engage in and respect the Catholic mission and values of the school. The School Council and Eco Committees enable pupils to express their views and make improvements to the school. Visits to St Aloysius Church help to enhance the Religious Education curriculum. Pastoral care systems are strong with the introduction of the "buddy" system proving popular with pupils.

Most pupils are keen to participate in the Catholic life of the school, showing empathy with the needs of others by raising £400 to contribute to the '*Hungry for change*' CAFOD project. The work of the Eco Committee is valuable in encouraging all members of the school to care for the resources in our world.

Most pupils appreciate the importance of prayer and worship. They know and understand a range of traditional prayers. The school grounds are used effectively by the youngest children in the foundation phase to develop spirituality. Collecting parts of God's beautiful creation and praying together in the attractive grounds enables the children to appreciate the awe and wonder of God's world. The class prayer books, currently being developed, contribute positively to encouraging participation in class prayer and worship.

In the whole school act of worship most pupils displayed reverence and respect. They were able to listen attentively and reflect on the Gospel. Although pupils contribute spontaneous prayers to class prayer sessions, pupil-initiated acts of worship are in the early stages of development.

<b>KQ2. How good is provision?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
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Strengths outweigh areas for improvement.

The quality of teaching and learning is adequate.

In the majority of lessons observed pupils listen attentively to their teachers and settle quickly to tasks. In many classes, pupils were able to apply prior knowledge to new learning situations when prompted by the teacher. Clear learning objectives and success criteria for the tasks set in around half of the classes enable pupils to achieve good standards. However, in a minority of classes, lengthy teacher-led introductions, which are not sharply focussed, result in pupils losing concentration and producing a poor quality response to tasks. Few lessons observed included the use of the Welsh language in Religious Education or used information technology effectively to enhance or develop learning in Religious Education.

In about half of the lessons observed the pace was slow. Many pupils worked quietly, responding to tasks through extended writing. Most pupils work at an acceptable pace however, in a minority of classes, planned activities do not match the abilities of all pupils. Too few opportunities are provided for pupils to develop independence or to enhance pupil learning in Religious Education through outdoor learning in the school grounds

Teachers plan using the archdiocesan guidelines, however most lessons were planned with a limited range of resources. Attendance at archdiocesan training events, cluster training and transition events is making a positive impact on standards. The moderated portfolio of pupils' work and cluster moderation sessions have enabled teachers to develop their knowledge and understanding of assessment using NBRIA levels of attainment, however, developments are in the early stages. The recently introduced target sheets are used well by many pupils. They are beginning to make an impact on standards and offer pupils next steps.

The recently appointed Religious Education coordinator has worked hard and, together with the deputy headteacher, has introduced a number of new developments. Once embedded into practice, these will raise standards in classroom Religious Education significantly. Classroom observation, book scrutiny, listening to learners and pupil questionnaires all enable the coordinator to develop a broadly accurate picture of standards throughout the school and inform future developments in Religious Education.

The Religious Education curriculum and wider life of the school meet the needs of nearly all pupils. Statutory requirements of the Bishops' Conference are met. Curriculum planning ensures that most pupils are provided with opportunities to relate learning in classroom Religious Education to their lives. Buddy systems, peer mentoring and pastoral care ensures that nearly all of the pupils feel safe and happy in school. Relationships between pupils and staff are positive. The PHSE curriculum ensures that children have a sound understanding of the importance of family life. The visiting "Show racism the red card" workshop

supports the work of the staff in developing attitudes of tolerance and equality amongst the pupils. Visits made by the school nurse support the work of the staff in promoting pupil wellbeing. The sex education policy has been approved by the governing body and implemented in the school.

Parish links have been strengthened, with parents, parishioners and pupils attending regular Masses and Christmas carol concerts together, both in the school and at the church. The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor to the school, working closely with the staff. His mission, “to make the gospel come alive for the children”, is evident. The school supports the parish sacramental preparation programme, preparing pupils for the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion during an after-school club.

Well developed charitable links with Mission Together and CAFOD enable almost all pupils to recognise the importance of helping those in need. The school recognises the need to help pupils develop bilingually. Annual celebrations on St David’s Day and the recitation of simple prayers in Welsh all serve to help pupils to develop and appreciate their national identity.

<b>KQ3. How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
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The governing body fulfils its statutory and canonical responsibilities. Members are committed to reflecting the distinctive Catholic character of the school in decision making and policies.

The Chair works closely with the headteacher and senior staff to ensure that the governing body is fully involved in the life of the school. Reports on curriculum Religious Education from the Religious Education coordinator and learning walks enable members of the governing body to recognise the strengths of the school and also identify areas for improvement. The link governor plays an active part in the life of the school. She works closely with the headteacher, coordinator for Religious Education and the deputy headteacher to “provide the best opportunities for the children in the school.” Their shared vision, “the children come first,” underpins all that they do.

The Religious Education coordinator was appointed in September 2012. She has a clear vision, works effectively with school leaders and is committed to raising standards in classroom Religious Education. Attendance at archdiocesan training events has enabled the coordinator to introduce a number of developments in assessment, teaching and planning which have improved standards in classroom Religious Education. However, these developments are still in the early stages. The school’s resources to support its Catholic life and curriculum Religious Education are adequate.

Recent monitoring, including classroom observations, scrutiny of pupils’ work, teachers’ planning, moderation tasks, displays and prayer foci have informed the self-evaluation and improvement plans for Religious Education. The recently

updated self-evaluation document provides a broadly accurate picture of the school, identifying areas for improvement. Many of these areas have yet to be included in the school improvement plan for Religious Education.

The headteacher's attendance at cluster meetings and moderation sessions with other partner schools involving the Religious Education coordinator ensure that close links exist between St Aloysius and Bishop Hedley High School. Transition links, including the '*Can Sing*' project, athletics meetings, carol concerts and Mass, help to prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

The school's pastoral care system offers opportunities for pupils to show respect and tolerance to others and encourages friendship. The recent pupil voice questionnaire reports that 87% of pupils strongly agree that they feel able to make a contribution to school life.

Community cohesion is promoted mainly through the links with the parish and other local churches in Merthyr, however leaders and managers acknowledge the need to involve pupils in wider community events.

## Appendix 1

### Responses to parent questionnaires

Parents and carers are very proud of the school and are happy with the progress that their children are making. Many families enjoy a long- standing connection with the school. Parents state that they are well informed about what their children are learning in Religious Education through the termly '*Here I Am*' newsletters. They feel that St. Aloysius is "a good faith school". Communication is good and pastoral care is strong, with the school responding swiftly to any concerns. Parents praised the school for its links with the church and the choir who sang at the Christmas carol service.

## Appendix 2

### Evidence Base

- The school's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation
- Meeting with the chair of the governing body
- Meeting with the headteacher
- Meeting with the deputy headteacher
- Meeting with the link governor for Religious Education
- Meeting with the parish priest
- Meeting with the coordinator for Religious Education
- Meeting with parents
- Lesson observations
- Scrutiny of planning and assessment
- Scrutiny of pupils' work
- Scrutiny of prayer foci
- Discussions with the School Council and Eco Committee
- Discussion with non-teaching staff
- Discussion with pupils
- Parent questionnaires
- Observation of daily routines