

Report of the Denominational (Section 48) Inspection of
Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

St Louis Catholic First School

DfE No: 935 3318
URN: 124768

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Mrs J. Whipp

Headteacher: Mrs T. Selvey

Denominational Inspector:

Mrs M. Betts

Date of Inspection: 1st November 2010

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DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

St Louis Catholic School is an average size primary school with part-time nursery provision for pupils from 3 to 9 years. It is maintained by Suffolk Education Authority. The school is situated in the parish of Our Lady Immaculate and St Etheldreda, Newmarket but pupils also come from the Mildenhall parish and surrounding villages. There are 240 pupils on roll, three quarters of whom are Catholic. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and many from non-British heritages. An increasing number of children speak English as an additional language. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The school is subject to Suffolk reorganisation of primary provision with year 4 children staying on at the school at the end of the year.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL.

Grade: 1

St Louis School is an outstanding Catholic school. The extremely strong Catholic identity permeates the daily life of the school and the children are aware of their role within this ethos. The committed leadership of the headteacher and deputy is instrumental in effectively promoting a strong spiritual purpose and prayer and worship are of central importance in the school's life. Staff are committed to the high profile given to religious education.

Relationships within the school are very good and reflect Christian love and concern for others. Staff create an environment where pupils are respected, listened to and where learning is often fun. Pupils are very proud of being part of this Catholic school. The pupils' personal, spiritual and moral development is outstanding and this is reflected in their good behaviour and positive attitudes. Pupils explained "We are a happy, welcoming school where everyone cares for each other". Good progress is made by pupils in religious education.

The self evaluation of the school is accurate. The headteacher and deputy have a very good overall view of the school's strengths and development needs. They have a clear vision for the development of Catholic life and religious education which includes plans for the extension of these when the school gains two extra year groups. The development issues from the last inspection have all been addressed and the school has continued to improve. Regular monitoring and evaluations feed into the school development plan. All staff are committed to the success of the school and are willing to improve their skills through regular training opportunities. The headteacher encourages staff to undertake national Catholic courses for their own professional development. The school has an outstanding capacity to improve.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

- To further develop religious education assessment by moderating work across the school and making explicit the criteria used to reach the judgement.
- To enhance children's knowledge of other faiths by undertaking visits to other places of worship.
- To provide opportunities for pupils to work with others from different faith and cultural backgrounds.

PUPILS. How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups. Grade 1

The extent to which pupils benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. Pupils appreciate this Catholic community and have a secure sense of belonging to it. They enthusiastically undertake responsibilities and show concern for the well-being of others especially younger children to whom they act as buddies in the playground, with curriculum activities and on visits to church. They are extremely welcoming to new children and willingly support them through any difficulties they may have such as language or special needs. Children display respect towards each other and to adults. They co-operate very well when working together. Pupils praise the friendly, caring attitude of the teachers who help with any problems. They explained "our teachers enjoy being with us". Pupils' achievements are recognised, praised and valued and linked explicitly to the aspiration to "Be the best you can be". Their views and ideas are sought and taken into account through the School Council who recently altered the mission statement into child-friendly sentences. They appreciate the trips provided for them which enrich their learning.

Pupils respond very well to the prayer life of the school. They understand the importance of prayer and participate with ease and respect. Pupils create their own prayers and appreciate being able to use another child's prayer as "prayer of the week". They enjoy worship and respond sensitively and maturely. For example during a meditation session year 1 children were completely absorbed by the theme and later made contributions of their own that evidenced deep thought and reflection. Children enjoy celebration services especially those linked to special festivals. Their participation in worship through high quality singing greatly enhances the experience. The children spoke of singing as a really enjoyable part of any assembly. Worship contributes extremely well to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Pupils are gaining religious literacy at a good rate during their time in the school. They achieve age appropriate levels of attainment and some exceed this. Most pupils enjoy their religious education lessons especially those linked to practical activities. Pupils have a very positive attitude to learning and work together very well. Their spiritual and moral development is outstanding. Pupils take a pride in their religious education work and the books are well presented and evidence a good coverage of the curriculum.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS. How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the school? Grade 1

The headteacher is deeply committed to promoting the Catholic life of the school. She communicates a clear vision for the Catholic ethos. She leads by example and her clear convictions are a source of inspiration for the whole community. Attractive displays around school often contributed to by children confirm the Catholic identity. Leadership promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development very well. The school's commitment to fair-trade and being eco-friendly inspires pupils and parents to be more aware of these important issues. The school has very good links with parents and strong links with the parish through the close involvement of the parish priest and deacon. Children regularly contribute to Sunday and mid-week mass.

The religious education subject leader, as deputy head, ensures this subject has a high profile across the school. A clear direction for improvement has been set. All aspects of religious education teaching and learning are monitored well and formal feedback provided to the staff. The religious education subject leader provides support and guidance to teachers. Induction takes place with any new staff member. The budget provided is generous and in line with that given to other core subjects. There is an additional Catholic ethos budget. The school has invested in many new materials and religious education is well resourced.

Governors fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities. They are very supportive and well informed about the work of the school through the headteacher's report. Governors visit the school regularly and are visible in the school community. Governors have clear systems for seeking views of parents and pupils. They regularly review the School Development Plan which contains objectives linked to Catholic life and religious education.

The school is a very welcoming and inclusive community where all members are respected and valued. The headteacher is passionate that inclusion is part of the school's Catholic mission. Diversity is celebrated and parents invited to share their expertise. Pupils show compassion for others by the extent of their charity work for Cafod and other charities. The school plans to involve pupils more fully in the choice of charities. The school has excellent links with other Catholic schools and joins together for events such as the annual pilgrimage to Walsingham. The school has built links with a local home for the elderly and visits to sing carols. Provision for spiritual development effectively provides opportunities for pupils to link the theme with their own experiences. The school participates with parishioners and parents to share celebrations and other events. Pupils learn about other world religions. This develops children's understanding of local beliefs. The school's work with the Sisters of St Louis will forge greater links with the world-wide Catholic Church.

PROVISION. How effective is the provision for Catholic education: Grade 1

Worship, prayer and sacramental celebration are integral to the life of the school community. Different styles of worship opportunities are provided including meditation and "Praying in colour" which provides a reflective atmosphere for children to draw marks, colours and words representing personal intentions. Well chosen songs, a prominent prayer focus and displays enhance the calm, worshipful atmosphere of whole school assemblies. Worship is well planned following the liturgical year. Catholic ritual is well established with Bible passages and visual presentations used very effectively to engage learners' interest and develop their thinking. Worship makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual and moral development of pupils. The attractive prayer table in each classroom provides a focus for prayer. Mass is celebrated regularly by the whole school and by each of the pupils' classes either in church or in school. Pupils also have other forms of liturgy celebrated by the parish priest. He is involved in planning services and makes a significant contribution to the sacramental life of the school and leads reconciliation during Advent and Lent.

The quality of religious education lessons overall is good with some outstanding features being observed. Teachers' knowledge is sound and they plan thoroughly. During the best lessons, teachers inspired pupils to be interested and motivated to learn by the use of visual presentations, demonstrations and practical activities such as freeze-frame drama and craft. The majority of tasks planned strongly consolidated the learning, an example being the children designing feeling flowers to empathise with someone receiving their confirmation. Talking partners and open questioning were also effectively used and pupils developed confidence in their own ideas. Lessons ended well with a reflection or prayer time linked to the learning objective.

Pupils of all abilities make progress in lessons through well differentiated activities and by extra support given. Assessments take place regularly and are linked to national levels of attainment. These levels are linked explicitly to the current topic enabling teachers to use former assessments to inform future planning. Teacher moderation of judgements is a planned future development. All work is marked well to the learning objective giving appropriate praise and comments with questions suggesting future improvements. The school plans to provide regular opportunities for children to extend and improve their work.

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding, and suitable for the age and abilities of the learners. It fulfils the requirement of the Bishops' Conference. 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education following the "Here I Am" programme with additional work linked to Catholic events such as the Pope's visit. Scripture is used very well during teaching. Pupils

are encouraged to become aware of the demands of religious commitment, the exploitation of third world workers and the care of the environment. Religious education is creatively linked to other curriculum areas such as information and communication technology (ICT), literacy, art, drama, and song. Other faiths are studied and many resources have been purchased for this. The curriculum contributes very well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Attractive religious education displays around school give added value to this core subject.

EAST ANGLIA DIOCESAN SCHOOLS' SERVICE



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Letter to pupils explaining the findings from the diocesan inspection.

4th November 2010

Dear Pupils

Diocesan Inspection of St Louis Catholic Primary School, Newmarket

Thank you for making us so welcome at your school. Thank you to all those pupils who spoke to us especially the group from year 4. We were very interested in your views of your school. We enjoyed being present with you in all your Religious Education lessons. It was a great privilege for us to be present for your Monday morning celebration assembly and to hear the high standard of singing. Well done to everyone involved.

Here are some of the things we especially liked:

- The strong Catholic ethos of your school that provides many opportunities for prayer and worship.
- You are friendly and considerate to each other and are well cared for by your teachers.
- The school provides very good opportunities for you to develop personally, spiritually and morally.
- The enjoyable and interesting tasks that your teachers plan to aid your religious education learning.

We have asked your teachers and governors to consider, as part of your learning about other faiths, to plan visits to places of worship. We were pleased with how your RE assessments are recorded and have asked your teachers to look at RE work across all year groups and ensure that their judgements of the levels you are achieving are consistent throughout the school. We feel that your understanding of the wider world could be enhanced if opportunities were given you to occasionally work with children who are not from a Catholic school.

Thank you again for your help. We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs M. Betts and Rosemary Barker
Diocesan Inspectors