

*Diocese of Hallam*

***INSPECTION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
(Section 23 of the 1996 Schools Inspections Act)***

**St Alban's Catholic Primary School  
Wadworth Street  
Denaby Main  
Doncaster  
DN12 4AQ**

Inspection Date: 3rd and 4th February 2004  
Diocesan Inspector: Mrs Gillian Foster

This inspection of the denominational character of St Alban's Catholic Primary School was carried out under the direction of the Governors of the school in fulfilment of their obligations under the requirements of Canon Law (ref,804, 806), Section 23 of the 1996 Schools Inspection Act, Section 13 of the Education (Schools) Act 1992 and Sections 241 and 259 of the Education Act 1993. This Inspection was conducted according to the Guidelines For Section 23 Inspections in Catholic Schools issued by the National Board Of Religious Inspectors and Advisors Inspection Working Party in January 2004.

The process of Inspection in the Diocese of Hallam has been developed to support and encourage each school and parish community. It is hoped that this report will celebrate all that is positive and praiseworthy in St Alban's Catholic Primary school and help to promote sound development for the future.

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A copy of this report may be obtained from the Governors of St Alban's Catholic Primary School, Wadworth Street, Denaby Main, Doncaster DN12 4AQ or from the Diocese of Hallam Schools' Department, The Hallam Pastoral Centre, St Charles Street, Sheffield S9 3WU.

## INTRODUCTION

### Basic information about the school

NAME OF SCHOOL	St Alban's Catholic Primary
TYPE	Primary
STATUS	Voluntary Aided
NUMBER ON ROLL	235
AGE RANGE	4 - 11
GENDER OF PUPILS	Mixed
CHAIRMAN OF GOVERNORS	Mr Graham Kirby
HEADTEACHER	Mrs Margaret Prendergast
ADDRESS OF SCHOOL	Wadworth Street, Denaby Main. Doncaster DN12 4AQ
TELEPHONE NUMBER	01709 862298
DATE OF INSPECTION	3rd and 4th February 2004
DIOCESAN INSPECTOR	Gillian Foster.

The 235 pupils on roll are organised into eight classes as follows:

Reception (Class 1)	29
Year 1 (Class 2)	29
Year 2 (Class 3)	23
Year 2 (Class 4)	24
Year 3 (Class 5)	33
Year 4 (Class 6)	34
Year 5 (Class 7)	36
Year 6 (Class 8)	27

### 1.1 Key characteristics of the school

1.1a St Alban's Catholic Primary School was opened in 1926 and serves the parishes of St Alban's Denaby Main and English Martyrs Mexborough. The catchment area of the school includes several villages, of which Denaby Main is one, situated in former mining areas which are undergoing some regeneration although the area still has a high rate of unemployment and according to indices of deprivation, is an area of high social and economic disadvantage. Approximately 25% of pupils are currently eligible for free school meals. On entry into the Reception Class, baseline assessment shows attainment to be below national expectations for pupils of that age. The school has a very small percentage of pupils from ethnic minorities and currently there are four pupils in school for whom English is a second language.

1.1b Of the 235 pupils currently on roll, 176, that is 75% are baptised Catholics, all but 11 of these pupils belong to St Alban's parish; the other 11 Catholic pupils belong to English Martyrs parish in Mexborough. 58 pupils of the total

number on roll, that is 25%, are members of the Church of England. One pupil in school belongs to the Greek Orthodox Church.

- 1.1c Of the ten full time teachers, (including the headteacher), and the one part-time teacher, 8 are Catholic, that is 73%; 27%, the other 3 members of staff are active members of the Church of England. Almost all the learning support staff are Catholic.
- 1.1d Attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage One is broadly in line with national expectations. Pupil's attainment at the end of Key Stage Two is below the national average, but there is a rising trend in attainment in this Key Stage.
- 1.1e The School Improvement Plan places targets and priorities identified for development in religious education at the beginning of the Plan. In this way, the very high priority the school gives to religious education and the maintenance and development of the explicit nature of the Catholic education offered to its pupils, is underlined. The current priorities include a specific one to review and up-date the Mission Statement and an over-arching one to ensure that all pupils flourish in a safe and attractive environment where they experience Jesus through the staff and each other. The day to day life of the school bears witness to the success of the latter aim. Each child and adult in school is treated by all others with dignity and respect and acknowledged as a unique gift from God to be nurtured in His love.

## **1.2 The overall quality of the school's Catholic life and its provision for Religious Education**

- 1.2a St Alban's Catholic Primary School is a very good Catholic school where the Gospel values explicit in the Mission Statement are lived out in the day to day life of the school.
- 1.2b The school is very well led by a headteacher who is dedicated and committed. She has a clear vision for the school based on her own deep faith and the desire to provide every child in the school community with the excellence they deserve as unique children of God. The headteacher is very well supported by an enthusiastic and committed deputy headteacher, a Religious Education Co-ordinator and the staff who work very well together as a team. The governors of the school have a very clear understanding of the explicit nature of Catholic education. Although recently re-constituted, they are very well led by a Chairman who has a long association with the school and parish and who is totally committed, along with other governors, to maintaining the very strong Catholic ethos of the school. They contribute to shaping the vision and direction of the Catholic life of the school.
- 1.2c The School Improvement Plan contains targets and objectives for the development of Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school. Staff and governors now need to ensure that targets identified in the school's Self-

Evaluation Document and issues raised in this report are also included in the Plan.

- 1.2d There are very good links between the school and the parishes. The priests of both parishes are frequent and welcome visitors to school. Through their involvement with the children and staff they make a significant contribution to the opportunities offered to the children for spiritual development. Pupils are made to feel an important part of parish life through the many shared celebrations and activities. Parishioners express great pride in their parish school. In recent years the school has become part of a local Education Action Zone, through this initiative, the school has opened its doors to the local community to offer a wide variety of training and social opportunities. This engagement with the wider community has been of great benefit to the pupils, parents and other members of the community and is a great strength of the school. It is a powerful demonstration that St Alban's Catholic Primary School exists to serve the whole community, following Gospel example.
- 1.2e Sacramental preparation is carried out in school by parish catechists: school supports the children during their preparation and celebrates with them after they have made their First Holy Communion. The parish priests and additional parish catechists hold meetings with parents during the preparation. This is good practice.
- 1.2f Relationships throughout the school are very good, this leads to a warm, caring, supportive environment where the aims of the Mission Statement are able to be lived out.
- 1.2g The provision made for pupils with special educational needs is very good and these pupils are fully integrated into the life of the school and make good progress.
- 1.2h Collective Worship is of a high standard and offers pupils the experience of belonging to a worshipping, Eucharistic community.
- 1.2i The spiritual and moral development of the children is very good and this is a strength of the school. Behaviour is generally good, children are clear about what constitutes acceptable behaviour and act accordingly. Children who present challenging behaviour are dealt with according to established, understood procedures. Poor behaviour does not impact negatively on the learning environment. Children are readily forgiven and helped to change their behaviour in positive and affirming ways.
- 1.2j Teaching in Religious Education ranges from satisfactory to very good. All teachers plan Religious Education thoroughly and in accordance with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Differentiated tasks and activities are always included. Those for children with additional needs are appropriate, challenging and allow the children to make good or very good progress. Tasks for the more able pupils are generally

lacking in sufficient challenge to allow pupils to fulfil their potential and make the best possible progress. This issue now needs to be addressed.

- 1.2k Children achieve standards in Religious Education which range from satisfactory to very good and are commensurate with their attainment in other curriculum areas.
- 1.2l The quality and quantity of recorded work in Religious Education is inconsistent. There now needs to be agreement amongst staff about how much recorded work is expected from each age group. More opportunities for the children to produce pieces of extended writing need to be planned for, especially in Key Stage Two. There are good procedures for assessment in place but these are not used consistently. This issue now needs to be addressed.
- 1.2m Children's attitude to learning is good.
- 1.2n Children make satisfactory to very good progress in knowledge and understanding.
- 1.2o The Religious Education Co-ordinator is hard working, dedicated and committed. She has had a significant impact on taking the subject forward since the last inspection. Her role now needs to be extended to include the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning through lesson observations.
- 1.2p Display throughout the school is of a variable standard. Attention now needs to be given to ensuring that the very high quality displays of Religious Education work and topics seen in some areas of the school, is replicated throughout the school and in particular in the main entrance.
- 1.2q The school is well resourced to deliver the Religious Education curriculum.

### **1.3 How the school's effectiveness has improved or changed since its previous inspection**

All Key Issues (KI) for further development identified in the report of 1998 have been addressed.

- KI 1 The school has consolidated the good practice in the spiritual and moral development of the children and this remains a key strength of the school.
- KI 2 The development of shared planning for Religious Education together with frequent in-service training, on-going staff formation and effective performance management, has ensured that all teachers are knowledgeable and confident in teaching Religious Education; this has ensured continuity throughout the school.

- KI.3 All teachers now include differentiated activities into their planning. This is especially effective for children with additional needs whose needs are appropriately addressed and their abilities challenged; these pupils make good or very good progress. Teachers still need to ensure a greater degree of challenge in the work for the more able pupils to enable them to make the maximum possible progress commensurate with their potential.
- KI 4 Teachers generally use a variety of teaching strategies which motivate children. There is still some need to develop independent learning in children and in some cases allow them more scope for creativity.
- KI 5 Very good assessment procedures are now in place which, when used, inform future planning effectively and provide teachers with accurate assessments of progress. The school now needs to ensure that these procedures are used consistently by all staff.
- KI 6 The structure of Collective Worship has been reviewed and now provides a balance between whole school, Key Stage and individual class assemblies. The quality of Collective Worship is very good.
- KI 7 Time allocated to teaching Religious Education is now 10% of all teaching time and fulfils the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- KI 8 The teaching of multi-faith and multi-cultural education is now carried out very well and is well resourced.
- KI 9 The content of the Religious Education curriculum now meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory.

#### **1.4 How the school is viewed by its pupils and parents**

- 1.4a From informal discussions with pupils and from attendance at a School Council meeting, it is obvious that almost all pupils enjoy coming to school and feel valued, safe and secure. They express the view that if they are in trouble there is always an adult who will listen to them and help them. They are generally enthusiastic about Religious Education lessons. They express a pride in their school and believe that the staff are there to help them and do their best for them. They believe their school to be the best school in the area.
- 1.4b Twenty seven parents attended the Parents' Meeting and seventy two parents returned the Questionnaire. The parents overwhelmingly support the school. They are well satisfied with the good standards their children achieve in Religious Education and they are very pleased with the very good moral and spiritual development of their children. They speak of the general good behaviour of the children and how it is remarked upon by people outside the school community. The parents value the dedication and commitment of the headteacher and staff and feel that they provide very good role models for their children. Parents are grateful for the way the staff treat each child as an

individual and work hard to develop the potential of each. Parents value the partnership with them that the school promotes by invitations to attend Masses and special celebrations. They express the view that they would appreciate more notice of such invitations to allow them to make arrangements to attend. They would also like to be invited to more class assemblies/liturgies. Parents are very happy with current arrangements for Sacramental preparation. Parents appreciate the many opportunities the school provides for them to develop their own understanding of how their children learn through the Numeracy and Literacy workshops and the 'drop in' sessions in the computer suite. They also appreciate invitations to them to help in school in a variety of ways. The home/school partnership is very strong and benefits the children.

## **1.5 The accuracy of the school's self-evaluation**

The school has completed the Diocesan Self-Evaluation Document. This provides a tool for development by highlighting relevant areas needing action or development. The assessment is realistic but now needs to be re-visited to include issues identified in this report. These issues need to generate targets and objectives which should then be included in the School Improvement Plan.

## **2.1 Areas for further development**

The governors and staff of St Alban's School should now address and include in its Post Inspection Action Plan:

- 2.1a Celebrate and consolidate the very good partnerships which exist between the school, the parents, the parishes and the wider community and the very good spiritual and moral development of the children.
- 2.1b Revisit the Self-Evaluation Document identifying areas for development highlighted in this report and include any targets or objectives generated into the School Improvement Plan.
- 2.1c Build on the good work already being carried out by the Religious Education Co-ordinator by extending her role to include the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning through lesson observations.
- 2.1d Ensure that tasks and activities presented to pupils contain a sufficient degree of challenge to enable them to achieve their full potential, especially for the more able pupils.
- 2.1e Come to an agreement about the amount of written work expected from each age group, in particular in Key Stage Two.
- 2.1f Ensure that the importance given by the school to Religious Education continues to be expressed through consistently high quality, visual displays throughout the school and especially in the entrance hall.

**2.2 The following matters should also be considered as areas for development by the school:**

- 2.2a Where possible, give parents more notice of events in school to allow them to make arrangements to attend. (1.4b)
- 2.2b Consider inviting parents to more class, Key Stage or whole school assemblies. (1.4b)
- 2.2c Ensure that the good assessment procedures already in place are used consistently throughout the school. (4.3a)
- 2.2d Present more opportunities to pupil's for extended writing and more independent and creative work. (3.1b, 3.1f, 4.2d)
- 2.2e Ensure that the Marking Policy is implemented consistently throughout the school. (4.3b)
- 2.2f Where appropriate, encourage pupils to use their improving skills in ICT in Religious Education work. (4.1g)

**3. The Quality of Religious Education**

**3.1 Standards and achievement in Religious Education**

- 3.1a The progress pupils make in Religious Education ranges from satisfactory to very good.
- 3.1b Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. These pupils are very well catered for; teachers plan activities that are appropriate to each pupil's ability and present tasks in interesting and varied ways, a good element of challenge is included in the work. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by non-teaching assistants who are knowledgeable and committed to helping pupils to achieve the best they can. The more able pupils would benefit from greater challenge in tasks and activities and higher expectations, especially by being given more opportunities for extended writing and personal creativity in Key Stage Two.
- 3.1c The progress made by boys and girls is broadly equal.
- 3.1d All teachers' planning includes learning objectives appropriate to the 'Here I Am' Religious Education programme and in line with the 'Levels of Attainment in Religious Education' level descriptors recommended by the Diocese. Most children make satisfactory or good progress in achieving these targets, some make very good progress.

- 3.1e The school places great emphasis on teaching the beliefs and values of the Catholic Faith to all children in ways appropriate to their age. Teachers achieve this through the delivery of the 'Here I Am' programme and through the day to day life of the school which is underpinned by Gospel values. The aim of the Mission Statement to provide an environment wherein children experience Christ through staff and each other is a lived reality. Children benefit greatly from the proximity of the parish church and their regular meetings with members of the parish community. This regular participation in the worshipping, Eucharistic community is a great strength of the school. Evidence of previous work and discussions with children show that they have a good knowledge and understanding of other world faiths. The multi faith elements of the 'Here I Am' programme are well taught.
- 3.1f Pupils are generally able to communicate their understanding of religious concepts well. All teachers demonstrate good questioning skills and give children the opportunity to express themselves verbally. During the past year, the school has focused on developing Speaking and Listening skills and the beneficial effect of this is apparent on listening to the children. The children are generally less skilled in communicating their knowledge and understanding in extended writing and this is an area which now needs to be developed, especially in upper Key Stage Two.
- 3.1g In all classes, teachers are skilful at asking questions which help children to search for meaning and purpose. By the time children are in the older classes, they are able to explore questions and issues and express answers based on their knowledge of the Church's teaching.

#### **4 Teaching and learning in Religious Education**

##### **4.1 The quality of teaching in Religious Education in relation to its impact on pupils' learning**

- 4.1a The quality of teaching in Religious Education ranges from satisfactory to very good.
- 4.1b All teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Catholic Faith, of Religious Education and of the 'Here I Am' programme. All teaching staff attend topic days at the Hallam Pastoral Centre to help them to understand and explore the topics. Staff meetings are regularly dedicated to Religious Education issues and the Religious Education Co-ordinator disseminates any information that is helpful to staff and is very supportive of colleagues in helping them with personal understanding, planning and delivery of the 'Here I Am' programme. Staff also benefit greatly from regular meetings with the parish priests and members of the parish convent community. On-going staff formation is given a very high priority and is planned for each year. Staff are confident and enthusiastic in their delivery of the Religious Education curriculum.

- 4.1c All teachers demonstrate good questioning skills in discussion sessions which challenge pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding, however tasks and activities set do not always contain sufficient challenge. This is especially so for the more able pupils. Teachers now need to ensure that tasks include greater elements of challenge to enable pupils of all abilities to reach their potential.
- 4.1d All teachers' planning is detailed and thorough and ensures coverage of the Religious Education curriculum. Most planning contains differentiated activities to suit the learning needs of all pupils. Each lesson is planned to have learning objectives and the content of the lessons promote these objectives. All teachers share the learning objectives with the children at the start of the lesson so that children are clear about expectations of what they are going to learn. In most cases, teachers re-visit the objectives at the end of the lesson enabling them to assess the level of understanding the children have achieved and so impact on future planning. This good practice observed in most lessons, now needs to be put into practice in all classes.
- 4.1e Teachers use a variety of teaching methods appropriate to the needs of the children in helping them to achieve the learning objectives and good use is made of resources. The inspector observed one very good lesson where a group children with additional needs were taught by another teacher who adopted different teaching strategies and resources to address the same learning objectives. All the children in each group during this lesson, made very good progress as a result of the diversity of teaching.
- 4.1f The behaviour of the children is generally good. Some pupils present challenging behaviour and this is dealt with by staff in a positive way and does not impact negatively on the learning environment and affect the capacity of other pupils to learn and make progress in each lesson.
- 4.1g Teaching time in Religious Education is used efficiently and all topics are thoroughly covered. Religious Education resources have been built up during the past few years in a systematic way and are now used well to enhance the curriculum. Pupils skills in ICT throughout the school are improving rapidly and staff may now like to consider using the pupils skills in this area more effectively in Religious Education.
- 4.1h Formal homework is generally not given in Religious Education but children are often asked to learn prayers or discuss with parents or relatives issues which have been discussed in class. Parents are sent material which can help them to support what their children are learning in Religious Education and this is appreciated by them.
- 4.1i Teaching assistants make a considerable contribution to the progress that the children make. All the teaching assistants are given training in the 'Here I Am' programme and are made aware by the teachers of learning objectives and expectations of outcomes for each lesson and each group of children. Almost all the teaching assistants are Catholic and all are completely committed to the

Catholic/Christian ethos of the school and the Gospel values which underpin all the school strives for. They make very good relationships with the children and in addition to supporting them in the curriculum, they contribute to developing self-esteem and self-worth in the children. They themselves are valued by teaching staff and parents and they bring enthusiasm and devotion to their role which benefits all.

- 4.1j As stated earlier in this report, on-going staff formation and development is given a very high priority. All staff receive regular in-service training in Religious Education and they are given many opportunities for their own formation. The effect of this is that all staff are well informed, confident and enthusiastic in teaching Religious Education.

## **4.2 How well pupils learn in Religious Education**

- 4.2a In all lessons, teachers share learning objectives with the children at the start of each lesson so that the children are quite clear about what they are going to learn.
- 4.2b All lessons are planned to ensure that children either acquire new knowledge and understanding or consolidate and develop existing knowledge and understanding. These objectives are almost always met.
- 4.2c In all lessons observed, teachers build upon the prior knowledge of the pupils by skilful and relevant questioning. The children show good recall of work previously done and are enthusiastic and eager to share this knowledge with staff and fellow pupils.
- 4.2d Pupils generally apply themselves well to the task in hand; sometimes the tasks presented to them are too prescriptive and do not allow them to be creative. More opportunity for individual creativity would provide children with greater stimulus and challenge. The quality of presentation of written work is variable, it ranges from poor to very good. Where the teacher makes known his/her high expectations and underlines this with affirmative and constructive marking, children respond and they produce well organised and well presented work. Achieving well presented written work throughout the school now needs to be a focus and could be facilitated by the development of the role of the Religious Co-ordinator to include regular work sampling.
- 4.2e Children are generally eager to engage with tasks and complete activities. This is especially so where teachers set high standards of expectation and help children to a good pace of working by encouraging remarks and affirmation. The quantity of written work recorded in books, especially at Key Stage Two, does not reflect complete coverage of the 'Here I Am' topics although when speaking to the children it is obvious that they have covered the work. Teachers now need to come to an agreement about the quantity of written work to be recorded by each age group.

4.2f Almost all children show interest and enjoyment in Religious Education and are able to concentrate. In the best lessons, there is good pace and a variety of activities and teaching strategies which inspire the children to concentration and enthusiasm.

4.2g Children are often given the opportunity to work collaboratively together in such ways as presenting dramas or mimes, discussing ideas, producing collaborative pieces of work or creating liturgies. Children are trained and encouraged from the earliest age to respect each others views and be confident to voice their own ideas. Children generally are prepared to listen to each other and respect views they do not always share. Pupils in upper Key Stage Two demonstrate very good skills in collaborative working. Pupils are generally encouraged to work independently, sometimes over prescriptive activities and tasks limit these possibilities and teachers could consider providing more opportunities for more independent, creative work where appropriate.

### **4.3. The quality of assessment of pupils' work in Religious Education**

4.3a The development of a whole school assessment procedure was a Key Issue in the last Section 23 Inspection and has largely been addressed. Teachers plan assessment opportunities into each 'Here I Am' topic; some of these assessments are recorded in special assessment books although this is not consistently carried out. A portfolio of moderated work is maintained by the Religious Education Co-ordinator. Teachers evaluate the effectiveness of pupil learning at the end of each topic and use this information to inform future planning. Teachers assess pupil progress against the level descriptors and criteria advised by the Diocese of Hallam and use this information to inform parents of their children's progress in end-of-term reports. These reports are informative and appreciated by the parents. The Religious Education Co-ordinator now needs to ensure that the good assessment procedures in place are used consistently throughout the school.

4.3b The school has a good marking policy which sets out procedures for ensuring that marking is both affirmative and helps children to know how they can improve their work. Some marking in Religious Education books adheres to this policy with the result that pupils clearly have a good idea of how well they are doing and constantly strive to improve. In a few cases marking, although generally affirming, does not identify targets for improvement. This inconsistency now needs to be addressed. The good practice in marking helps the children to evaluate their own work.

### **5. Pupils' response to Religious Education**

5.a Pupils generally apply themselves productively and with interest to what they are doing especially when they are presented with interesting and challenging tasks. They generally show enjoyment of Religious Education and are able to sustain concentration in lessons. Teachers contribute to this by lively questioning and appropriate prompts.

- 5.b The Gospel values which underpin all the school tries to achieve, place a great emphasis on developing and nurturing self-respect and respect for others as children of an all loving God. This is reflected in the very good relationships throughout the school. All staff are supportive and affirming of each other and act as excellent role models for the children. The children form respectful and purposeful relationships with each other which lead to the creation of good learning environments.
- 5.c All the adults in school work hard at helping the children to develop confidence and self esteem. Children are frequently asked to perform tasks and are always thanked for doing so. Pupils are encouraged to praise classmates when they have done good work or behaved well, pupils respond well to this praise and are generous in giving it.
- 5.d Children's behaviour is generally good, they have a clear understanding of what is right and wrong, a good sense of justice and an understanding of what constitutes acceptable behaviour. When pupils' behaviour falls below acceptable levels, staff discuss issues with them and help them to understand how they can improve. There is an evident culture of forgiveness in school.

## **6. The provision for the curriculum in Religious Education**

- 6.a The planned curriculum fulfils the requirements of the Curriculum Directory.
- 6.b The teaching time allocated to Religious Education fulfils the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- 6.c The school has sufficient teaching and support staff to match the demands of the Religious Education curriculum. The school has a well planned programme for staff development and formation and all staff are knowledgeable and confident in teaching Religious Education.
- 6.d Classrooms, although small provide adequate accommodation for the delivery of the curriculum. Most classrooms feature displays of pupils' work in Religious Education related to the current 'Here I Am' topic. Most classrooms have a focal area for prayer; some of these are of a very high quality and enhance the opportunity for spiritual development. The good practice observed in some classes should now be shared with all colleagues to ensure that each classroom has high quality displays of Religious Education work and focal areas for prayer. The main entrance to the school is a difficult area as it basically gives access to a stair well. Re-modelling or developing this area was a recommendation made by the Diocesan Review Team in July 2003 following their visit to the school. This recommendation has been included in the Strategic Development Plan but cannot be implemented until the school is clear about the outcome of the Strategic Review of Catholic schools in Doncaster. In the meantime, efforts should be made to use the area to display visible signs and symbols to highlight the distinctive Catholic education that the school undoubtedly offers to its pupils. Other public areas of the school,

including the hall, do feature good quality displays of Religious Education work and artefacts.

- 6.e The school commits an annual budget to the Religious Education Co-ordinator to purchase resources. The Co-ordinator has conducted audits of resources, and with input from the staff, she has built up a supply of appropriate and very good resources to enhance the delivery of the Religious Education curriculum. The school is now very well resourced for the teaching of multi-faith and multi-cultural topics.
- 6.f The school is fully socially inclusive and within the limits of the admission criteria welcomes any child into the school whose needs they are able to address.
- 6.g The school includes and respects the faith backgrounds of pupils of other Christian Churches. Currently the school has no pupils from other world faiths but all the children are taught to understand, respect and celebrate diversity.

## **7 Leadership and Management in Religious Education**

### **7.1 The quality of leadership provided for Religious Education**

- 7.1a The headteacher, together with the deputy headteacher and members of the Governing Body, have a very clear vision for curriculum Religious Education within the mission of the school. She is committed to promoting high standards in Religious Education and ensuring the best provision for all pupils. The headteacher gives good, strong supportive leadership.
- 7.1b The Senior Management Team have recently reviewed and up-dated the Teaching and Learning policy, this document makes clear to all staff what the school considers are the necessary elements of good teaching and learning. The Religious Education Co-ordinator is dedicated, committed and enthusiastic about the subject. She is given regular non-contact time to allow her to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in Religious Education. Currently the Co-ordinator scrutinises planning and carries out some work scrutiny, she manages resources very efficiently and she also supports colleagues in class when her help is requested. Colleagues are appreciative of her sensitive and knowledgeable support. The role of the Co-ordinator now needs to be developed to include regular lesson observations in order to allow her to have a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning in Religious Education and to share the many examples of good practice already identified in this report to ensure consistently high standards throughout the school.

### **7.2 The effectiveness of management in Religious Education**

- 7.2a Priorities for the development of Religious Education are already included in the School Improvement Plan; the senior management team and governors now need to include curriculum priorities and targets in the Plan. A budget is

allocated each year for the purchase of Religious Education resources and staff training/formation. This money has been spent effectively in the past resulting in a supply of good resources and well trained staff. Future expenditure needs to be planned to support identified priorities for development.

- 7.2b Planning of the Religious Education curriculum by all teachers is effective in securing progression in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. This is often enhanced by teachers planning together so that they are clear about where the children have come from and what is required to develop their understanding further and ensure progression.
- 7.2c The school has completed the Diocesan Self Evaluation Document and this has provided a good tool for assessing current practice and highlighting areas for future development. This document now needs to be revisited in more detail following this inspection, and the priorities thus identified for development included in the School Improvement Plan.
- 7.2d As stated earlier in this report, the Religious Education Co-ordinator makes a valuable contribution to the successful delivery of curriculum Religious Education. Her role now needs to be developed to include lesson observations to allow her an overview of strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum in order to address any identified weakness and promote the very good practice already taking place.
- 7.2e Performance Management is embedded in the culture of the school and is seen by all as a positive, affirming process which leads to greater personal and professional development which impacts beneficially on the provision made for the children. A Religious Education or Catholic/Christian target always forms part of each Performance Management cycle.

## **THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL**

### **8. The impact of the school's leadership and management on the Catholic life of the school**

#### **8.1 How well the governing body fulfils its role in relation to the school's religious foundation**

- 8.1a The governors of the school have a very clear understanding of the explicit nature of Catholic education. Although recently re-constituted, they are very well led by a Chairman who has a long association with the school and parish and who is totally committed, along with other governors, to maintaining the very strong Catholic ethos of the school. They contribute to shaping the vision and direction of the Catholic life of the school.
- 8.1b The governors of the school are very proactive and play a valuable part in the life of the school. They take their responsibilities very seriously and meet regularly in committees or as a full body. They undertake relevant training and they are kept very well informed of school issues by the headteacher and the

LEA to enable them to be effective in monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school.

- 8.1c The governing body, who are very well informed about school issues, act as an effective 'critical friend' in supporting the leadership team and also challenging them at appropriate times.

**8.2 The quality of leadership of the headteacher and senior staff in leading the Catholic life of the school.**

- 8.2a The headteacher has a very clear vision for the direction of the Catholic life of the school. This comes from her own deep faith and commitment to serve the children of the school community in the best possible way, acknowledging that each child is made in the image of God and therefore deserving of the best possible opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and academic development. She is very ably supported by the deputy head and staff who all share the ideals of this mission.

- 8.2b Strategic planning reflects and promotes the school's mission. The school, under the effective leadership of the headteacher, constantly strives to find new ways in which to enhance and promote the school's mission; this is evidenced by the contents of the School Improvement Plan.

- 8.2c The Mission Statement informs and directs all school documents and policies. The Gospel values explicit in the Mission Statement are lived out in the day-to-day life of the school.

- 8.2d There is a very clear commitment to catechesis and evangelisation. The headteacher is aware that for many pupils, school is the only part of the Eucharistic worshipping community that they will be part of and so must be of the highest quality and appropriate to their needs. The school's commitment to catechesis and evangelisation extends beyond the children to their parents who are frequently warmly invited and encouraged to join in Masses, celebrations and liturgies. The school always works hard to improve standards of attainment and this is so in curriculum Religious Education. The inclusion of the areas for development highlighted in this report into the School Improvement Plan should act to strengthen the rigour of curriculum Religious Education and thus promote even higher standards of achievement.

- 8.2e The headteacher gives very strong, clear leadership. She supports the staff and she is held in very high regard by them, the parents and pupils.

- 8.2f The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together to form a very good, effective senior management team. They have the confidence of all staff and support and motivate them.

- 8.2g The headteacher and deputy headteacher are totally committed to running an equitable and inclusive school in which each pupil matters. Each child and adult in the school is treated with dignity and respect and is valued as a unique

gift from God. Within the constraints of the Admissions Policy, the school is welcoming to pupils who have sometimes had difficulties in other schools and they help these pupils to regain feelings of self-worth and value.

- 8.2h The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very good role models for other staff and pupils. The parents express these views strongly through the parents' questionnaire and in the pre-OFSTED meeting.

## **9. The quality of Collective Worship**

### **9.1 The frequency and quality of prayer and Collective Worship**

- 9.1a Collective Worship fulfils statutory and diocesan requirements. Acts of Collective Worship are held each day either in whole school assemblies, Key Stage assemblies, in class or in Church.

- 9.1b There is an excellent Collective Worship policy which is regularly reviewed and which states a clear rationale and practical details to ensure implementation. From the evidence gathered by the inspector, the aims of the policy are being fulfilled. Worship plays a large part in the life of the school and acts of worship and liturgies are very carefully planned to ensure that they reflect the Church's liturgical season and usually the 'Here I Am' current topic.

- 9.1c Two assemblies were witnessed by the inspector, one whole school assembly led by the headteacher and one Key Stage One assembly led by a Key Stage One teacher. Both assemblies were very well prepared and appropriate to the children's ages. Very good use was made of scripture, music, appropriate resources, silent reflection and formal prayers. In both assemblies children participated willingly, confidently and respectfully. It was apparent from the children's responses to some thought provoking and challenging questions, that they have a good knowledge of scripture and are well acquainted with the beliefs and traditions of the Catholic church.

- 9.1d The inspector also observed several reflective sessions at the end of Religious Education lessons where pupils were given the opportunity to reflect upon what they had learnt and relate this to their own lives. In all such sessions there was a strong emphasis on giving praise and thanks to God through formal and informal prayers.

- 9.1e The heart of the school is rooted in prayer and the understanding that each individual is valued and loved by God. This creates an awareness of God's love and presence throughout the school community. Staff gather together for voluntary prayers at the start of each week. The headteacher and staff openly profess their faith and love of God and the children are quite comfortable to do likewise.

## **9.2 The provision and quality of the liturgical life of the school**

- 9.2a The school recognises the Eucharist to be at the heart of the school's liturgical life. From the earliest age the children are helped to understand in an appropriate way, the centrality of the Eucharist to beliefs of the Catholic church. The school provides regular opportunities for pupils to participate in Mass with the parish community on holy days and special days such as the beginning and end of term. Mass is celebrated in class rooms on a regular basis. The parish priest encourages the children to active participation and guides them to an understanding of the celebration appropriate to their age.
- 9.2b Sacramental preparation is carried out by parish catechists in school. The parish priests and additional parish catechists hold meetings for parents during the preparation time. School, parents and parish work very well together in partnership to prepare the children to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. When the children have made their first Holy Communion, the whole school celebrates and invites parents and parishioners to join them. The parents express great satisfaction with these arrangements.
- 9.2c The school plans liturgical celebrations carefully and includes penitential services within the schedule. Both parish priests enrich these occasions by their participation.
- 9.2d Children respond well to liturgical celebrations. They respond and sing with enthusiasm and they say formal prayers confidently and respectfully. Children often contribute their own personal prayers to such celebrations.

## **10. The spiritual and moral development of the pupils**

### **10.1 Spiritual development**

- 10.1a Through planned activities in the 'Here I Am' programme and in all areas of the broad and varied curriculum offered, teachers seek to identify opportunities for spiritual development. The children are constantly reminded of the presence of God in their lives. The school offers many additional opportunities for spiritual development to the children such as residential visits, out of school visits and inviting poets and artists into school to work with the children.
- 10.1b The thorough planning and delivery of the 'Here I Am' programme, allows children many opportunities to reflect on their own experiences, attitudes and values in the light of the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church. By the time the children reach upper Key Stage Two, they are generally able to demonstrate skills such as empathy, self-awareness, analysis and evaluation.
- 10.1c The children develop throughout their time in school, an awareness of how religious beliefs impact on people's lives and behaviour. They develop the ability to explain people's actions and motives based upon religious beliefs.

The inspector noted this in several formal lessons and in informal discussions with the children.

- 10.1d All staff in school place a great emphasis on building self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others in the children. They achieve this by living the Gospel values expressed in the Mission Statement and treating all members of the community with respect and dignity; they reward good behaviour and achievement with praise and they readily forgive each other.
- 10.1e The life of the school is rooted in prayer. There is a formal schedule of prayers to be learnt by each age group and children are encouraged to write and say their own prayers. Prayers are said reverently and confidently. Some classrooms have high quality focal areas for prayer which feature the children's prayers. The standard of these areas is not consistently high and this issue needs to be addressed.
- 10.1f The children are helped to understand through their Religious Education lessons and in the day-to-day life of the school that inward experiences and a knowledge of God can transcend the material world.
- 10.1g From the earliest ages, the children are helped to understand and appreciate their own feelings and emotions and how these can impact on others. This was very well demonstrated in a Year Six class where the outcomes of feelings of gratitude and ingratitude were explored in depth.
- 10.1h Through their studies of other world faiths as part of the 'Here I Am' programme, children become aware of how people of other faiths respond to the spiritual dimensions of life. This was well illustrated in samples of work taken from all classes during this study and in speaking with the children.
- 10.1i The school does not currently have a specific policy for spiritual development. This has been noted as an area for further development in the self-evaluation document and now needs to be included in the School Improvement Plan.

## **10.2 Moral development**

- 10.2a The school has very good policy for behaviour which states clearly and in detail what is expected of the children and what procedures are taken to address unacceptable behaviour. The policy is based on the Mission Statement of promoting Gospel values and providing a learning environment in which all pupils feel valued, safe and secure. Parents are aware of this policy and work with the school to ensure its success. Parents speak highly of the general good behaviour of the children.
- 10.2b The behaviour policy speaks of giving responsibility to the children; a School Council has recently been established which seeks to give responsibility to the children for many things such as suggesting ways of improving the quality of the school environment and dealing with certain types of behaviour. Members of the Council represent their classmates and have so far identified several

issues they would like to address. They are given support and encouragement by the deputy head and are enthusiastic about their new role.

- 10.2c In observing and speaking to the children it is obvious that they generally have a good understanding of what is right and wrong and a sense of fairness and justice. They generally treat each other and adults with courtesy, consideration and respect and try to live out the Gospel values so well promoted by the school.
- 10.2d The school does not currently have a specific policy for moral development but this is incorporated into the new PSHE policy and the Drugs and Sex Education policy.
- 10.2e The children are encouraged to and give very generously to many charities including, The Good Shepherd Collection, Mission Together, CAFOD and other charities which have particular links with the school. This charitable giving helps the children to understand and engage with the wider world beyond their own community.

## **CONCLUSION**

The inspector wishes to place on record her personal thanks and appreciation for the kind co-operation received from the headteacher, staff, governors, parish priests, parents and children of St Alban's School.

## **APPENDIX: EVIDENCE BASE**

- The programme of inspection included attendance at a parent's meeting, two pre-inspection visits to the school and two full day inspections.
- Religious Education lessons were observed in all classes.
- The inspector attended a Whole School assembly led by the headteacher and a Key Stage One assembly led by a Key Stage One teacher.
- Interviews were held with the headteacher, the parish priests, the chairman of governors and the Religious Education Co-ordinator.
- Discussions were held with members of the School Council, other children, parents, teaching and ancillary staff, classroom assistants, dinner ladies and the caretaker.
- A very comprehensive range of well presented and well organised documentation was provided by the headteacher and Religious Education Co-ordinator. This included all items on the Diocesan list and many other policies. The inspector was also provided with samples of pupil's work, assessment books, portfolios of moderated work and photographs of celebrations, liturgies and special events in school.

## **SUMMARY REPORT**

### **The major strengths in Religious Education, Collective Worship and the spiritual and moral development of the children.**

- Standards in Religious Education attained by the children range from satisfactory to very good and are commensurate with their attainment in other curriculum areas.
- Teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good.
- Behaviour is generally good and the children have good attitudes to learning.
- The spiritual and moral development of the children is very good and this is a strength of the school.
- The quality of Collective Worship is very good.
- There are very good links between the school, the parishes and the wider community and this is a strength of the school.
- The school is very well led by the headteacher who is effectively and well supported by the staff and governors.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good which leads to a warm, caring, supportive environment where the aims of the Mission Statement are able to be lived out.

### **How the school has improved since the last inspection.**

All Key Issues identified in the last inspection have been addressed although the issues relating to assessment and providing opportunities to challenge the more able pupils need to be further developed.

### **How the parents view the Religious Education, collective worship and spiritual and moral development of their children.**

- Parents highly value the spiritual and moral development of their children, and feel that the headteacher and staff provide very good role models for their children.
- Parents are well satisfied with the good standards their children achieve in Religious Education.
- Parents praise the caring Catholic ethos of the school and they are grateful for the way in which the staff treat each of the children as individuals and work hard to develop the potential of each.
- Parents value their frequent invitations to Masses and celebrations although they would appreciate more invitations to attend school assemblies and receive more notice of all these events.
- Parents value the very good partnership fostered by the school between themselves, the parishes and the wider community.
- Parents are well satisfied with the arrangements for Sacramental Preparation.

### **Areas for further development**

1. Celebrate and consolidate the very good partnerships which exist between the school, the parents, the parishes and the wider community and the very good spiritual and moral development of the children.
2. Revisit the Self-Evaluation Document identifying areas for development highlighted in this report and include any targets or objectives generated into the School Improvement Plan.
3. Build on the good work already being carried out by the Religious Education Co-ordinator by extending her role to include the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning through lesson observations.
4. Ensure that tasks and activities presented to pupils contain a sufficient degree of challenge to enable them to achieve their full potential, especially for the more able pupils.
5. Come to an agreement about the amount of written work expected from each age group, in particular in Key Stage Two.
6. Ensure that the importance given by the school to Religious Education continues to be expressed through consistently high quality, visual displays throughout the school and especially in the entrance hall.