

St Vincent's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	109631
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	377956
Inspection dates	1–2 March 2012
Lead inspector	Susan Thomas-Pounce

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Leo Fitzgerald
Headteacher	Christine Lake
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2009
School address	Hammersmith Gardens Houghton Regis Dunstable LU5 5RG
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	1–2 March 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce

Additional inspector

Anthony Green

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed each teacher teaching at least twice and, in total, visited 17 lessons, together with a number of shorter observations. Safeguarding procedures were evaluated, as well as a detailed analysis of pupils' behaviour. Meetings were held with staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised pupils' books, monitoring and assessment information, the school's improvement plan and teachers' planning. Inspectors also visited an assembly and listened to individual pupils read. Additional discussions were held with pupils about many aspects of school life and examples of their work were also discussed. Responses to inspection questionnaires from staff and pupils were scrutinised, as well as 56 received from parents and carers.

Information about the school

St.Vincent's is an average-sized primary school. As a Catholic school, it serves a largely White British community from Houghton Regis and also from other nearby communities. Although the proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are much higher than average, very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with a statement, and the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals are below average. The school meets the current government floor standards, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. There has been a change in leadership since the previous inspection with a new headteacher taking up her post in September 2011.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not good because achievement and teaching over time are satisfactory. Achievement dropped by comparison with previous years in 2011 and pupils' progress was inadequate overall. The new headteacher has taken steps to ensure that pupils currently in the school make better progress. The high quality of care and support and pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development encourage good behaviour.
- Children start school with skills below those expected for their age; their progress throughout the school is satisfactory. By the end of Year 6, their attainment is broadly average in English and mathematics. There are missed opportunities for pupils to use their developing skills across all subjects.
- Teaching is satisfactory and at its best in Key Stage 2. Teachers' expectations of pupils are not consistently high enough. There is insufficient challenge for pupils of all abilities or adequate opportunities for children to take more of a lead in their own learning. Pupils who are disabled, or who have special educational needs, learn as well as their classmates.
- Pupils' behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. They are well behaved in lessons, respectful and have good attitudes to learning. Their attendance has risen over the last two terms.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher has a clear vision for the school's development and has begun to make changes. Well-targeted professional development is successfully improving the performance of teachers and pupils' achievement. In their response to the questionnaires, parents, carers and staff noted the 'new clear leadership, the many positive recent changes and the need to move the school forward'. Staff, with leadership roles, do not have the skills for monitoring and evaluating. Whilst the governing body supports the school effectively, it has not provided enough consistent challenge to leaders and managers and recognises the need to develop these skills.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring

visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics by ensuring that teachers:
 - increase their expectations and pitch their teaching to provide greater challenge in lessons.
 - enable pupils to take more of a lead in their own learning.
 - widen the opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy, numeracy and communication skills in other subjects across the curriculum.
- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching through the school by encouraging teachers to share their best practice.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - enabling leaders at all levels to develop the skills necessary to improve the quality of pupils' learning
 - ensure members of the governing body always challenge the school and hold it fully to account.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Almost all parents and carers who returned questionnaires said that their children were making good progress. Inspection findings indicate that, over time, achievement is satisfactory. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same satisfactory progress as others because of the support they receive which is tailored to their individual needs. Similarly, more-able pupils make satisfactory progress, although the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels at the end of Year 2 and 6 for the last two years has been below average. In 2011, attainment dipped because pupils did not make sufficient progress during their time in the school from Year 3. However, there is evidence of recent improvement and, in many of the lessons seen during the inspection, pupils made good progress. This is because the school has taken action to redress the underachievement in 2011 with a more focused approach to improve the quality of learning by ensuring teaching is more appropriately matched to the needs of all pupils.

Most children join the Nursery class with skills and experiences below those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and by the time they move into Key Stage 1, most achieve the goals expected at this age. In the past, there has been some underachievement, but, as a result of focused leadership, training and support, this has recently improved. The daily timetable has been reorganised so that children benefit from a suitable amount of direct teaching as well as self-chosen activities. Pupils' continuing satisfactory progress throughout the school means that they reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Standards in reading are average in Year 2 and Year 6, although inspectors observed that pupils showed a much increased confidence and interest in reading. Pupils were

seen to demonstrate a good range of strategies to help them read unfamiliar words, and they benefit from the school's systematic approach to teaching letters and sounds from an early age.

Pupils show real enjoyment of school. They demonstrate this, for example, through the strong interest they show in assembly with their lively singing and in their willingness to share with inspectors their pride in all the good things they like and do in school. Sometimes, their learning in lessons is constrained because there are not enough opportunities for pupils to show independence and use their own ideas.

Quality of teaching

Most parents' and carers' hold the view are that their children are well taught and most pupils share this positive view of lessons. Inspectors find while teachers have good relationships with pupils and they have strong subject expertise in lessons, their teaching is satisfactory. Inspectors took into account achievement over time, pupils' current work and the quality of feedback given when teachers mark pupils' work. These indicate that measures, put in place to improve teaching, are having an impact and are leading to the better progress currently evident in the school. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to supporting those who find learning difficult.

Some teaching was found to be inadequate, and no outstanding teaching was witnessed. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is of mixed quality and further improvements are planned to accelerate the progress of all pupils. In Key Stage 2, teaching is better with much being good. Here, teachers have increasingly high expectations of the pupils. Often, they provide clear explanations and give pupils active and challenging tasks. In the lessons observed, tasks were organised well but, as in the Key Stage 1 classes seen, not always related closely enough to assessments made of individual pupils. Teachers usually explain what they want pupils to learn and then set targets so children know what is expected of them. However, not all teachers are able to match their teaching to ensure that pupils are fully challenged. There is much teacher directed learning and pupils are unable to take more of a lead in their own learning. Although staff ask questions of pupils, too many of these are closed questions requiring short answers; this limits the amount of thinking required by pupils. However, in an effective mathematics lesson in Year 5, well-focused questioning by the teacher, along with the challenging tasks set, led to pupils working confidently and reflectively as they developed their understanding of probability and problem solving. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to extend their skills in literacy, numeracy and communication in other subjects across the curriculum.

Teaching has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In several lessons pupils were observed working enthusiastically and positively in groups with boys and girls of different abilities and with pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Pupils held each other in mutual respect and were keen to learn from each other. Pupils eagerly explained to the inspectors how they learn about different faiths while showing considerable respect and knowledge about their own beliefs. Daily collective worship is planned well and pupils' multicultural awareness is enhanced by links with other schools and by visits. Pupils enjoy

demonstrating and explaining what they can do and helping each other to learn by discussing their ideas together. This helps their good social development.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour in lessons throughout the school is generally good. Despite this, inspectors observed younger pupils become fidgety in lessons when activities were mundane and the pace of learning slowed. However, even then, pupils tried to behave well and maintain their efforts. The behaviour and anti-bullying systems are consistently applied by staff. Pupils fully understand the system of rewards and sanctions. Instances of poor behaviour are very rare as recorded in the school logs. Pupils are well aware of all types of bullying, such as homophobic language, cyber-bullying, intimidation, harassment, and name calling. Pupils in need of a little extra support are well cared for and the school makes good use of the support of other agencies as appropriate.

In all aspects of daily life, pupils are encouraged to show initiative and take responsibility; for example, when welcoming visitors to the school, serving water at lunch times or listening to younger children read. Although attendance is broadly average there is a marked, recent improvement as a consequence of the school's more rigorous procedures. All parents and carers who returned the Ofsted questionnaire think that their children feel safe at school and almost all say their children are well looked after. Inspectors confirm these positive views.

Leadership and management

The overall impact of leadership and management on pupils' progress is satisfactory; the ethos of the school contributes strongly to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly through their religious education programme, and well planned acts of collective worship. Pupils enjoy demonstrating and explaining what they can do and helping each other to learn by discussing their ideas together. This helps their good social development. This is a school where children are warmly welcomed and equally valued. The curriculum promotes the school's values and meets statutory requirements. It appropriately supports the development of pupils' skills in reading, but there are not enough regular opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills across other subjects. Leaders are committed to promoting equality and tackling discrimination. Firm action is underway to narrow the gap, between the achievements of different groups. Improved attendance is increasing pupils' chances of success.

The new headteacher has contributed significantly to improvements in teachers' involvement and confidence in tracking pupil achievement. Roles and responsibilities of subject leaders have been reallocated and staff are optimistic that the school is moving in the right direction. Staff are now starting to develop their skills in monitoring and evaluating subject areas. The school development plan is focused on correctly identified areas. Coupled with well-targeted professional development, this is successfully adding to the improvement drive. With the support of the local authority and external consultants, improvements have been made in planning and resourcing in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teaching assistants have been trained to give more focused support and good partnerships have been developed

with other schools and this is further supporting pupil achievement. The headteacher is a resourceful and ambitious leader who is successfully bringing about steady improvements.

The governing body ensures that safeguarding meets requirements. They take a keen interest in the work of the school. Members recognise that they need greater skills in questioning school data. They have insufficient first-hand knowledge about the work of the school to improve the way they hold the school to account for its successes. The school demonstrates that it has satisfactory capacity to improve further as a result of the headteacher's quick and accurate self-evaluation, including rigorous analysis of performance data that has reversed a declining trend in results.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



5 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Vincent's Catholic Primary School, Dunstable LU5 5RG

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school and for talking with us about the interesting things that you do. We could see that you behave well and that you enjoy learning and are ready to work hard. You get on well with your teachers, for whom you have great respect.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. This means that there are a lot of things that the school is doing right and some things that need to be improved. I know that all the adults who help to run your school want it to be a good school. For this to happen, you need to make better progress in your work. Recently, you have been making better progress in lessons. This is because your new headteacher is really working hard with all the other staff in keeping a closer eye on how you are doing. In order to help all of you make even better progress in your learning, we have asked your school to do three things:

- make sure every lesson always leads to good progress by helping you to participate more in your lessons so you can learn more independently
- encourage teachers to share what they do best to help you learn and giving you more opportunities to use your skills in literacy, numeracy and communication in all your subjects
- share the leadership and management of the school more widely with members of staff, and the governing body so they develop the skills they need to improve your learning.

You can help in all of this by continuing to work hard, and taking some responsibility for your own learning. We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Susan Thomas-Pounce
Lead inspector

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