

St Vincent's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103417
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	376899
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Kath Campbell

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	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Carlyle
Headteacher	Janet Tibbits
Date of previous school inspection	9 March 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 15 lessons taught by 10 teachers. The headteacher joined two of the inspectors for three lesson observations. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and pupils. They also spoke informally to parents and carers. They observed the work of the school and looked at a range of documentation, including information about pupils' progress, and child protection and safeguarding procedures. They looked at pupils' past and present work, and scrutinised 102 questionnaires completed by pupils and 122 by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Do all groups of pupils, including those with English believed to be their first language, make equally good progress?
- Are standards in English, particularly in writing, high enough?
- How effectively is assessment used to promote good learning for different groups of pupils, particularly the more-able pupils and those in Key Stage 1?
- How rigorously do leaders and managers and members of the governing body monitor learning outcomes in order to provide support for pupils who might make less than expected progress?

Information about the school

St Vincent's is an average-sized school close to the city centre. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Almost a third of pupils speak English as an additional language, which is twice the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is also well above average. The school has received several awards in recognition of its work including Artsmark Gold, Quality Mark for Basic Skills and Healthy Schools status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Vincent's is a good school that has maintained and built on the strengths found at the time of the previous inspection. Its success lies in the good leadership and management of the headteacher and senior leaders and the strong determination of staff to sustain improvement. The school is rightly held in high regard by parents and carers. Numerous appreciative comments, such as, 'The staff give 110%, the school's a credit to them', aptly sum up their high level of satisfaction.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and makes a major contribution to their good personal development. Pupils are impressively well-informed about why eating healthily and keeping fit are important. They have an excellent commitment to a wide range of sporting activities. The work of the learning mentor is instrumental in the excellent care, guidance and support offered to individual pupils and their families. Attendance is above average because pupils like school a great deal and there is a very powerful sense of community. Pupils of all ages relish responsibility and make a very strong commitment to engaging with, celebrating and improving their local community. The school's securely established links with schools in, for example, Thailand and Bulgaria provide excellent foundations for outstanding community cohesion.

By the time pupils leave, they typically reach broadly average standards. They achieve well after a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The high-quality input for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of English language acquisition permeates all the school's work. This support enables pupils to develop vital skills for their future learning. Standards have risen steadily in mathematics in Key Stage 2. The rise is chiefly due to the school's improved systems for tracking the progress of individual pupils. In addition, tenacious monitoring and accurately targeted intervention identify potential underachievement much earlier than in the past. The school is now seeking to bring about improvement in reading and writing where standards have not been as high. Through initiatives, such as 'Big Write', pupils of all ages are beginning to take a greater interest in improving the quality of their written work. Although there is some way further to go, there are strong signs that the school's strategies for improvement are starting to have a good level of success. However, some initiatives are in their infancy and have not yet had a full impact on standards.

Teaching and learning are good, with some outstanding practice. Staff do much to make learning enjoyable and classrooms are lively environments where learning is

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fun and pupils want to succeed. However, there are some inconsistencies, most notably in teachers' use of assessment and the quality of marking. Teachers sometimes do not show pupils clearly enough how to improve their work or involve them sufficiently in assessing their own levels of understanding. Occasionally, expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. The innovative and exciting curriculum is good. Some features, such as the school's excellent partnerships with numerous other schools and outside providers to promote learning, are outstanding. There are not always enough opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy skills across different subjects.

The headteacher and senior leaders provide a highly effective partnership. They have created an impressively good climate for learning. The school is reflective and honest in self-evaluating its performance. Leaders have an accurate view of what needs to be done and they measure the impact of initiatives on pupils' learning outcomes with rigour and precision. The governing body is well organised and hard working. Its members have good involvement within the school, monitor areas such as safeguarding well and are knowledgeable about whether pupils make as much progress as they should. Effective leadership, combined with tighter tracking systems and good quality teaching and learning, ensure that the school has a good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in English by:
 - extending pupils' enthusiasm for reading and writing from an early stage so that they sustain a strong interest as they move through the school
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in different subjects.

- Develop greater consistency in the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring all teachers have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - sharing the good practice that exists within the school
 - using marking more effectively to move pupils to the next step in their learning
 - involving pupils more in assessing their own levels of understanding of their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Children typically start school with skills, knowledge and understanding that are well below the levels expected for their age, and with weak social and language skills. The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make), particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is impressively good, enabling secure foundations for future language and literacy development. As pupils move through the school, they make good progress and some make outstanding progress. Greater challenge for more-

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able pupils, especially in Key Stage 1, has seen a rise in the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels. Pupils with English believed to be their first language and those who speak English as an additional language make equally good progress because work is tailored well to capture their interest and meet their individual needs. An outstanding example of this was observed when a small targeted group of older pupils was developing mathematical skills, including acquiring greater confidence with using decimals. Despite encountering difficulties, pupils were highly motivated to succeed. Learning was rapid because expectations were very high and teaching was targeted with pinpoint accuracy at individual needs. Not a second was wasted and pupils made outstanding progress because activities were carefully structured to ensure a high level of understanding.

Parents and carers believe their children feel safe and pupils know they are part of a very caring community. Behaviour is good and sometimes outstanding in lessons but, occasionally, not of the same high standard at lunchtimes. Pupils take their responsibilities, such as being peer mediators or house captains, very seriously. The school council is a very well-respected group of pupils with an influential role in school life. A strong ethos underpins the work of the school. Acts of collective worship make an outstanding contribution to pupils’ spiritual growth. Art and music play an important part in cultural development. By the time pupils leave, their secure personal and improving academic skills ensure they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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Parents and carers rightly believe that their children are taught well. Staff develop highly effective relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well. As a result, most pupils are keen to do their best. Good use of questioning successfully prompts pupils to find out more and explain their thinking. Occasionally, teachers talk for too long, leaving pupils with too little time to practise skills and sometimes pupils waste valuable time moving from one activity to another.

The curriculum is rich and diverse. In discussion, pupils reveal that they greatly appreciate the opportunities on offer and levels of enjoyment are high. Themed activities are constantly revised and adapted to ensure they meet pupils’ needs and interests. Information and communication technology is a very integral part of learning. The school provides an exceptional range of enrichment and enhancement opportunities, such as trips to the theatre and, more ambitiously, visits to partner schools in other countries. These ensure learning takes place in meaningful contexts. However, the overall quality of the curriculum is good rather than outstanding, because it is not yet embedded firmly enough to raise standards further, particularly in English.

Pupils’ care and welfare are given a high priority. The school is a very harmonious, cohesive community where pupils get along exceptionally well together. Older pupils care for younger ones and establish firm bonds of friendship. Those in need of personal support receive excellent guidance, enabling them to participate fully in school life. Breakfast club is of a high quality and provides a positive start to the day for many pupils. The introduction of individual interviews with pupils to discuss the quality of their extended writing is proving highly effective. These interviews develop pupils’ self-esteem because they enjoy the one-to-one attention and can see their progress clearly. Good procedures for monitoring attendance have resulted in a rise to above average levels.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a calm, measured view of what needs to be done. She provides a secure framework of expectations for everyone involved in the school. Together with other senior leaders, there is a strong determination towards raising standards and improving overall school performance. Monitoring, through lesson observations and numerous other evaluations, is rigorous and of high quality. The school

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development plan is a valuable working document and is increasingly underpinned by better analysis of data about pupils’ achievement. Class teachers are more accountable than in the past for the standards achieved by the pupils in their care. The governing body has an accurate view of what the school does effectively and what needs further work. Its members are highly supportive and confident to challenge and question the school’s performance.

Links with parents and carers, especially when helping them to support their children’s learning at home, are strong. Safeguarding procedures are robust, meet requirements and follow good practice. The single central record, the document that keeps vital safeguarding information about adults who work within the school, is of a particularly high quality. The school is strongly inclusive and values pupils as individuals. It promotes equality of opportunity well by narrowing the gap between the performance of different groups and by providing innovative learning opportunities for all pupils to achieve well. It tackles discrimination effectively through its wealth of links with pupils from other schools in a wide variety of contexts. Pupils within the school are appreciative of each other’s success and everyone has the opportunity to make a contribution. The promotion of community cohesion is impressively strong at a local, national and international level. Pupils regularly write and email to or video conference with pupils in their partner schools in countries as far flung as Finland or Spain.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The strong focus on personal, social and emotional development effectively enables children to grow in confidence and self-esteem. In targeted areas, such as early language and literacy development, children, especially those who have English as an

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additional language, make rapid progress because they receive good quality individual support. Children engage in activities with high levels of motivation and perseverance. A good example of this was seen when a small boy displayed considerable determination while trying to practise writing letters independently on an interactive whiteboard. He never gave up and had a look of sheer delight when he had succeeded. Parents and carers greatly appreciate the numerous opportunities on offer to become involved in their children’s learning. Staff in both the Nursery and Reception classes work together well as a team. The balance between adult-led and independent activities is just right. Occasionally, some independent activities lack sufficient challenge to extend the learning of more-able children. The outdoor learning area in the Reception class is a real strength and provides an outstandingly stimulating and challenging space for children to learn and develop skills. Teaching is of a consistently good quality and the Nursery ‘learning journey’ books are of a very high standard. They provide valuable insight into the progress of individual children. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good because staff share the same vision and drive for future improvement.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a good level of response to the parental questionnaire. Inspectors also spoke to parents and carers informally and found a high level of satisfaction. Parents and carers greatly appreciate the opportunities offered to them to become more involved in the work of the school. Those who replied to the questionnaire particularly like the fact that their children have an enjoyable experience at school. They believe their children are taught well and that the leadership and management of the school are good.

Most written comments expressed appreciation. Very few parents or carers expressed concerns and these tended to be of an individual nature. The lead inspector followed up with the school all matters raised while preserving confidentiality.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Vincent's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 122 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 235 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	66	37	30	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	79	65	32	26	4	3	3	2
The school informs me about my child’s progress	73	60	46	38	2	2	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	75	61	36	30	7	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	71	58	49	40	0	0	1	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	70	57	39	32	9	7	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	61	50	55	45	4	3	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	58	48	49	40	2	2	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	60	49	49	40	5	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	57	47	49	40	5	4	7	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	45	49	40	5	4	6	5
The school is led and managed effectively	68	56	45	37	3	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	70	57	42	34	7	6	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Vincent's Catholic Primary School, Birmingham, B7 4HP

Thank you for looking after us so well when we visited your school. There are many things of which you should feel very proud. Your attendance is above average because most of you enjoy coming to school very much. We were pleased to see how many of you have lots of golden stamps in your books for your good behaviour. The way in which you try to eat healthily and keep fit is excellent and you do many good things to make your school a success. We really liked looking at your 'Big Write' books because they show how much your writing has improved.

You go to a good school. You say that your headteacher and other senior teachers are doing a good job and we agree with you. All your teachers find lots of different ways to help you to learn. The extra help that some of you get is excellent. You make good progress because you are taught well. Many of you do an excellent job helping in school and getting involved in the local community. Some of you have been lucky enough to travel abroad because you have excellent links with schools in other countries.

We have asked your school to do a few things to help it improve even more. Some of the teaching is brilliant and we want it all to be as good as that. In English, we want you to improve your reading and writing skills even more and to be given more chances to practise your writing in different subjects. We have asked everyone to make sure you know how to improve your work each time you have it marked. You could play a bigger part in working out how well you think you are doing.

Keep up that good attendance and help your teachers by behaving well and always trying to do your best.

My best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Kath Campbell
Lead inspector

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