

St Vincent's Catholic Primary School

Vauxhall Grove, Vauxhall, Birmingham, B7 4HP

Inspection dates 25–26 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well through the school. Although many children start school with skills well below those expected for their age, pupils leave Key Stage 2 having reached average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching ensures learning is lively and interesting and pupils are enthusiastic about what they are learning.
- Pupils enjoy a good range of well-taught physical education activities and clubs, which promote an active and healthy lifestyle.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils mean that pupils are keen to try hard and they develop positive attitudes to their work.
- Pupils behave well in and around school. They are polite to adults and to each other and respond sensitively when helping each other.
- Pupils feel safe in school and understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations.
- The headteacher and senior leaders rigorously track pupils' progress to quickly identify, and help, any pupils in danger of falling behind. Leaders' actions ensure that achievement is good as a result of good teaching.
- Governors are very supportive of the school. They ask challenging questions of senior leaders in holding them accountable for improving the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school and underpins all it does.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' use of grammar, spelling and punctuation is not as strong as their other skills.
- Sometimes teachers do not challenge pupils enough to help them make better progress and, occasionally, the work they are given is too easy for the most-able.
- Not all teachers give pupils clear guidance about how to improve their work or time to act on the advice given.
- Governors' frequent visits to the school are not always focused tightly enough on evaluating progress on specific improvement priorities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons, six of which were seen together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff, two groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, a parent governor, and a representative of the local authority.
- Informal discussions were held with parents.
- The inspectors took account of the 20 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, the school's own parental questionnaires and 25 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and reviewed a range of documentation, including: the school's checks on its performance, its analysis and tracking of pupils' progress, records of behaviour and safety, school improvement plans, records relating to classroom observations and the management of staff performance, safeguarding arrangements and records of meetings of the governing body.
- The inspectors also looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and checked information on attendance.

Inspection team

Susan Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Westall

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, have a parent in the armed forces or are in local authority care, is above average.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are also above average.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs are all above average.
- The school has formed a partnership with other local schools and the Children's Centre.
- The school has gained the gold level Artsmark accreditation.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - there is more focus on the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar so that pupils learn how to use language more accurately
 - guidance for pupils as to how they can improve their work is consistently clear, and that teachers make sure pupils have time to act on the advice given
 - the most-able pupils always have work which takes into account what they already know and challenges them to make even more rapid progress.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that governors' frequent visits to the school are always rigorously focused on improvement priorities and that each governor's findings are fully reported to the rest of the governing body.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children typically start in the Nursery and Reception classes with skills well below those expected for their age. They make good progress, especially in the development of their social and communication skills, but still enter Key Stage 1 with weak skills in many areas of learning.
- The results of the most recent Year 1 national screening check on how well pupils know phonics (the sounds that letters represent in words) were below average. However, good progress throughout Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics narrows the gap between pupils' attainment and the average for their age group by the end of Year 2. Overall standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2013 were below average, but pupils had made good progress from very low starting points, including in reading, where standards were ahead of those in writing during the last three years.
- Pupils continue to make good progress through Key Stage 2 so that they leave with average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test taken in 2013 were slightly lower.
- Progress is consistently good in all year groups. Pupils supported by the pupil premium make equally good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because they are ably helped by the staff. Eligible pupils left Key Stage 2 in 2013 with lower attainment than that of other pupils. Their overall attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was one and a half terms behind that of other pupils. However, eligible pupils currently in the school are making such good progress that the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils is narrowing year on year.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their specific needs are quickly identified and appropriate support put in place. They are well supported in their learning.
- While most more-able pupils generally make good progress because teachers have high expectations of what they can do, occasionally the most-able do not make even better progress because they are not always challenged enough to achieve their best.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make particularly good progress. Adults and other pupils encourage them to practise speaking, which helps them use English with confidence.
- Progress in physical education is good. The school has used its primary sports funding to employ highly trained coaches to teach lessons and run clubs. This not only gives pupils the opportunity to excel, but also helps teachers develop their own skills as teachers of this subject.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because teachers have good subject knowledge and teach lessons where learning is made interesting and challenging. For example, Year 6 pupils were fascinated by the idea of 'contaminating' bread so that they could grow their own micro-organisms in a controlled way. In Year 4, pupils speculated how they could describe turning a simple plimsoll into an exciting shoe with special powers. Year 2 pupils were interested to explore angles and were able to identify right angles in different two-dimensional shapes.

- The Nursery and Reception classes provide a good range of activities for children to develop their skills. Adults consistently encourage children to talk about what they are doing to help develop their language skills. For example, children in the Nursery described what it felt like to walk through the trays of grass, mud, stones and water set out for them to investigate.
- Physical education is taught well both by specialist coaches and by class teachers. During the inspection, Reception children learned effective ways to warm up before playing a game. Throughout the lesson the teacher created a positive learning atmosphere by praising sporting behaviour as well as physical achievement.
- Additional adults in the classroom are used well. They are well briefed and support different pupils effectively, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They model what they do on the way teachers promote learning to make sure that their support and advice is consistent with that of the class teacher so that pupils have continuity in their learning activities.
- In most lessons pupils are engrossed in their learning because the tasks they are given take into account what they already know and build on that knowledge. Very occasionally, the most-able pupils are not challenged enough, finish their work quickly and have to wait for others before they can move on to the next piece of work, hampering the possibility of making better progress.
- Some teachers give good guidance about how pupils can improve their work. For example, targets are used effectively and oral and written comments are helpful. They then make sure that pupils have time to follow their advice. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school and some teachers' guidance is clearer and more helpful than others.
- Pupils are given plenty of experience in writing at length and in different subjects. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to improve their spelling and refine their writing to ensure that punctuation and grammar are used correctly and to good effect.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good in lessons and around the school. They are pleasant and polite to adults and each other. During the inspection they readily shared equipment and supported each other in lessons by offering advice or help. The school actively teaches pupils how to pay and receive compliments and pupils respond well, following the positive role models that adults present to them in the school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber, physical, emotional and racist bullying. They are adamant that it rarely happens in the school. They feel confident that any incidents are always sorted out by adults. Parents who responded to the questionnaires or who spoke to inspectors wholeheartedly said that behaviour is good and bullying is dealt with effectively.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders ensure that access to the building is secure and staff are rigorously checked prior to appointment. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in and outside school and told the inspectors about visitors to school who teach them about firework, internet and road safety. Older pupils act as good role models for younger ones through mentoring, acting as reading 'buddies' and helping in the Reception and Nursery classes at playtimes.

- Pupils are very enthusiastic about their lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. In Year 5, for example, pupils encouraged their teacher to give them increasingly challenging work so that they could demonstrate what good progress they had made.
- Pupils who find behaving well difficult are well supported. As a result of a fair and consistently applied behaviour policy and the time adults spend guiding them about their behaviour, their behaviour improves considerably over time and they settle well into school life.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is led well by the headteacher and senior leaders. Pupils' progress is rigorously tracked by senior and subject leaders so that any in danger of falling behind are quickly identified and effective steps are taken to help them keep up.
- Leaders and managers make sure that teaching is good. Subject leaders contribute well to the appraisal system for checking teachers' performance, introduced last year, which contributes to the good teaching across the school. Individual targets are used by the headteacher and the governing body to measure whether pay rises and promotion are justified by results. Teachers say that they have good training opportunities to develop and refine their skills.
- The school has formed strong partnerships with other local schools, which help provide training for staff and opportunities for pupils to work together. Good links with parents are demonstrated by the overwhelming support shown through responses to Parent View and the school's own questionnaires.
- The curriculum gives pupils interesting learning opportunities. Pupils respond with enthusiasm to learning and, for example, those in Years 3 and 4 talked about enjoying work done on health. Music, dance and drama play an important part in pupils' learning and they enjoy performing to different audiences, which has helped the school gain the gold standard Artsmark. However, on occasions, insufficient emphasis is given to pupils' accuracy in written work.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a particular strength of the school. Pupils take their faith very seriously and strong links with the church help them develop a strong sense of spirituality. The school celebrates the wide range of cultures represented by pupils in the school and termly 'International Days', based on those cultures, are talked about enthusiastically by pupils. The school promotes equality of opportunity to make sure that all pupils achieve equally well.
- The local authority has accurately assessed the leadership and management of the school to be good and not in need of specific support. However, governors have attended training courses provided by the local authority to enhance their skills.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are extremely supportive of the school. They ask challenging questions in meetings with leaders and hold the headteacher and senior leaders accountable for the school's continued improvement. They require convincing evidence from leaders that the new appraisal system is contributing to improving the quality of teaching, and they make sure that teachers' pay rises are linked to the progress their pupils make. Governors have investigated for themselves teachers' reactions to the revised system and say that teachers feel this is challenging but fair. Governors know that the pupil premium is helping eligible pupils to achieve well and they understand how the new primary school sports funding is used to extend physical education opportunities. Governors frequently visit the school to support

events and check on how well it is doing for themselves. However, visits are not always tightly focused on evaluating progress towards specific improvement priorities and findings from visits are not always fully fed back to all governors. Governors have made sure that national requirements for safeguarding and child protection are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	103417
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	440494

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	247
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Carlyle
Headteacher	Janet Tibbits
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2011
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