

# Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School

Bedwell Crescent, Stevenage, SG1 1NJ

**Inspection dates** 3–4 July 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- Strong leadership from senior leaders and governors have brought significant improvements to teaching and pupil achievement since the previous inspection.
- Good teaching helps all groups of pupils, whatever their ability or background, to make good progress.
- Standards are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well. They are proud of their achievements.
- Parents and carers, staff and pupils all agree that behaviour in classrooms and around the school is good. Pupils say they feel safe and enjoy attending school.
- The well-planned range of interesting themes and activities that pupils study promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Governors are well informed and support the school well. They hold leaders to account for the progress that pupils make. They are aware of its strengths and provide a good balance of support and challenge.
- The school has strong links with the community and links with partnership schools

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The teaching is not quite as strong in mathematics as it is in reading and writing. Occasionally, work is repetitive and pupils lose interest.
- Teachers do not always set pupils, including the more able, sufficient challenges or give them the opportunity to use their mathematical skills to think hard and to solve problems.
- Teachers' marking in mathematics is not as helpful as it is in English. Teachers' comments do not always ensure pupils understand what they need to do to improve.
- Although subject leaders are enthusiastic about their roles, their skills in improving the quality of teaching are not fully developed.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 23 classes to observe pupils' learning in lessons, one of which was jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Short visits were also made to classrooms to observe behaviour and to look at pupils' books.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan, external evaluations of the school, minutes of meetings of the governing body, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, met with different groups of pupils and spoke to members of staff. They also considered the 21 responses to the staff questionnaire. ,
- Inspectors spoke to members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 56 responses to the online (Parent View) survey. The views of parents were sought at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors watched part of the sports day celebrations and a multicultural dance by a group of pupils.

## Inspection team

Gillian Bosschaert, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Stephen Johnson

Additional Inspector

Jacqueline Pentlow

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Vincent de Paul is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- A well above average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. About a third speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, the additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority, is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in staff including the appointment of a new headteacher.
- The new headteacher took up his post in April 2014.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring:
  - all teachers regularly provide challenging and stimulating activities for pupils, particularly those who are more able, to ensure that they concentrate hard at all times
  - pupils are encouraged to use their skills in mathematics to find solutions to mathematical problems and are given more opportunities to do so
  - the guidance teachers provide in their marking makes clear to pupils what they need to do next to improve.
- Develop the role of teachers who lead different subjects by giving them more responsibility for improving the quality of teaching in their areas, particularly in mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics has improved rapidly in the last year, particularly so in reading and writing. Assessment data generated by the school's and the good quality of the work in pupils' books both indicate that these improvements have continued to improve.
- In 2013 pupils reached standards which were average in Key Stage 1 and well above average in Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills in communication; speaking and listening skills are below those typically seen at their age; a third are learning English for the first time. The school focuses effectively on building all children's vocabulary and literacy skills with the result that, by the time they enter Year 1, they have made good progress to reach levels that are typically in line with those expected for their age.
- All groups of pupils, from their different starting points, achieve well by the time they leave. This trend is set to continue because leaders keep a careful check on the progress of different groups of pupils so that those who are in danger of falling behind get the extra help they need.
- Pupils currently at the school are making good progress across all key stages with a growing number making even faster progress. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They say they enjoy learning because 'learning is fun'. In a few classes progress in mathematics is not quite as rapid as it is in reading and writing because their problem-solving skills are not developed sufficiently. More-able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in mathematics. Some activities repeat work pupils have already covered. As a result pupils' learning slows. However, progress in Year 6 is accelerated by good teaching so that, by the time they leave, pupils' attainment is good.
- When children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage their love of books is encouraged to develop through the wide range of stories, songs and rhymes they are given. Pupils learn to use their knowledge of phonics, (the sounds letters make) accurately as they make progress through the school. Throughout Key Stage 1 they read simple words and texts enthusiastically. By the time they reach Year 6 pupils have a real love of books and talk excitedly about favourite authors and different types of story.
- The school uses additional funding well to provide the best help for pupils eligible for pupils premium support. The impact of this funding is regularly reviewed to ensure that pupils are making at least similar progress to their classmates. In Year 6 the attainment of eligible pupils who left the school in 2013 was, on average, the same as other pupils in reading, two terms behind in writing and three terms behind in mathematics. Eligible pupils in all year groups are making progress similar to their peers. The attainment of pupils in the current Year 6 is the same as their peers for mathematics and slightly ahead in reading and writing.
- Pupils enjoy the sporting opportunities the school provides through its use of the additional funding for primary sport. During the sports event seen during the inspection, pupils enthusiastically joined in each event regardless of ability. They talked excitedly about the range of competitive events in which they take part in the local area, including Tag Rugby and Girls Football.
- Some of the sports funding has been used to provide a sports apprentice from the Stevenage

Sporting Futures Team who works with all year groups to support teachers and improve pupils' physical activity and well-being. He also provides targeted support for a number of pupils who need extra help. This has built pupils' self esteem and their cooperative skills within teams as well as to help improve their listening skills.

### **The quality of teaching is good**

- Teaching over time is typically good. The quality and quantity of work in pupils' books has been consistently good throughout the year. Consequently, pupils across the school make good progress. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- When children start in the Nursery and Reception classes, they settle quickly and routines are well established. Teachers provide interesting and imaginative activities that help them to develop their early reading, writing and number skills well. For example, a group of children were having fun while learning to write their names in shaving foam on an empty water tray. Another group was lifting stones and logs to find small creatures and attempting to recognise what they were so they could tick them off from their list of possible creatures to find.
- This good teaching ensures pupils are hard-working and keen to learn. Teachers ensure they take pride in what they do and in most cases present their work legibly and neatly. Pupils' work is displayed carefully and attractively around the school. Some excellent artwork on the artist Lowry showed that the skills of control and use of technique are well taught.
- Teaching assistants are generally used well and make a good contribution to pupils' learning. They know what they have to do because they are briefed well by teachers and given guidance on how to support individuals and groups, including disabled pupils and those who have educational special needs, and those in the early stages of learning English
- In the majority of classes, pupils make good progress in English because literacy is taught well. Teachers plan activities that build effectively on what pupils already know and can do so that they make good progress. In one class pupils were asked to recite riddles they had previously written about animals. Their writing had to include clues so that other pupils could guess what the animal was. Pupils relished the activity and wrote carefully drafted pieces that showed they could descriptive use language very effectively.
- Teaching is not always as thorough in mathematics as it is in English. In a few classes, more-able pupils are provided with repetitive work and they lose interest. Marking, although regular does not give pupils clear advice on what to do if they have not understood. Teachers do not consistently offer pupils work that is hard enough and makes them think or provide sufficient opportunities for them to apply newly gained knowledge to investigations or problem solving activities.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are polite to each other and to adults. They say they love learning and, when in their classrooms, the overwhelming majority are eager to learn. Good behaviour was clearly evident during the sports morning, for example, when all groups waited patiently for their turn without fuss or complaint.
- Pupils of different backgrounds play and learn well together because the school does not tolerate any discrimination. It encourages empathy, care and respect as part of the school ethos. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strength of the school.

- The school's work to keep the pupils safe and secure is good. All leaders including governors are committed to ensuring that pupils are kept safe at all times. Pupils feel safe at school because adults look after them well. Relationships are warm and supportive. Positive behaviour is promoted through a system of rewards and sanctions which the pupils know and understand.
- Parents and carers who responded to Parent View or who spoke to inspectors during the inspection were highly positive about behaviour in the school. Staff also feel that behaviour is consistently good and managed well. Any incidents are carefully noted and discussed with pupils and, if necessary, with parents.
- Pupils are aware that bullying takes many forms but are clear that if it should happen they would involve a teacher. They are confident that teachers would act swiftly to deal with any incident and ensure it was not repeated. Incident logs confirm that when there have been rare incidents of name-calling, these have been dealt with quickly and appropriately by staff. The school ensures pupils know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.
- Occasionally, when pupils do not have enough to do to keep them occupied, a few become restless, lose their concentration and as a result, their learning slows. Sometimes noise levels get too high but these occasions are rare.
- A named governor oversees and checks that pupils attend school regularly. Regular reports are shared with parents through newsletters. As a consequence, pupils' attendance has improved to above average.

### **The leadership and management are good.**

- The new headteacher has strengthened the senior leadership team since his appointment at Easter. He has a clear vision about what he wants the school to achieve for its pupils. The headteacher is fully supported by leaders at all levels including governors. They consistently communicate high expectations and ambition, which are shared with all staff and pupils.
- Senior leaders work closely as a team, with each taking responsibility for increasing pupils' attainment and expecting high quality teaching. The deputy head teacher and the external associate headteacher have worked closely together since the previous inspection and have brought about rapid improvements.
- The leadership team has been extended to include more experienced teachers who have been asked to lead the development of different subjects. Some of these roles are relatively new, however, and while subject leaders are enthusiastic about their new roles, they do not always have the skills needed to lead improvements in teaching in their areas of responsibility.
- The school has a good understanding of what it does well and clearly identifies areas for improvement. Its self-evaluation is accurate and robust systems are in place to monitor the quality of teaching and check its impact on pupils' attainment and progress. Leaders make regular checks on lessons and work in books and ask pupils' their views and opinions. Professional training for staff is closely linked to school priorities for improvement and is open to both teachers and teaching assistants. As a direct result, teachers and other adults work well together in teams to improve pupils' achievement.
- Leaders have not been afraid to tackle inadequate teaching in the past. Their high expectations are clearly communicated and leaders manage staff performance effectively, robustly challenging

any members of staff who do not meet the targets set for them.

- The Early Years Foundation Stage is well managed. The leader makes good use of time allocated for joint activities, both inside and outside in the shared area, to check on the quality of provision and to observe her team at work. Teachers and other adults plan well together to make the best possible use of all their resources.
- Staff ensure pupils are provided with creative opportunities to extend their reading, writing and communication skills when they are learning about other subjects. The school works well with the local Catholic secondary school to provide opportunities for pupils to participate in drama and music. One such example was observed by inspectors, who were entertained by a group of pupils presenting a delightful dance with links to several different cultures and based on Indian music.
- The links between home and school are good. The school makes good use of parent forums and workshops with governors, for example on internet safety, to explain the school's work in different subjects. Parents who spoke to inspectors during the sports morning were complimentary about the new headteacher and his approachability.
- The local authority and the Diocese of Westminster and the catholic community have supported the school well throughout the period when there was no substantive headteacher. The local authority has provided training to school leaders to help them check on the quality of teaching and has also successfully supported the school in making rapid improvements in achievement.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Following the review of governance required by the previous inspection, the governing body has been significantly strengthened. Governors are very clear about their roles and responsibilities. An audit of their skills has ensured that there are more people with the skills to help them analyse of school's performance data and to work with senior leaders to check on the quality of teaching. They now ensure that the pupil premium and sports funding is spent wisely and governors check that it is making a positive difference to pupils.
  - Parent and governor forums now take place on a regular basis and an increasing number of parents attend. To strengthen the work of committees, additional parents have been asked to join and contribute to the school's work. Governors take full advantage of the training that is offered by the local authority and the diocese. This ensures that governors' knowledge is up-to-date and as a result, they are well placed to make decisions about what happens in school. They are fully involved in writing the school development plan and hold leaders to account for the school's performance. Governors ensure that safeguarding requirements are met and finances are secure.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117498
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	442041

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary Aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	471
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Penny Perschky
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Keane
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 November 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01438 729555
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