



St Vincent's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103417
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276913
Inspection dates 28 February 2006 to 1 March 2006
Reporting inspector Martin Kerly AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Vauxhall Grove
School category	Voluntary aided		Birmingham
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		West Midlands B7 4HP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 3592359
Number on roll	230	Fax number	0121 3336912
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Father John Carlyle
Date of previous inspection	29 November 1999	Headteacher	Miss Lynne Lawrence

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Vincent's is an average-sized primary school. It serves an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage and half the children are eligible for free school meals. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic groups, the largest being Black or Black British Caribbean, Asian British and White British. An increasing minority of pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that has some excellent features. It gives good value for money. It has good systems for checking its performance and the inspection evidence confirms the school's own rigorous judgements. Good provision in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) enables children to settle quickly and make good progress. Good progress is maintained throughout Years 1 to 6, accelerating in Years 5 and 6 as a result of some excellent teaching. Most children have exceptionally low levels of attainment on entry. By the end of the Reception Year very few have reached the expected learning goals for their age. However, by the end of Year 2 most pupils are nearer to the national average, although still below in language and mathematical skills. By Year 6 standards are in line with national averages. Teaching is good across the school, enabling pupils of all abilities to learn well. It is excellent at times in Years 5 and 6. Teachers match work carefully to their pupils' levels of understanding and plan interesting and imaginative activities which motivate and enthuse them. In the Nursery and Reception classes, children get insufficient opportunities to use the outdoor area to support their learning across all areas of the curriculum. Pupils' personal development is good, and their care, guidance and support are excellent as a result of wholeschool commitment and practice. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and has successfully enabled those around her to share in the leadership responsibilities. Good leadership and management overall have maintained the many strengths identified in the last inspection. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities but do not sufficiently check on the school's performance. However, the school is well placed to make further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the use of outdoor areas to extend the range of learning experiences for children in the Nursery and Reception classes
- Build on the ways governors formally operate as critical friends and how they check on its performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards by Year 6 are broadly average. Pupils of all abilities make good progress from Years 1 to 6, accelerating in Years 5 and 6 where some make excellent progress. The progress of some boys with social and emotional difficulties is slow in Years 1 and 2 but quickens as their maturity develops in Years 3 to 6. Most children enter the Nursery with exceptionally weak personal, social and emotional development and limited language and mathematical skills. Children's abilities on entry have fallen in recent years. Children make good progress in Nursery and Reception. Nevertheless, by the end of Reception very few children reach the expected goals for learning, particularly in language and literacy and mathematical development. This means their starting points in Year 1 are well below average. Good progress is maintained in Years 1 and 2 although standards by the end of Year 2 remain below

average. By Year 6, there is no significant difference in achievement between boys and girls and standards are broadly in line with the national average. Pupils do significantly better in science than in English and mathematics. Standards in mathematics have been slightly below average in recent years. However, the current Year 6 pupils are on course to reach their challenging targets in mathematics which are in line with national expectations. The large proportion of pupils with learning difficulties achieve well, some making excellent progress as their needs are identified early and they receive targeted support. The school has high expectations of all pupils and sets them challenging targets in all years which almost all achieve and some exceed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good as a result of highly effective whole-school provision. Pupils enjoy school, usually cooperate well with each other, and are polite and caring. Attendance is satisfactory. Most pupils attend well and arrive on time. A small minority arrives late. The school works most effectively with outside agencies and the families to help overcome the difficulties that contribute to their lateness. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is excellent and their moral and social development is good. Their reflection on the main themes of the Ash Wednesday Mass shows their emerging spiritual awareness. Pupils have a clear awareness of the multicultural society in which they live, showing respect for the contribution of all. Most pupils behave well and those with challenging behaviour are managed well. Pupils learn about decision making through, for example, the school council. They feel they are listened to and their suggestions are thoroughly considered. One said 'We make a massive difference'. They collect enthusiastically for national charities. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. The school has gained a 'Healthy Schools' award. The exceptionally broad range of after-school activities enables many pupils to participate in a variety of sports. Pupils know about keeping safe. The school is equipping them well with the basic skills in literacy, information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematics needed for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and have some excellent features, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Teaching in Nursery and Reception is good, with an effective balance between activities chosen by children and those directed by teachers. However, children get insufficient opportunities to work and play outdoors in all areas of learning, limiting their range of experiences. Throughout the school, innovative approaches to teaching have been introduced that are tailored to the pupils' particular learning needs. These include soft lighting, calming music, access to healthy snacks at all times and the recognition that pupils learn in different ways. The use of signing effectively supports pupils with language barriers, those in the early stages of learning English and others

with difficulties in concentration. Very comprehensive assessment procedures, including exceptionally detailed and helpful marking of work, promotes good learning by all pupils, including those with complex learning difficulties. It also enables careful matching of activities to the needs of individuals and small groups. The well trained and skilled team of learning support assistants (LSAs) contribute significantly to the learning of all pupils. The environment for learning in classrooms is good throughout, and excellent in Years 5 and 6 where the outstanding displays are exceptionally well structured and related directly to what the pupils are learning about. Teachers frequently refer to pupils' short-term targets displayed in classrooms to help pupils focus on what they need to do.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. Speaking and listening, and personal, social and emotional development are identified as priorities, and there are many well planned activities, including role-play and conflict resolution. The school recognises that insufficient use is made of the outdoor areas to extend the learning experiences in Nursery and Reception. There are good links between subjects and ICT is used well across many subjects. Themed days and weeks, such as an arts week, enrich the curriculum well, and many visits and visitors, including two residential visits which strengthen all aspects of the curriculum, help to broaden pupils' interests. Personal, social, health education and citizenship are very well planned and effectively make pupils aware of staying safe and keeping healthy. A wide The curriculum is good and adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. Speaking and listening, and personal, social and emotional development are identified as priorities, and there are many well planned activities, including role-play and conflict resolution. The school recognises that insufficient use is made of the outdoor areas to extend the learning experiences in Nursery and Reception. There are good links between subjects and ICT is used well across many subjects. Themed days and weeks, such as an arts week, enrich the curriculum well, and many visits and visitors, including two residential visits which strengthen all aspects of the curriculum, help to broaden pupils' interests. Personal, social, health education and citizenship are very well planned and effectively make pupils aware of staying safe and keeping healthy. A wide

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support given to pupils are outstanding, reflecting the strong commitment of staff to all pupils. Pupils feel safe in school and parents agree that their children are well looked after. One parent wrote 'thank you for making our children's future brighter'. Health and safety procedures and child protection measures are applied rigorously. Support for pupils' learning is very effective and based on the excellent monitoring of the progress they make. Pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve in order to meet their targets. The help given to pupils by skilled LSAs and the learning mentor is very well coordinated, and is aimed accurately at the

pupils' needs. Pupils' learning difficulties are identified early and individual education plans contain targets that are appropriate and achievable. The school makes very good use of available specialist help from outside agencies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Together with the highly effective deputy, she has high expectations of all pupils and very effectively promotes innovative approaches designed to improve pupils' academic and personal development further. She has successfully developed a large leadership team in which all members fulfil their roles well. They appreciate the opportunities they are given to lead initiatives, such as the work on learning styles. They take seriously their responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of their work, which they do well. This level of commitment permeates all teams within the school including, for example, the LSAs and the lunchtime supervisors. Detailed data on performance is used well to track pupils' progress and to deploy staff with specific groups. Effective strategic planning accurately identifies priorities, following detailed and analytical monitoring, and canvassing the views of parents, pupils and governors. Evaluations by team members are shared and acted upon well. Consequently, the school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses, has maintained the previously reported strengths and is exceptionally well placed to improve further. Governors receive good quality information about the outcomes of monitoring by senior staff, which gives them a satisfactory understanding of the school's performance. They are supportive and committed to the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. However, they make few formal visits during the school day and are sometimes reluctant to challenge and hold the school sufficiently to account.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Children, As you probably remember a team of two inspectors visited your school recently to find out how well the school is doing. Thank you for making us so welcome. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing some of your work. We judged that St Vincent's is a good school. Here are some of the most important things we found to be good:

- You all make good progress in your lessons
- You learn to behave well
- Your teachers and teaching assistants plan really interesting things for you to do
- Everyone who works at the school makes sure you are all safe and help you when you have problems
- Your headteacher and the senior teachers work very hard to make sure that this is a good school. We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together to improve two things:

- Ensure children are able to make more use of the areas outside the Nursery and Reception classes when they are working and playing
- Build on the ways governors formally check on the performance of the school.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection. We hope you carry on enjoying your school. Yours sincerely,
Martin Kerly Lead Inspector