



St Vincent's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109631
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278226
Inspection dates 22 February 2006 to 23 February 2006
Reporting inspector Dr. Anna Coyle LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hammersmith Gardens
School category	Voluntary aided		LU5 5RG
Age range of pupils	3 to 9		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582 862456
Number on roll	183	Fax number	01582 862456
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Father.Kieran Magovern
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs. Pauline Cotton

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Vincent's Roman Catholic Lower School adjoins the church and serves the surrounding residential area. Most of the children are from White British backgrounds, and several are from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including Asian, African, Portuguese and Afro-Caribbean. A small number, whose home languages include Gujarati, Shona and Portuguese learn English as an additional language. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and disabilities is lower than nationally. The school is currently consulting with parents, the Diocese and the local education authority to extend its provision to include children in Years 5 and 6.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspectors agree with the school's evaluation of its effectiveness as being good. Children achieve well and reach good standards by the end of Year 4. Children begin school with average skills and knowledge. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. They do well in the Nursery and Reception classes, and make steady progress in Year 1. By the end of Year 2, children have made good progress. They attain above average standards in the national tests for reading, writing and mathematics. Children continue to build on what they know steadily in Year 3. Learning quickens in Year 4 so that children attain good standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave. Standards of behaviour are good. Children enjoy school because teaching is mainly good and the school provides a good curriculum, with a wide range of extra curricular activities to promote learning and prepare them well for the future. A few shortcomings in teaching include the need for a better match of activities to children's needs and more effective marking in Years 1 and 3, and better use of the time allocated to the end of lessons. Most parents are very supportive of the school's work and are pleased with the education it provides. Children are cared for, guided and supported very well within a strongly Catholic community that is sensitive to children's spiritual, moral, social and emotional development. The headteacher provides good leadership and is supported very well by an enthusiastic deputy headteacher. The governors are regular visitors to the school and provide very good pastoral support. However, the strategic role of the governing body and its monitoring procedures are not fully established. Nevertheless, owing to the good improvement since the last inspection, the good leadership and good teaching, the school is well placed to make further improvements. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 3 to ensure that pupils' work is more effectively marked and better matched to children's needs, and that the ends of lessons are used productively.
- Formalise the systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning, and use the information systematically to spread good practice.
- Extend the strategic role of the governing body and refine its arrangements for monitoring the school's provision.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Children enter the school with average attainment on entry compared with children in other schools. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, and many reach the expected standards by the time they transfer to Year 1. A significant number exceed the expected goals. From this good start, children make satisfactory progress in Year 1. Learning accelerates in Year 2 so that by the time they reach the end of Key Stage 1, standards are good. This is borne out by the inspection findings and the results of the 2005 national tests, which show that

standards were above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards have risen consistently in recent years as a result of good teaching. Children in Year 3 continue to build steadily upon the good progress made in the earlier years so that by Year 4 they are ready to strive to meet challenging targets presented to them by their class teacher. By the time they leave, most have done very well to reach good standards, including the most capable children, the few with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who learn English as an additional language. Nevertheless, the school is not complacent because it has already accurately pinpointed writing and spelling as areas upon which to improve still further and, consequently, standards are improving well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children enjoy school. They want to do well, try hard and take care with their work. The school's promotion of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and successfully underpins its caring Catholic ethos. Children have a good understanding of right and wrong. They get on well with each other and with adults, and show respect for other people's views and property. Through the curriculum, and supporting a range of charities, children successfully develop an appreciation of different cultures. Attendance is satisfactory. Children arrive on time and lessons start promptly. Children have a good understanding of the importance of regular exercise and healthy eating. They have a good awareness of keeping safe. Behaviour is mainly good. Children successfully learn to make choices and work on their own. They take responsibility effectively for classroom jobs, with older children maturely carrying out duties as playground helpers. Through the school council, children help shape the life and work of the school. The school's strong focus on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) successfully promotes children's economic well-being and prepares them well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers draw upon a good range of teaching resources to grip children's interests and imagination, such as computers, interactive whiteboards and practical activities during science investigations. The pace of teaching is lively in the best lessons, especially when children are well motivated and keen to learn. For example, they respond with great enthusiasm to teachers' skilful questioning during very well focused reading and spelling sessions. Children have good relationships with staff and each other, which help them to benefit from the good teaching. However, where the teaching is only satisfactory, children's behaviour is not always managed consistently and teachers do not use marking sufficiently well to help move children on to the next steps in their learning. The ends of lessons are occasionally too short to be used effectively to draw together all of the main points of learning. Most teachers make good use of formal procedures to check on children's learning

and guide their planning to match children's learning needs, although this is not consistent across the school. For example, in Years 2 and 4 the very good use of assessment information helps staff to tailor activities to suit children's individual needs and, thus, build upon their previous knowledge successfully, but this is not always the case in some other classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum successfully promotes all children's needs. It meets requirements and effectively prepares them for the next stage of their education. Teachers' planning is good because there is a good emphasis on developing children's basic skills, encouraging team work and promoting skills of investigation and enquiry. The curriculum for children with additional needs is good: staff adapt the activities well for the most capable children and provide good support for learners at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Children enjoy a good range of after-school sporting and musical activities. The school has a good programme for children's personal, social and health education and citizenship and staff make good use of visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is a very caring community that successfully promotes children's enthusiasm for learning and good progress. Parents commend the staff for their commitment and care, and for the quality of support they provide for children's differing needs. Children in the Nursery classes settle quickly into the school routines. Children enjoy good relations with adults and each other. The school successfully promotes good standards of behaviour and positive attitudes to work. It works closely with outside agencies to improve attendance. Daily routines are well established. Child protection and other health and safety procedures are soundly documented and understood. The school enjoys good links with its partner schools and outside agencies, and acts promptly to meet children's specific learning needs. It has good procedures for assessing and recording children's development and progress. Personal targets are achievable and most children have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides good leadership and clear direction for the school. Her sensitive approach and quiet good humour help to maintain a welcoming, friendly ethos for all who visit. She is very well supported by the dedicated deputy headteacher whose enthusiasm and commitment to the children is clearly evident. Both work together closely with the staff, governors and parents to maintain a very strong Catholic ethos for learning. Governors are supportive and interested in the work of the school. As regular visitors, they provide very good pastoral

support to the staff and children, although the strategic role of the governing body and its monitoring arrangements are yet not fully established. The procedures for evaluating the school's work are effective. Regular consultations with all of the school's stakeholders help the senior managers to take account of their views and ensure that all children have equal opportunities. The good school development plan highlights suitable priorities and is used well as a management tool. All the issues arising from the previous inspection have been dealt with well, but the monitoring of teaching and learning is still an area to go on developing into a more formalised system. The good teamwork amongst staff and strong leadership puts the school in a good position to go on improving further.

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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	2	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?	2	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	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	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

Thank you for being so helpful when we came to inspect your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and seeing you working with your teachers. We particularly enjoyed hearing you sing during Mass. We think that your school does a lot of things well, and there are a few things that it could do a bit better. What was best about your school: - You behave well and achieve good standards. - You told us that you enjoy school and get on well together, and we agree. - The teaching is good, and your teachers are kind and helpful. - The headteacher and deputy headteacher work very hard to make sure that the school runs smoothly. What we have asked your school to do now: - Spread the good quality teaching across the whole school. - Keep a more careful check on the teaching and learning in all classes. - Strengthen the role of the governors. We hope that you will continue to enjoy school and work hard.