

# St Vincent's RC School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101334
<b>Local Authority</b>	Barnet
<b>Inspection number</b>	307654
<b>Inspection date</b>	18 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Lynn Bappa

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	313
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs M Stannard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs D Mansi
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	The Ridgeway Mill Hill London NW7 1EJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8959 3417
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8906 9733

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated standards and achievement in Key Stage 1, pupils' personal development and well-being and the impact of the school's work to develop a more creative curriculum. She gathered evidence from the school's records, planning and policies, and by observing teaching and learning. She also held discussions with staff, governors and pupils and scrutinised parents' questionnaires. The inspector did not investigate other aspects of the school's work in detail, but found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These assessments have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

St Vincent's is bigger than most primary schools and serves the Catholic parishes of Mill Hill and Edgware. It is popular and over-subscribed. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage entitled to free school meals is below average. A much higher proportion of pupils than is usually found comes from minority ethnic backgrounds, with the largest groups being pupils from Black African heritages and a range of White backgrounds. Although the percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is above average, very few pupils are at the early stages of learning it. The main languages spoken, apart from English, are Yoruba, Spanish and Polish. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is broadly average and their needs relate mainly to speech and communication difficulties. There are six pupils with a statement of educational need and this percentage is broadly average. The school is one and a half form entry and most pupils attend the private nursery on site before being admitted to St Vincent's.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

'The staff go that extra mile. It is a very special school', wrote one parent, summing up the views of many. They are right to be proud of the school because it is outstanding in the way in which it promotes both pupils' personal development and their academic achievement. At its heart lies a clear commitment to Catholic values. As one parent commented, 'My daughter loves school and it gives her a Catholic foundation with an emphasis on good behaviour and respect'. This is due to the very successful leadership of the recently appointed headteacher, whose guidance generates high expectations and a continual striving for improvement. Teamwork is of a high quality and all staff are committed to moving the school forward. The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Given its extremely successful record of accomplishment and the enthusiasm and skill of the staff and governors, there is excellent capacity to continue building on its successes. This can be seen, for example, in the plans to develop the extensive grounds around the school as an 'outdoor classroom' and resource.

The school is outward looking and works successfully in partnership with other schools and providers, the local parish and parents. Although a very small number of parents thought that the school did not pay enough attention to their opinions, most others disagreed with this and said that communications with parents had improved significantly in the last year. The inspector found no evidence to support the view that there were shortcomings in the school's partnerships with its parents.

Throughout the school, achievement is outstanding for all groups of pupils. Most enter the school with levels of skills and knowledge broadly in line with those expected for their age, and make exceptional progress. Standards by Year 6 are significantly above those expected for the pupils' ages and they are exceptionally high in English. Standards at the end of Year 2 dipped in 2007 and were broadly average. The school acted swiftly to tackle this. The recent introduction of a system to track pupils' progress to identify those who need extra support is beginning to have a positive impact on standards. Senior leaders can show, for example, that Year 3 pupils, whose standards were average last year, are now beginning to make much faster progress with their learning. A new phonics programme for children in Reception and for targeted pupils in Key Stage 1 is also beginning to bear fruit. In the 2008 national assessments, there was a healthy rise in the percentage of pupils working at the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils use their basic skills extremely well across the curriculum and achieve high standards in subjects such as history, geography, art, information and communications technology and design and technology. They have a very good understanding of the world of work and are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils are doing so well because of excellent teaching and positive attitudes towards learning. Parents and pupils agree. As one parent commented, 'I feel the teaching is at a very high standard.' Pupils were quick to make comments such as, 'If you are stuck, the teachers will always help you.' Lessons are lively and varied, and often involve group or partner work, drama and a wide range of practical and relevant activities. Teachers have rightly identified that, in order to improve even further, they should provide more opportunities for pupils to be more responsible for their own learning. The school has recently devised a better way to track pupils' academic progress as they move through the school. This has already started to highlight pupils who need additional support or who are in danger of falling behind. However, teachers are clear that it needs to be further refined and embedded through the whole school for maximum

impact. They set challenging targets for learners who are clear what these mean. As one pupil in Key Stage 1 commented, 'The target is to show me what I need to learn next.'

There is little doubt that the pupils play a significant part in helping make the school what it is. For many pupils, behaviour is exemplary. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average levels of attendance. They are attentive and respectful and they are great ambassadors for the school as they talk with great pride about their teachers, their learning and all the school provides. Their readiness to contribute to the school community is impressive. The school council, environmental and enterprise projects, as well as clubs such as the St Vincent's Art Academy are just some examples of pupils' unstinting commitment to their school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They show very caring attitudes towards each other and the environment. During the inspection, for example, they were keen to make sure that the inspector put the envelopes from the parent questionnaires in the recycling bin. They learn to respect children from different backgrounds and have an excellent understanding of healthy living and keeping safe. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for in an environment where they can blossom. As one pupil commented, 'If you are feeling sad, you can really trust our teachers.' Another added, 'They give up their time for us and spend the school's money on us, not the staff room!'

Pupils' achievement is fuelled by a rich curriculum and a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Teachers cleverly link subjects together and ensure that they base their plans on relevant examples and real-life experiences. Mathematics lessons throughout the school, for instance, are currently making excellent use of Euro 2008 and recently pupils were engaged in a project on replacing the headteacher's old car with something more up-to-date. This combined lessons in English, mathematics, art, geography and design and technology. Italian is taught throughout the school and there is specialist provision for sports and music.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

When children begin in Reception, their overall development is broadly in line with what is expected. They receive an excellent start to their education and make very good progress, particularly in mathematics and their personal development. The introduction of a new phonics programme is beginning to have a positive impact on children's literacy skills. Excellent teaching and high levels of teamwork underpin the excellent provision. There is a very good balance between activities led by adults and those children choose for themselves. Visitors add much to the children's experiences, such as the sports coach who puts them through their physical paces. Good use is made of the outdoor area that the school shares with the private on-site Nursery and there are plans to develop this provision further. Children settle quickly and adjust well to school routines because of the calm and supportive environment. One parent, reflecting the views of many, wrote, 'I am delighted with the progress my daughter has made this year. She is always eager to go to school. What a wonderful start to her school life!'

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Although there are no substantial weaknesses, the inspector agrees with the school that in order to build on its success it should concentrate on its plans to embed the new tracking system throughout the school and increase the opportunities for pupils to work independently.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No



## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

30 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Vincent's RC School, London, NW7 1EJ

You may remember that I came to your school recently. I am writing to thank you all for being so friendly and helpful. I really enjoyed my day at St Vincent's and I thought you would like to know what I found out. Special thanks to all the pupils who talked to me, those who chatted to me at lunch and the girls who showed me their dancing. Thank you also to those pupils who came and showed me their work.

You all told me how special your school is and I agree. It is outstanding. You make excellent progress because you work very hard. The teaching in your school is excellent and you told me that lessons are fun and that your teachers always help you if you are stuck. I particularly liked seeing the work you did on Mrs Mansi's old car - I hope you can persuade her to get a better one soon! You also told me that you really enjoy the trips you go on that bring your learning to life - I enjoyed hearing about the visit to the Guardian newspaper and the one to Kew Gardens.

All the staff look after you very well and make sure you are happy and safe. You have an excellent headteacher who is helped by the rest of the staff and governors to make sure your school always wants to get better. I was very impressed by your politeness and your excellent behaviour. You all get on very well together and act sensibly in lessons and the playground. I think you do a lot to make the school a better place.

Your teachers and the other adults have also worked hard to improve the school and are keen to make it even better. I have agreed with them that there are two things to do that will do this. Teachers have spent a lot of time making sure they know exactly what level you are at and telling you how to improve. I think they should carry on with the plans they have to help them get even better at doing this. We also agree that they should find even more ways of helping you to work independently.

Finally, I would like to thank you once again for all your help. I wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Lynn Bappa

Lead Inspector