

# St Vincent's RC Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 108514              |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Newcastle upon Tyne |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 309716              |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 10–11 October 2007  |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Dean Jackson        |

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>                     | Primary   |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Voluntary aided   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 4–11  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed   |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |   |
| School                                    | 202   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body  |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mr Ged Crulley  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Sister Mary Josepha   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 1 October 2003  |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Monkchester Road<br>Walker<br>Newcastle upon Tyne<br>Tyne and Wear<br>NE6 2TX |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 0191 2655049  |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 0191 2656859  |

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|--------------------------|--------------------|
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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, serving the Walker area of Newcastle. This is an area of considerable social disadvantage that is part of a major city-wide regeneration programme. The number of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and have a first language that is not English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The school has the Healthy Schools award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Vincent's RC Primary School is a good school. It is underpinned by strong Christian values and a caring, supportive tradition that it uses to maintain and develop the long standing relationships that exist between the school and the wider community. Christian values and concern for children's welfare are central to the school's work. Parents are involved in the life of the school and appreciate the quality of education provided. As one parent commented, 'The school could not do more for my child.'

Achievement is good. From a well below average start in the Reception class most pupils make good progress overall and reach average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave school in Year 6. This is because the quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching is stronger in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1 and pupils' progress accelerates rapidly in Years 3 to 6. In Key Stage 1, teaching is not yet uniformly good. Information on pupils' progress is used by most teachers to ensure that pupils are challenged in lessons. This good practice is more consistent in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported particularly well and, as a result, they make good progress.

A strength of the school is the way in which it nurtures pupils' personal development and well-being. They like coming to school and feel that the school has successfully introduced strong measures to combat any bullying. During their time at school, pupils develop sound basic skills required for their future education. Pupils contribute well to the school and the wider community through a variety of responsibilities and activities, such as the school council and 'buddy' system. The school pays great attention to health, safety and welfare and this ensures that all pupils are well cared for. To support this, a good range of high quality experiences, often involving local professional sports clubs, are provided to encourage the pupils to stay healthy and safe. The curriculum is satisfactory and is enriched by a good range of activities outside of lessons. Over the last twelve months, it has been substantially strengthened in Key Stage 1 to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to developing reading, writing and mathematical skills.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is supported by a strong management team and staff across the school. There is a clear understanding of the challenges that face the school and what needs to be done to overcome them. There is a strong emphasis on raising standards. A range of actions have been put in place to further improve achievement, particularly in Key Stage 1, and there is already evidence of success in the classrooms. The school has good capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children build on the well below levels of development they start with in Reception. They make satisfactory progress but many do not reach the levels typical for their age by the start of Year 1, particularly in their early reading and writing and aspects of their mathematical knowledge. The curriculum provides a suitable variety of activities and practical learning experiences and is very successful in promoting children's personal development. Learning and play activities are not always well focused on, or rigorous enough in developing children's basic skills, particularly in recognising sounds, basic

writing and mathematics. The accommodation lacks easy access to outdoor learning, but staff make the best use of the space available.

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

- Ensure greater focus on and rigour in developing children's basic skills in Reception.
- Ensure that teaching in Key Stage 1 is consistently good by making better use of assessment information to provide challenge for all pupils in order to raise standards.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' achievement is good and standards are average. From a low starting point when pupils start school they make good progress overall and by Year 6, standards are average. The above average numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress towards their own personal targets. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.

In recent years, the progress of pupils in Key Stage 1 has been disrupted by unavoidable staff changes. Staffing is now stable and recent improvements in teaching have increased the rate of progress in Years 1 and 2 and it is currently satisfactory. This is not yet reflected in the standards gained in Year 2. In 2006, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were well below average. The 2007 results show some improvement.

In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress accelerates in response to consistently good teaching. Standards have been improving over the last three years. In 2006, the results in the national tests were broadly average in English, mathematics and science. This was a good performance given the low point of entry to the school.

The results for 2007 national tests are similar to those in 2006. Work seen in lessons and books confirms pupils' good progress in Key Stage 2.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is good. Good behaviour and relationships are well established in the Foundation Stage and continue as pupils move through school. Recent moves such as re-establishing the school uniform have contributed to pupils feelings of pride in their school. Pupils enjoy their work. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and is well supported by the school's commitment to the Catholic faith. Excellent school assemblies make a strong contribution to pupils' good sense of spirituality. Pupils say that bullying has been an issue in the past, but feel that the school now deals with such issues very well. 'There is zero tolerance of bullying,' one pupil commented. As a consequence, they feel safe and secure. A good understanding of the democratic process is developed by pupils through their involvement in the student council. They understand well the benefits of a healthy diet and exercising frequently. The pupils' good personal skills and satisfactory academic skills provide a sound basis for their future education. Attendance is average; the majority of pupils attend regularly and punctually.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good overall, resulting in pupils making good progress in their time in school. The majority of lessons seen were good. Teaching is strongest in Key Stage 2 and it is here that pupils' progress accelerates. In Key Stage 1, the quality of teaching is not as consistent in promoting good progress and is satisfactory overall. The school is working hard to ensure that teaching is consistently of the highest quality. Across the school, classrooms are bright and stimulating places to learn with well prepared resources. Effective use is made of technology, such as the interactive whiteboards. Pupils behave well in class, enjoy their learning and are enthusiastic, particularly when offered practical opportunities. A particular strength of the teaching is the range of effective strategies used to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. Pupils in Key Stage 2 in particular are consistently given opportunities to reflect on how well they have done and how to improve. Teaching assistants are well deployed and are particularly effective in Key Stage 2, providing good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are securely in place across the school. This information is used more consistently and effectively to set challenging targets and tasks for all pupils in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory, meets the needs of the pupils and contributes well to their personal development. It is stronger in Key Stage 2 than Key Stage 1. Until recently, too little attention was given in Years 1 and 2 to the development of pupils' skills of reading, writing and mathematics. This has now been rectified and opportunities for pupils to develop their skills alongside other subjects have been increased and progress in these areas, along with planning to meet the needs of more able pupils, is improving. The staff work hard to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world through a good range of educational visits. Strong links with primary and secondary schools give able, gifted and talented pupils good opportunities to develop their talents.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The care, guidance and support pupils receive are good. Pastoral care is outstanding. Child protection and the safeguarding of pupils are extremely well managed. Pupils are kept safe and risk is removed as far as possible. Pupils are confident that if they have a problem or a concern there is always someone to turn to for help or advice. Close attention is paid to the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enabling them to learn effectively and to play a full part in the life of the school. Procedures for tracking pupils' academic development provide a secure overview of the progress they make over time. There is some inconsistency in how this knowledge is used by teachers to provide challenging targets and work for pupils and guide their progress, particularly in Key Stage 1.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides effective leadership that ensures pupils make very strong progress in terms of their personal development, and good academic progress overall. Staff across the school support the headteacher well. Together, they have a good understanding and very clear vision of what they need to do next to raise achievement across the school. Senior leaders analyse assessment information effectively to monitor the school's performance and identify priorities for school improvement. Realistic yet demanding expectations of pupils' performance in all classes are being established and shared with staff. This results in setting challenging statutory targets for Year 6 pupils. Improvements brought about include achieving stability of staffing in Key Stage 1, the development of secure assessment systems and an improved emphasis on developing pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1. These improvements are having a clear impact on raising standards but progress is more rapid in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory and the school has good capacity for further improvement.

Governance is good. The well informed governing body have a good understanding of the pupils' needs and confidently question and challenge the school. Good home-school relationships help pupils feel confident and secure. The school has developed strong partnerships with external bodies, such as the Educational Welfare Officers. These partnerships are valued highly by the school and provide good support for more vulnerable pupils. Effective links with the local schools' network are used to support both staff and curriculum development. The school provides good value for money.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

|  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| <b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b> | <b>School Overall</b> |
|--|-----------------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 2   |
| 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?  | 2   |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage  | 3   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | 2   |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 2 |

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 2 |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 3 |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 2 |

<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>                                       | 2   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2   |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards  | 2   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 2   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 2   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 2   |
| 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

12 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Vincent's RC Primary School, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2TX.

Thank you all for your friendliness and help when we visited your school. We were very impressed with your good behaviour, your very smart school uniforms and the way that you confidently spoke to us whenever we needed to ask you any questions. Special thanks go to those Year 6 and Year 2 pupils who had meetings with an inspector.

You told us that you enjoy school, people are friendly, your teachers are kind to you and that you feel safe. You said that if there are any problems, the teachers sort them out quickly. We agree with you and we feel that your school not only gives you a good education but it also helps you to play sport, sing beautifully, stay healthy and join in with lots of activities in the local area. We thought that the assembly we watched was fantastic – everyone was so happy and even the youngest children (and some parents!) confidently went out to the front to sing and dance. Those of you who sometimes find your work to be a little difficult receive plenty of help from all the adults in school.

Your school is very well led. All the adults in school, including the governors, work well together to make it a good school. Here are some things we have suggested the school could do better.

- Find even better ways to help the children in the Reception class learn to read, write and increase their mathematical skills.
- Make sure that all of you have challenging work to do in Year 1 and Year 2 so that everybody does well in reading, writing and mathematics.

You can help by working hard and always doing your best. We hope that you will continue to enjoy school and we wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Dean Jackson

Lead inspector