

St Vincent's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101239
Local Authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	323428
Inspection date	5 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Nicola Davies

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	229
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Betty Hetherington
Headteacher	Mrs Rachel Mahon
Date of previous school inspection	13 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Burnside Road Dagenham RM8 2JN
Telephone number	020 8270 6695

Age group	3–11
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Fax number

020 8270 6696

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the impact of the school's work on standards in writing and mathematics; the impact of curriculum developments on pupils' learning and personal skills; and how well children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Evidence was gathered from observations; analysis of test results; parents' questionnaires; and discussions with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is an average sized one-form-entry primary school. There is a morning Nursery for three-year-olds and a full-time Reception class for four-year-olds which together form the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school is ethnically and linguistically diverse. A third of pupils are of Black British or African heritage, a third are of White British heritage, and a third are from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. Around one in five is bilingual and a small proportion are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language when they join the school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little below average. These relate mostly to difficulties in acquiring basic skills. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is a little higher than average, as is the proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the normal times of admission.

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 is a very popular school which provides its pupils with a good education. Staff seek to create 'a happy and secure environment, where children want to come to school in the knowledge that they feel unique and valued as members of God's family'. They accomplish this very well, and parents, pupils and staff are rightly proud of the school, its achievements and its ethos. One parent explained this special ethos in this way: 'At St Vincent's, it's the children who matter.' As a consequence, care, guidance and support for pupils are excellent. Parents wholeheartedly value this, and praise the dedication and commitment of staff. As one parent noted, 'The care, attention, dedication, enthusiasm, safety and discipline are all at a very high level. Staff are friendly, approachable and supportive every single day.' The outcome of this high quality of care and guidance is seen in pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. Pupils enjoy school immensely, behave very well and attend extremely regularly. Such positive, caring and conscientious attitudes make St Vincent's a very happy community and prepare pupils very well for their futures.

There are robust processes at St Vincent's for evaluating what the school does well and how it could improve further. One challenge the school has set itself is how to maximise the learning of different groups of pupils, particularly in English and mathematics. This issue is a key consideration, as the profile of each year group is often markedly different and pupils have widely varying experiences and abilities. The school has made good progress on this issue. For example, staff have put in place effective small-group provision for older pupils who are struggling with mathematics, and a successful focus on promoting the language and literacy of younger pupils. The outcomes can be seen in the standards that pupils reach and the good progress which pupils of all abilities make. Standards at the end of Year 2 have risen steadily and are now above average in reading, writing and mathematics. National test results show that standards at the end of Year 6 are average in English, mathematics and science, and the school has good evidence to show that older pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well in relation to their starting points. This is a result of the good teaching which pupils experience across the school. Tracking of pupils' progress over time is regular and effective. However, leaders and managers have rightly identified that day-to-day assessment is weaker. Not all teachers consistently identify the small steps that pupils need to take to make progress in lessons, nor do they all involve pupils well in understanding and working towards these. As a result, plans are now in place to develop this aspect of teaching further.

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to develop stronger links between subjects. Work has been ongoing on this issue, and at the beginning of the academic year the school adopted a new way of combining different subjects into particular teaching themes. Although it is early days for this initiative, the views of pupils and staff are extremely positive. Pupils spoke to the inspectors with great enthusiasm about the *café*; they had set up as part of their work on rainforests, and carefully explained their research into slavery, which had resulted in group presentations of a very high quality. Similarly, pupils made outstanding progress in their learning about the properties of materials in a lesson linked to volcanoes. An exceptionally wide range of extra activities is a further component of the outstanding curriculum. Examples include opportunities for pupils to take part in a special day to develop their enterprise skills. Year 6 pupils visit the linked secondary school to take part in science, physical education, design technology, and information and communication technology lessons. There is excellent provision for music, which enables all older pupils to move on from general musicianship to

learning to play a musical instrument. These opportunities demonstrate the very good partnerships that the school has established with other schools and agencies, as well as its strong links with the local parish church and its community. Such strong partnerships, and the exceptionally broad curriculum, mean the school promotes community cohesion well, but strategic planning to meet this duty is an area to be further developed by the governing body.

The school is very well guided in its work by the headteacher and the senior management team. With a focus on teamwork, the school's vision and ethos is shared by all staff. The successful outcomes of the team approach to school improvement, development and evaluation can be seen in its continually improving effectiveness. As a result, the school is well placed to improve still further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with a good start to their education. Across the Nursery and Reception classes, children learn enthusiastically through a good range of activities. They pursue their ideas independently as well as through activities led by the skilful adults. There is a strong focus on developing children's early skills in language, communication and literacy. The success of this work was seen in the enthusiasm of children in the Nursery class when learning about letters and sounds, and in the high priority given to extending children's spoken language. Both Nursery and Reception classes include outdoor areas which children can access independently, but the school has rightly identified that there is more work to be done to enhance the facilities and range of opportunities for children to learn outdoors.

For most children, this is their first experience of education outside the home, and their skills and experiences vary widely. For example, a noticeable minority are unsure how to work cooperatively with others, while others need support to develop their skills in language and communication. Staff in the Nursery use a good range of daily observations to chart children's learning. Historically, the tracking of children's progress in the Reception Year has been less consistent, but this is being addressed well by the newly appointed Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator. Most children make good progress to reach the expectations for their age by the time they enter Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further improve the effectiveness of teaching by making good use of day-to-day assessment to steer pupils' learning.
- Extend the outdoor curriculum for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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 learners' needs?	2
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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Vincent's Catholic Primary School, Dagenham, RM8 2JN

Thank you for helping the inspectors when we came to visit your school. Thank you to all of you who gave up your time to talk to us and to tell us about your school. We did not meet as many of you as we would have liked, but we were very impressed by everyone we did meet, and by all that you had to tell us. One of the things which impressed us the most was how you develop into such well-behaved, concerned and confident young people. We judged your personal development to be outstanding so well done to all of you.

Your parents told us how pleased they are that you attend St Vincent's, and we could see why. We judged that St Vincent's is a good school. You do well in your studies because you are taught well and are keen to learn, and this helps you to make good progress. Another factor in your good progress is the excellent curriculum. We were able to see some of your very interesting lessons for ourselves and you told us how much you enjoy your studies and all the other activities which you get a chance to take part in. The care, guidance and support which the adults provide are excellent.

The school is very well led by your headteacher and the senior managers. The teachers and governors work together as a team and have made many successful changes. This means that the school can continue to build on its strengths. Talking to your teachers and discussing your work with them, we agreed with their ideas to develop the way that teachers plan for your progress by watching carefully what you do in lessons. Your teachers will want to involve you in this too. We also agreed that it would help children in the Nursery and Reception classes to make even better use of the outdoor areas to help them to learn.

With best wishes for your continued success.

Yours faithfully

Nicola Davies

Lead Inspector