

St Vincent's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103417
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323819
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Roger Sadler

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)	237
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	John Carlyle
Headteacher	Janet Tibbits
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Vauxhall Grove Vauxhall Birmingham B7 4HP

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2009
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Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is situated close to the centre of Birmingham in an area of considerable economic disadvantage. Half the pupils are eligible for free school meals. Pupils are from a wide range of ethnic groups, the largest of which are Black Caribbean or Black British Caribbean, and White British. About a quarter are from homes where English is not their first language, with a significant minority being at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above that found nationally.

Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage when they enter Nursery full time, from the beginning of the school year following their third birthday. They move to the Reception class the following year.

The school is part of an Education Action Zone. It has gained a Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark for physical education and exercise and the Eco Schools Award. Since the previous inspection, the deputy headteacher has been promoted to the post of headteacher.

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. Parents recognise this and are supportive of the school's work. One parent reflected the views of many when she said, 'We are happy because we know they are in good, safe hands.' Pupils also regard their school highly. They especially like the wide range of sporting activities and educational visits provided. The headteacher provides a very clear vision for the school, and the senior management team and subject leaders demonstrate a clear commitment to raising standards. All leaders have a shared and accurate understanding of where improvements are needed. Many children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills much lower than those expected of children of their ages. By the end of Year 6, pupils have made good progress and most pupils achieve well to attain standards expected of their ages. The school has good capacity to continue to improve in the future.

Good leadership and management result in continual improvements in the quality of provision, strong relationships and a happy school. Teaching and learning, the curriculum, and care, guidance and support are good and provide effectively for pupils' good achievement and personal development. Teachers are knowledgeable, provide a supportive and caring environment and make lessons interesting. Staff hold high expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves and they manage pupils well. Consequently, pupils enjoy school, feel safe and secure and concentrate well in lessons. The school knows its pupils well and carefully monitors the progress of each individual. The curriculum is stimulating and focuses on providing a rich range of experiences. Pupils who are not on track to attain expected standards receive frequent additional help, but more able pupils too rarely receive extra challenge to ensure they always do their best. Consequently, few pupils exceed standards expected for their ages. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because their needs are regularly assessed. They regularly receive good quality support from teaching assistants. Pupils at early stages of learning English are given good guidance and soon develop the skills and confidence to join in fully with other class members.

Home reading is well organised and pupils are encouraged to develop positive attitudes to books and reading, and many read at home. The school has recognised that their progress in reading is limited by their underdeveloped skills in using their knowledge of the relationship between letters and sounds to help them read and spell. Although improvements have been made in younger classes, these skills remain limited, especially in older classes. The school has recently undertaken a careful review of the way it contributes to community cohesion and has a clear and effective plan to improve on its already good provision for this aspect. It has a very clear understanding of the nature of its own community and uses this knowledge to ensure that it develops pupils' confidence and self-esteem and expands their horizons, experience and aspirations.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Many children enter Nursery with very limited language, communication and personal skills. Staff take every chance to develop children's speaking and listening skills and good support is given to those at the early stages of learning English and to those who find learning difficult. The school provides a safe and secure environment and children are well cared for. Each child has a designated key worker and this helps them adapt to life beyond home. Children settle quickly into school routines and they continue to develop in confidence as they move through

the Nursery and Reception classes. Appropriate emphasis is placed on promoting children's personal, social and emotional development and they steadily develop independence as they share resources and choose their own activities. Children work and play together well. The use of the outdoor areas has improved since the previous inspection, and children enjoy the good range of outside learning activities provided. As a result of good teaching and well-planned activities, they make good progress in all areas of learning but many still have not reached nationally expected standards by the time they enter Year 1. Staff sometimes miss opportunities to make informal observations and assessments when children are working at their tasks. Leadership and management are good, and recent national guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage has been implemented successfully. However, leaders recognise the need for a more rigorous system to track the progress of children more accurately.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress in reading, by improving the way that pupils acquire and use their knowledge of the relationship between letters and sounds.
- Improve the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in their tests and assessments by providing more challenge and guidance for more able pupils throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Due to good provision, pupils achieve well and make good progress. By the end of Year 2, standards are a little below national averages but above those attained by pupils in similar schools. By the time they leave the school in Year 6, the vast majority of pupils attain standards expected for their ages in all subjects. Because the school has, over the last year or so, concentrated on improving pupils' written English and also because writing is developed and used in a wide range of subjects, writing standards are rising. Due to teachers' and teaching assistants' high expectations, pupils take pride in their books and present their work well. In some lessons, the progress of more able pupils is occasionally slowed a little when they are given insufficient additional challenge and support. Pupils who enter the school with limited skills in using English soon gain in confidence in speaking and writing English because of the frequent good quality support they are given.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their improved attendance and enthusiasm for learning. They are polite, friendly and welcoming and mostly behave well. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. They show good knowledge of, and respect for, other faiths and ways of life. They willingly and proudly seek and accept additional responsibilities for roles such as school councillors, house captains or Eco committee members. Older pupils volunteer to act as buddies to younger pupils and are pleased to be involved in helping to keep the school tidy. The school has good partnerships with community groups. Organisations such as the fire service or British Transport Police visit school to ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe. The healthy lunchtime choices and many physical activities help them develop a clear understanding of how to live healthily. Pupils learn about and contribute to the wider community as they raise funds for local, national and international charities. Business skills are effectively encouraged by activities such as making and selling bird

boxes. Pupils' good achievement in basic skills and their well-developed social skills provide a good preparation for their next school and the world of work beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to ensure that work is interesting, relevant and fun. Teaching assistants provide good support for learning when pupils are working in small groups and also during the first part of mathematics lessons. They make an important contribution to the good progress made by pupils who find learning difficult and also to the progress made by those at the early stages of learning English. They are less effectively deployed during other parts of the lesson in both mathematics and English and opportunities are missed to divide the full class into smaller groups to ensure that teaching matches the learning needs of all pupils as closely as possible. The teaching of writing has improved and writing standards are rising. Reading standards are not as high as writing standards despite the help that many parents give to their children by hearing them read daily. The reason for this is because pupils' skills in understanding the relationships between letters and sounds to help them read and spell unfamiliar words are underdeveloped. Some useful work has begun to improve these skills but there is more to be done, especially in older classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad, interesting and very well enriched by visits, visitors and clubs. Pupils say that staff often make learning fun and that they enjoy lessons. They also enjoy the way that subjects are linked together and appreciate the extensive range of first-hand experiences they are provided with, such as learning to spin plates and perform other tricks as part of the recent topic on circuses in the younger classes. This topic gave good support to pupils' knowledge and skills in many subjects. Frequent opportunities are provided to help pupils develop their basic literacy and numeracy skills in a wide range of subjects. In some classes, however, opportunities for pupils, especially the more able, to write at length and take responsibility for their own learning are limited. The school appropriately places much emphasis on helping pupils develop confidence and skills in speaking and listening and these are promoted well, for example through pupils' end of topic presentations. The curriculum provides strong support for pupils' personal development, and personal and social education lessons enable them to reflect on and gain control of their emotions and feelings.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is excellent and academic guidance good. Pupils are very well looked after in a safe, secure environment. All systems to safeguard pupils' health, safety and well-being, including arrangements for internet safety, fully meet requirements. Adults do much to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem in lessons and throughout the day. Pupils feel valued and know that there is always someone to help them with any problems they have. Instances of bullying and racism are rare and quickly dealt with. More vulnerable pupils and their parents are well supported by the learning mentor and extra help is readily available when needed. The school uses its effective system for monitoring pupils' progress to help pupils make good

progress. In some classes, teachers' marking and other guidance give pupils a very clear understanding of which aspects of their learning require attention. However, this is not fully consistent throughout the school and so a minority of pupils are unclear about how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Effective leadership and management result in the pupils' good achievement and in their good personal development and well-being. The headteacher enables other leaders to carry out their roles in monitoring standards and improving the quality of provision in their subjects well. Subject leaders play an important part in ensuring that pupils achieve well. Staff training, teamwork and attitudes to their professional development are very strong and staff are continually seeking to do their work better. Governors carry out their roles well and provide appropriate support and challenge. The school sets very ambitious targets for the proportion of pupils who should attain standards expected for their ages. However, targets for the proportion of pupils aiming at an even higher level are not as demanding.

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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	3
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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	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 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**

11 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Vincent's Catholic Primary School, Birmingham, B7 4HP

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school. We especially want to thank those of you who gave up part of your lunchtime to talk to us. We enjoyed watching you learn and talking with you.

Your school is a good school. It gives you a good education and is run well. Adults teach you well so that you make good progress and achieve well. The ways that you are cared for, guided and supported are also good. Yours is obviously a happy school that you and your parents are clearly pleased with.

You enjoy school and most of you attend very regularly and arrive on time. You all act safely and think about the safety of others. You are being well prepared for life at your next school. You show consideration for others, understand what is right and what is wrong, and are very friendly to each other. You should be proud of your excellent behaviour and manners. Those of you who find learning difficult make good progress because the school helps you learn, and you are given frequent help in small groups. Those of you who come to school with little English soon gain in confidence in your speaking, reading and writing.

There are many things that your headteacher, the staff and the governors want to improve because they want your school to get even better! We agree with them that there are two important things that they need to do first:

- help you make better progress in reading, by improving your knowledge of the links between letters and sounds
- help more of you attain higher levels in your work.

I send you our very best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Roger Sadler

Lead inspector