

INSPECTION REPORT

ST VINCENT de PAUL RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Norden, Rochdale

LEA area: Rochdale

Unique reference number: 105831

Headteacher: Mr E Scott

Reporting inspector: Lynne Read
21199

Dates of inspection: 7 - 8 July 2003

Inspection number: 259902

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Edenfield Road
Norden
Rochdale

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Telephone number: 01706 642469

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs J Holt

Date of previous inspection: 22 September 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Vincent de Paul Roman Catholic Primary is situated in Norden, close to Rochdale. With 416 pupils on roll, it is larger than most primary schools. A total of ten per cent of pupils claim free school meals and this is below average. Most children entering the reception class have a range of learning experiences that are around average. Ten per cent of pupils are on the school's list of special educational needs and this figure is below average. Some need help with learning whilst others have physical or sensory impairment, problems with speech or behavioural difficulties. There are four pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs, which is below average. Most pupils have a White British background and a small number have Irish, or mixed heritages. All pupils speak English as their first language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school and there are a number of excellent features. The very good quality of teaching means that pupils achieve very well, especially in English, mathematics and science. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and management that are firmly focused on constant improvement. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour and relationships in school are major strengths. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make very good progress through the school and, as a result, standards are well above average by Year 6.
- Teaching is very good.
- The broad curriculum provides a very good range of learning opportunities to develop pupils' academic, creative and physical skills.
- There is a very good emphasis on nurturing pupils' personal development, in line with the school's Christian foundation.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning, behaviour is very good and there are excellent relationships throughout the school.
- The headteacher provides excellent leadership and management and is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher, senior managers and subject managers.

What could be improved

- No significant weaknesses were identified at the school.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There have been very good improvements since the inspection of 1997. The school has been constantly moving forward during the past six years, basing development plans on the rigorous evaluation of performance. Leadership and management at the school have improved further. The headteacher and subject managers have developed very good systems for checking the quality of teaching, learning and for tracking pupils' attainment. The quality of teaching has improved well with a much greater proportion of very good and excellent lessons seen in this inspection. Standards of attainment have continued to rise with many more pupils reaching the higher levels. There have been excellent improvements in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT). Computer systems are used very efficiently in teaching, administration and in keeping parents well informed.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6, based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	C	A	B	A	well above average A
mathematics	B	A*	A	A	above average B
science	C	A	A	A	average C
					below average D
					well below average E

A represents attainment that is in the top 5 per cent of schools and is very high.*

Performance over the last two years has been very strong when compared with the national picture and the school has received the government's School Achievement Award in recognition of this fact. When children enter school, their prior learning and experiences are similar to those of most children of this age. They make good progress in the reception classes and by the time they enter Year 1, attainment is above average and a good number have begun to work within the National Curriculum Programmes of Study in English and mathematics. During Years 1 and 2, pupils make very good progress and, in the 2002 National Curriculum tests, their attainment in reading and mathematics was above average. In writing, it was average. The school has highlighted writing as a developmental area this year. Standards seen in the scrutiny of work and lessons in reading, writing and mathematics were above average in Year 2. The school keeps very detailed records of pupils' achievements, showing very good progress across all areas of English, mathematics and science during Years 3 to 6. The table above illustrates the high standards attained. Over 40 per cent of pupils achieved the higher level 5 in English and mathematics and over 60 per cent did so in science. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that standards will be well above average this year and that pupils, of all ages and both genders, are achieving very well in their lessons, regardless of their starting point or any special educational need they may have. Over time, standards at the school are improving at a better rate than the national trend. Attainment in other subjects of the curriculum is at least in line with expectations and there are strengths in art and design, design and technology, history and music. Gifted and talented pupils work at advanced levels in the appropriate subjects. Early indications from this year's tests show that the school is likely to meet the targets set for English and mathematics. The percentage of pupils attaining the expected level 4 in all three subjects has improved further since last year.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn. They are extremely well-motivated in their lessons and work very hard. Pupils take pride in their achievements.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The standard of behaviour is very good. Pupils show great respect and consideration for others. From the reception class upwards, children and pupils collaborate very well, readily sharing ideas and resources.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent among all groups and make a significant contribution to pupils' progress and to the pleasant learning atmosphere. Pupils are confident and show developing maturity as they take

	responsibility for their own conduct.
Attendance	Attendance rates are well above average when compared with schools nationally. Pupils arrive in good time for lessons, eager to start work.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The very good quality of teaching is largely responsible for the very good results. In seven out of ten lessons seen during the inspection, teaching was very good or excellent. Between them, the teachers have a very good knowledge across all the subjects and willingly share their expertise with colleagues when planning work. Expectations are high and there is a very brisk pace to learning. Teachers in the reception classes provide a good range of activities to develop children's skills across all areas of learning and to develop independence. There is a good balance between the activities that teachers direct and opportunities for children to choose. In Years 1 to 6 there is a very good emphasis on teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Throughout school, teachers plan and prepare lessons very well, setting a clear purpose for learning. Lessons often conclude with a review of pupils' work. This allows for the good development of pupils' self-evaluation skills and helps the teacher to assess their learning. Consequently, the next steps can be planned precisely. Subjects are often linked so that pupils are able to practise and consolidate their skills in English, mathematics and ICT. In all classes, teachers set challenging targets for pupils' learning. Marking is thorough, refers to pupils' targets and includes pointers for improvement. Teachers set very good homework tasks that are meaningful and often include research or extension work. Lessons include extended activities for the higher achieving or gifted and talented pupils that lead to attainment at the higher levels. Good support for pupils who have special educational needs ensures that they meet their individual targets and that they make good progress. Teachers keep a constant eye on the attainment of boys and girls and pupils of the various ethnic groups to ensure that all are meeting expectations.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school provides a broad range of interesting learning opportunities to promote pupils' academic, creative, physical and personal skills. The staff are successful in ensuring that all pupils have full access to every aspect of school life.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	There is good provision for pupils who have special educational needs. They have individual education programmes that are shared with parents and reviewed regularly. Provision for those with a Statement of Special Educational Needs is very good. Specialist support is secured where appropriate.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is excellent. School rules and procedures encourage pupils to respect other people's views, values and feelings. Pupils clearly know right from wrong and are polite and helpful. Cultural development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Adults in the school care for pupils' individual needs very effectively. Positive strategies and high expectations underpin the promotion of very

	good behaviour. Established policies and routines provide a very good standard of safety. Pupils' progress is constantly checked and the information gathered is used very effectively to plan the next stages in learning.
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Parents have a very high opinion of the school and express great confidence in the headteacher and his staff. They are kept very well informed through an excellent range of leaflets and newsletters and a very good programme of meetings. They support their children's education very effectively by helping at home and by fund-raising to support improvements.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides excellent, active leadership. He is very well supported by the deputy headteacher and the senior management team and provides the main driving force in maintaining a clear direction for the school. There is very strong teamwork amongst all staff, including non-teaching personnel. Subject managers have a very good overview of teaching and learning in their subjects. They are successful in directing the planning for improvement through their annual reviews and reports.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are constantly striving to ensure the best provision for their pupils and provide good leadership. They have a good overview of the strengths of the school and a secure awareness of the priorities for development in both the short and long term.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The headteacher, with the assistance of the assessment manager, keeps an accurate and thorough view of the quality of teaching, pupils' performance and trends in attainment. An annual cycle of evaluation is in place.
The strategic use of resources	Resource management is excellent. The school's budget is carefully targeted to support the priorities for development. Best value, in terms of cost and quality, is routinely sought.

Resources are chosen carefully and are of high quality. Some very good displays of pupils' work celebrate achievements and provide a stimulating learning environment. All staff show a strong commitment to the school's aims and share in the vision of excellence.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like coming to school. • The school is well led and managed. • Behaviour is good and the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. • The teaching is good. Their children are expected to work hard and they make good progress. • They are welcomed at all times to discuss issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework. • Activities outside of lessons • Information for parents and the way in which the school works with home.

The team whole-heartedly agrees with parents' positive views. The views from questionnaires expressed in the 'would like to see improved' box were not repeated at the meeting or in conversations with parents during the inspection. The inspection team judged that homework, out-of-school activities, information for parents and home/school links are very effective in supporting pupils' learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils make very good progress through the school and as a result, standards are well above average by Year 6.

1. When children enter the school, their prior experiences and learning are broadly similar to what is expected of the age group. They make very good progress and, in the 2002 National Curriculum tests for Year 6 pupils, standards attained in English were above average and in mathematics and science they were well above the national average. When performance was compared with schools in similar circumstances, standards in all three subjects were well above average. The attainment seen in Year 6 lessons during the inspection was well above average in all three subjects and there have been very good improvements in writing this year. The pupils keep examples of their work in their 'continuation books'. These provide further evidence of the very good progress made year on year. Above-average standards of attainment have been maintained since the time of the previous inspection and there are even more pupils working at the higher level 5, especially in English. In the returned parents' questionnaires, 96 per cent agreed that their children are making good progress. At the meeting, parents felt that standards were very good and praised pupils' achievements in art and music.
2. During their time in the reception class, children gain a solid grounding in communication, language and literacy, in mathematical understanding and in their knowledge of the world around them. By the time they enter Year 1, pupils have reached the goals in learning expected of the age group and some are already working in the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment is above average.
3. Pupils make very good progress in Years 1 and 2 and attainment is above average. Their skills in the recognition and articulation of letter sounds are well-developed and help pupils to read new words. Pupils recognise a very wide range of words on sight and many use the clues within the plot to decipher new text. They recognise the features of both fiction and non-fiction books and know how to use the contents and index sections effectively to find information. All take books home regularly and are very well supported by parents. This helps to promote good progress; around 40 per cent of the current Year 2 pupils are reading at the higher level 3, which is well above average. Pupils' writing is well structured. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils wrote questions about the seaside, showing a good awareness of the required punctuation. Imaginative writing is of a good standard with pupils choosing vocabulary to create effect. Year 2 pupils are confident in writing poetry. In one lesson, they used the poem *Please Mrs Butler* as a model for their own writing. They very successfully maintained the rhythm and pattern of the work and were able to copy the humorous style of the poet by choosing their words very carefully.
4. By the end of Year 6, pupils read fluently and show very good levels of comprehension. Pupils in Year 3 rehearsed their reading of a 'rap' poem to achieve a very good standard of expression and rhythm. They followed the author's intentions very well, taking note of the punctuation, spacing and bold print features to create the intended effect. Pupils state their preferences for favourite works, justifying their views. They extend their reading experiences across a wide range of genre, both fiction and non-fiction. Pupils in Year 6 investigated how the author of *Goodnight Mr Tom* had influenced the readers' views of the main characters. They identified how he had portrayed fear, anger and love through descriptive language and direct speech. They demonstrated exceptionally well-developed skills of prediction, inference and deduction at a level that was well above average. Pupils have a thorough understanding of library classification systems and locate information efficiently from print and electronic sources. By the end of Year 6, pupils' writing is lively, thoughtful and sophisticated. In their fiction writing, pupils demonstrate a secure grasp of grammar, often using longer sentences to add detail. They show a good awareness of audience in their choice of vocabulary. In Year 4 pupils chose some very good strategies in their persuasive writing. They engaged the readers' attention successfully by using alliteration and word-play to get their message across. Handwriting is of a high standard, with some pupils developing their

- own, neat style. Pupils are very confident in expressing their opinions and show a clear understanding of how language changes according to the context in which it is used.
5. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good understanding of number. They especially enjoy the challenging mental arithmetic sessions and discuss ways of improving the speed and accuracy of their work. Pupils add three numbers, double or halve amounts and make reasonable estimates of answers to mathematical problems. They understand the concept of multiplication and recall facts from the 2, 5, and 10 times tables at random. Just over one third of pupils in Year 2 are working at the higher level 3. They clearly understand the value of each digit, explaining whether it represents a hundred, ten or unit. Pupils are very confident in using different methods to calculate answers. When adding or subtracting, they use their knowledge of doubling, rounding up or down or partitioning numbers. Most are confident when solving problems that involve halves and quarters. They apply their mathematical skills very effectively when dealing with problems. Pupils gather, sort and organise data very effectively. In an excellent Year 2 lesson, for example, they used a tally chart accurately to find the most popular fruits and presented their findings clearly in a block graph.
 6. Mathematical skills develop well throughout Years 3 to 6 and, by the end of Year 6, pupils work very confidently with decimals, fractions and percentages. They understand ratio and identify the range, mean and median in a set of figures. They solve complex calculations. Some Year 4 pupils found the missing numbers in a multiplication grid using their well-developed skills of problem-solving. Many pupils add and subtract by splitting numbers, and this greatly increases the speed at which they calculate. They measure and draw angles accurately when working on problems relating to shape. Data-handling skills are very good. Pupils collect and tabulate their own data and display patterns and relationships through graphs and pictorial diagrams. They often use computer programs to support this work and are confident in handling databases and spreadsheets.
 7. Pupils' skills of scientific enquiry and knowledge develop well in Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2, pupils observe closely and make suggestions on how to find solutions to problems. They group materials into categories such as opaque or transparent. They identify and solve faults in their electrical circuits. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a very good awareness of the life cycles of plants and animals and classify living things according to specified criteria, such as habitat. Pupils learn about health issues and study the benefits of good diet and exercise. Their investigative skills are developing very well. In Year 1, for example, the pupils were asked 'what does a seed need to grow?' They thought out their work very carefully by using the headings, 'what I need, what I think, what I did, what I saw and what I found out'. This early introduction to scientific enquiry lays a very good foundation for later work.
 8. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' skills of observation, experimentation, investigation and problem-solving are very good indeed. They carry out fair tests and experiments, often making informed predictions. In Year 3, pupils tested materials to see how much light passed through. Working very effectively in pairs, they discussed the reasons for their predictions and recorded their results methodically. Year 5 pupils demonstrated a very good knowledge and understanding of the planets and used this to work out how and why the seasons change. Working at a level above that expected, they used specific terminology, such as *axis* or *hemisphere* very accurately. Their diagrams were of high quality and showed very careful attention to detail. Pupils throughout Years 3 to 6 measure accurately and use equipment appropriately and safely.
 9. Achievement is good in design and technology and well supported by strong links with other subjects. For example, pupils use their scientific, mathematical, ICT and writing skills to design, make and evaluate their products. They achieve a high quality of finish by applying their artistic skills very effectively. In Year 6, pupils have made accurate models of bomb shelters to link with their history topic on World War II. The sketches and designs provided evidence that pupils have engaged in extended research into the product and have a secure understanding of the materials and components used. Artwork is good throughout school. In Year 2, pupils took inspiration from Van Gogh's sunflowers to create pictures of a similar style but using cold colours. The resulting 'moonflowers' illustrated very well the pupils' skills in exploring and developing ideas. Some interesting drawings and torn paper collage work in Year 6 show how pupils have experimented with visual and tactile qualities to reproduce the style of Lowry. Pupils have worked on some

excellent sculptures in the style of Giacommetti that make good use of shape and form to depict movement. Pupils are very knowledgeable about the work of artists around the world and of different times. They recognise and appreciate cultural and religious influences in art. In history, pupils' skills of enquiry are very well-developed and they have a very good understanding of how the past is represented in different ways and from different view-points. Pupils in Year 2 examined the different accounts of The Great Fire of London, one written by an eye witness and the other depicted through a painting. They evaluated the information in both, showing good skills of enquiry and interpretation. Pupils' performing skills in music are good. They read conventional notation when singing or playing and many are working above the average level. All have opportunities to take part in the school's performances, which are of a high standard.

Teaching is very good.

10. The quality of teaching is very good and has improved further since the previous inspection, with a higher percentage of very good and excellent practice. It is a major strength of the school and has a significant impact on pupils' learning. Parents' returned questionnaires show that 97 per cent agree that their children benefit from good teaching. Similar views were expressed at the parents' meeting and letters written to the inspection team reflect the same, high opinion.
11. Teachers have a very good understanding of the most effective ways to teach literacy and numeracy and are successful in supporting pupils to develop skills in these areas. Excellent links between subjects ensure that pupils have many opportunities to extend their reading, writing and mathematical expertise to the full. Lessons are very well planned and structured; teachers have very high expectations and learning is brisk. There is a very good emphasis on teaching the basic skills. In one reception class the teacher read from a large-print book and encouraged the children to join in some repetitive phrases. In doing so, they copied the teacher's good, expressive model and made very good progress in this part of the lesson. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy are firmly established in school and teachers often build in additional short sessions for reading, mental arithmetic or writing so that pupils have opportunities to orchestrate and consolidate the skills they are taught. Teachers' knowledge of ICT has been extended through a whole-school training programme and pupils have very good opportunities to extend their computer skills when researching or recording their work in other subjects.
12. In the reception classes, the teachers and nursery nurse work closely together to provide an interesting range of experiences. Children of differing abilities and prior experiences are very well catered for through an established assessment process that directly informs what will be taught next. Tasks are often challenging and take the children's learning forward at a good rate. In one creative lesson, the children were asked to think of alternative words to the rhyme 'Jelly on a Plate'. Their imagination was fired as they suggested phrases such as 'Pancakes in a Pan'. However, role-play is not as well promoted to expand language and to fire children's imagination. There is an appropriate balance between activities that adults lead and those that the children select for themselves. Adults pay great attention to establishing routines and to developing confidence and independence in the children. This sets a very firm foundation for later learning.
13. In Years 1 to 6 the teachers make clear to pupils what is to be learnt, giving a clear focus to the lesson and generating enthusiasm. Aims are written on the board or on cards and in clear language. For example, in one lesson the teacher wrote 'at the end of the lesson we will have solved a problem by collecting information and organising it'. During, and at the end of lessons, teachers refer to the aims and encourage pupils to assess how well they are progressing. These are very effective strategies in creating a purpose for pupils' learning and in developing skills of personal evaluation. At the end of a Year 2 cricket lesson, for example, the pupils decided that they needed to think quicker if they were to improve their game. Teachers direct questions of differing levels of difficulty to ensure that everyone in the class is actively involved. Teaching assistants are well deployed to help those who might find it difficult to keep up with the fast pace of whole-class sessions. All oral contributions are valued and handled sensitively and, as a result, pupils are confident to 'have a go'. Teachers are very skilled in asking open-ended questions and in prompting pupils' thinking so that they discover things for themselves. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, the pupils were guided towards finding a pattern when subtracting ten from a number in the teens. They identified accurately that the unit numeral remained constant and

then used this fact to speed up their calculations. Teachers prompt pupils' thinking rather than simply providing answers. In one English lesson the pupils were having difficulties defining the word 'flourished'. The teacher gradually extended their thinking until one pupil

remarked 'it's like sparking new life'. Teachers encourage pupils to work efficiently. When working out some mathematics problems, the pupils first had to decide whether to use their mental strategies or the calculator. They proved to be very discriminating in using the latter.

14. Lesson preparation and planning is very good and teachers often set an exciting agenda for the whole day's work. Some Year 2 pupils talked eagerly about the first lesson of the afternoon when they were going to design and create fabric patterns. They were very well-motivated and eager for the end of lunch-time so that they could begin. Carefully chosen resources are organised and readily available; pupils' books and other consumables are always to hand and classroom routines are very firmly established. This means that lessons start on time and proceed without interruption. The role of all adults in the room is clearly stated in the lesson plans. Instructions for the pupils are very clear and expectations are explicit. These two factors ensure that all know exactly what they are doing in the timescale given. In turn, this leads to a very good pace of learning. A scrutiny of pupils' books shows that they work very hard in their lessons to complete their tasks. Teachers use time very efficiently. For example, pupils often complete a handwriting or quick mental arithmetic exercise while the register is called.
15. Pupils' work is always marked conscientiously and often includes encouraging praise where good standards are achieved or a sustained effort made. Teachers write very useful comments to point out ways to improve and often refer to the pupils' targets so that they know how well they are doing. Parents are kept very well informed about what their children are learning and are encouraged to help at home. Reading records include space for parental comment, a current list of spellings and words to learn. Homework is well used to extend learning and some excellent standards were seen in the completed research projects in Years 5 and 6.
16. One of the most commendable features of teaching is the assessment of learning and the use of information gathered to plan the next challenges. Pupils' learning is tracked carefully so that if a difficulty occurs, teachers can act swiftly before it becomes a problem. Lessons are planned specifically for the various different learning groups, providing extension work for gifted or talented pupils and including focused support where it is needed. For example, teachers devise a 'writing frame' to help pupils structure and order their thoughts before writing. In some lessons, teachers arrange the tables into a horseshoe-shape with themselves in the centre. This enables very good contact and allows them to intervene actively as pupils work.

The broad curriculum provides a very good range of learning opportunities to develop pupils' academic, creative and physical skills.

17. The school provides a very broad and interesting curriculum. It includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education and meets all statutory requirements fully. There is very good enrichment of learning through the links between subjects. The two points for development that were identified in the previous inspection have been addressed and there have been very good improvements. The provision for pupils who are gifted or talented has been extended so that they have tasks to challenge their skills. The school has worked hard to develop very good provision for ICT with an extensive computer suite, good training for teachers and much better use of computers across the curriculum. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy are well established and adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. The core skills of English and mathematics are constantly applied when studying other subjects. The success of the curriculum is seen in the high standards achieved. In replies to the parents' questionnaire, 95 per cent agreed that 'my child likes school' and this is a further indicator of the quality of learning experiences.
18. The quality and range of learning opportunities for children in the reception classes are good. The curriculum for these children is based on the nationally recognised areas of learning. They have opportunities for creative work through a wide range of practical activities, such as painting or

making music. Physical skills are developed successfully through dedicated lessons in the hall or outside areas. There is a good emphasis on developing skills in literacy and mathematics. Teachers skilfully engage children in conversation, extending vocabulary and confidence.

19. There is good provision for pupils who have special educational needs that enables them to take full advantage of what the school has to offer. Those who have behavioural or emotional difficulties are supported sensitively so that they gain full benefit from their lessons. Pupils' individual education plans are detailed and provide a good guide for lesson planning so that they have the right support at the right time. The breadth of learning experiences that the school provides helps to ensure that those pupils who find difficulties in one area have lots of opportunities to succeed in another. For example, some pupils who need help with writing are recognised as good artists or for their sporting talents. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and develop good levels of self-esteem. Some excellent support is provided for pupils who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Specialist advice or equipment is sought, where needed, to ensure that they are fully integrated into school life. For example, lunch-times are organised in exactly the same way every day so that a pupil with sensory impairment can find his way around with a minimum of support. Pupils are very sensitive to the needs of their friends who have a physical or sensory impairment. They offer help willingly but also know when to allow more time and space for pupils to maintain their independence.
20. There are good challenges for pupils who are capable of higher attainment. The curriculum is planned at different levels and includes tasks of varying degrees of difficulty. The setting system for mathematics in Years 3 to 6 and English in Year 6 is especially successful. In one lesson, the lower-attaining group worked on the same learning objectives as the higher-attaining one, using materials that had been specially selected and adapted for their pace of learning. The lesson for the higher-attaining group contained a vast amount of challenge and proceeded at a very fast pace, enabling rapid progress. As a result, both groups succeeded very well.
21. Planning exploits links between subjects and this is very effective in consolidating pupils' skills, especially in English and mathematics. As an illustration, pupils in Year 6 were studying 'life in World War II' as part of their history work. They had interviewed a local resident who came to recount her experiences, investigated life at work and home and examined posters of the time. As part of the topic, the pupils had read a novel set in war time and used this as an inspiration to write their 'diaries of an evacuee'. Some very good artwork was produced on the theme of 'the Blitz' and pupils had designed and made model air raid shelters in their design and technology lessons. They are currently working on songs of the era in their music lessons. The quality of the learning over the term has been very good and reflected in the homework projects recently completed, which are of a very high standard.
22. There is a very good programme of activities available out of lesson time. The sporting opportunities include football, netball and rugby and there is a popular gymnastics club. Members of the choir meet to practise and extend their repertoire and also help to raise funds for charity through their performances. Pupils have opportunities to sing alongside professionals and pupils from other schools when they take part in local music festivals. School performances such as 'Robin Hood' or 'Joseph' provide a further outlet through which pupils may develop their talents. Throughout the year, pupils visit places of interest that supplement their studies and provide them with first-hand experiences. Pupils in Year 5 visit an activity centre and those in Year 6 have a residential visit. Both provide opportunities for them to try out new, adventure activities and promote social skills and independence effectively. In addition, pupils are invited to clubs run in school by the parish, such as Cubs or Brownies. Pupils can join in prayers at lunch-time and take part in masses throughout the year. A novel and successful approach at the school includes lunch-time clubs run by the pupils themselves. Activities are chosen by the organisers and cater for a diverse range of interests.
23. The curriculum is constantly checked and improved where necessary. Subject managers analyse the results of statutory and optional tests and teacher evaluations to see if there are any areas of relative weakness or potential improvement. They keep a watchful eye on resources to ensure that teachers have all they need. Good, informal communications mean that minor problems are shared and acted upon quickly before they develop into major issues.

There is a very good emphasis on nurturing pupils' personal development, in line with the school's Christian foundation.

24. Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is excellent and there are very good opportunities for pupils to develop their cultural awareness and understanding. These areas of personal development are central to the life at St Vincent's and reflect the strong Christian ethos of the school's mission statement. In returned questionnaires, 96 per cent of

parents agreed that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. This aspect was highlighted as a major strength of the school by the parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting.

25. The pupils' spiritual development is promoted extremely effectively. School assemblies convey a strong sense of spirituality and are reverent occasions in which the pupils show, through tone and posture, the importance of prayer in their lives. There are many opportunities throughout the day for pupils to reflect on a personal level. These include quiet prayer sessions and discussions where pupils explore their feelings and try to make sense of their experiences. Teachers allow time for pupils to explore the beauty and wonders of the natural world through their scientific studies. The 'memory books' given to each Year 6 pupil when they leave school are individually made and beautifully presented. They record memorable times at the school and help pupils to appreciate how they have grown and flourished over the years.
26. The teachers and pupils agree sets of class rules that reflect a moral code centred on honesty, integrity and respect for others. This is very successful in fostering a very caring and supportive environment. The teachers speak to the pupils with courtesy and this is highly successful in promoting an atmosphere of mutual respect. Rules are consistently applied by all adults. Lunch-time supervisors and helpers are well-briefed about expectations. A well-established reward system provides very good motivation for hard work, good manners and thoughtful actions. Adults and pupils speak and act calmly and a raised voice is rare. This is largely because the discipline and behaviour policy is not so much imposed but is owned and shared by all members of the school community.
27. Pupils are given very good opportunities to carry increasing levels of personal responsibility as they move through the school. They are called upon to act as monitors and carry out many tasks that aid the smooth running of the school. For example, pupils organise the hall for collective worship or act as receptionists during the lunch-break. Pupils in Year 6 may apply to become prefects. In order to ensure a fair distribution of responsibility, applications and appointments for this important job are done half-termly, thus providing ample opportunities for all to be involved. The school council plays an important part in the social development of the pupils and in extending their awareness of citizenship. Elections are held regularly so that pupils have good opportunities to act as representatives and promote the voice of their peers in the running of the school. There are considerable fund-raising efforts for a wide range of charities that extend the pupils' awareness and concern for people outside their immediate circle successfully.
28. It is the school's policy to allow autonomy for pupils who volunteer to run the lunch-time clubs. They value the freedom they are given whilst also recognising the degree of responsibility that goes with it. During the inspection, some pupils presented reports on the success or otherwise of their clubs over the year. Hints and advice given to the Year 5 pupils taking over next year included, 'sometimes people did not come on time and we had to go and find them' or 'we would think out the activities and organisation more carefully next time'. It is obvious that pupils have learned some very useful lessons in life through these leadership opportunities.
29. Provision for the pupils' cultural development is very good. Studies in history and geography provide the pupils with opportunities to learn about ancient civilisations such as the Greeks and Egyptians and to recognise their influence on modern culture. In music, art and English lessons they are taught to appreciate a good range of creative media and learn about famous artists, composers, poets and authors from different cultures. Religious education lessons teach the

pupils successfully to respect religious practices and beliefs other than their own, such as those of Judaism and Islam. The pupils themselves are taught to recognise the different ways that events are recorded and to detect bias. Pupils express their opinions on ethical issues and moral dilemmas, showing an ability to consider all views. They fully understand the concept of interdependence between peoples and exercise respect and consideration. The work done with Amnesty International helps pupils to become aware of complex political influences on the lives of children around the world. The school occasionally welcomes visitors from other cultures but there is scope for this aspect of school life to be developed further.

Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning, behaviour is very good and there are excellent relationships throughout the school.

30. All these aspects are strengths of the school and make a significant contribution to the pleasant learning atmosphere. Pupils are keen to learn and they need very little prompting by adults to maintain a very high standard of conduct. Excellent relationships are seen throughout, and among, all age groups. There have been no exclusions in the last or previous years and the attendance rates are well above the national average. The high standards reported at the time of the previous inspection have been sustained. The school lives out its mission statement, recognising and valuing each child's abilities and talents and ensuring good levels of self-esteem. As a result, all pupils regardless of special needs, gender or ethnic background, participate eagerly in the varied range of activities and enjoy their work.
31. The pupils show great interest in and enthusiasm for their lessons. They are very willing to join in discussions and answer questions. They participate fully in class activities and there is very good support for the out-of-school clubs. To illustrate their keenness, some pupils arrive very early in the morning for the before-school sessions to improve their spelling and general English skills. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and demonstrate good levels of concentration. They become increasingly able to work well in pairs and small groups, supporting each other's learning and offering constructive suggestions.
32. Behaviour in school is very good. Pupils come into school on time, organise their belongings efficiently and settle very quickly in the classrooms. Pupils of all ages clearly understand and accept the standards of conduct expected of them. They consider the effects of their actions on others and are mindful of other people's feelings. There are very few incidents of bullying or aggressive behaviour in school and any that do occur are dealt with very promptly, fairly and to the satisfaction of all concerned. The school council plays an active role here and their judgements are well respected.
33. Relationships within the school are excellent. Pupils show very good empathy with their classmates who have special educational needs and there is a strong, caring, supportive ethos that pervades all the school's work. Some very effective examples of collaborative working were observed during the inspection. Children in the reception class made 'pancakes and tea' around their 'camp fire' in the role-play area. In a Year 4 physical education lesson, pupils played short games, organising themselves into teams and negotiating turns in bowling and batting without any fuss. Members of the school council influence decision-making very effectively by reflecting the pupils' wishes. Pupils throughout school carry out their allocated responsibilities conscientiously. Those in Year 6 become 'special friends' to the reception children, helping them to settle in to school life and becoming their mentors. Pupils in other year groups said that they look forward to carrying out this role when it is their turn. The paired reading system is very effective and has benefits for both the learner and the supporter. A very positive feature of school life is the 'Captain's Table' where pupils entertain a friend over lunch-time. This is a privilege awarded to pupils for good lunch-time behaviour. Relationships between staff and pupils are also excellent. In one ICT lesson in Year 3, the pupils sent an e-mail attachment to their teacher to say thank you for the year's work. There was genuine appreciation expressed for the good times spent in the class and pupils went to great lengths to find a picture or animation that they thought their teacher would like.
34. The attendance figures for the school are very good. There were no unauthorised absences over the last year and pupils have good time-keeping. These are further indications of pupils' positive attitudes.

The headteacher provides excellent leadership and management and is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher, senior managers and subject managers.

35. The headteacher sets very high expectations of staff and pupils. His excellent leadership and management are major strengths of the school and are highly valued by the governors. As a result

of his leadership, the school has driven standards of attainment to a level that is well above the average for similar schools. St Vincent's has received the government's School Achievement Award for high standards in the past two years. There have been very good improvements at the school since the time of the previous inspection. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting commended the school's work. They said that the school has a high reputation within the local community and wider parish, which is well deserved.

36. The headteacher works in a very effective partnership with the deputy headteacher, who shares in the day-to-day running of the school. Together, they are very successful in promoting an environment where staff and pupils work very hard and enjoy excellent relationships. All staff and governors are firmly committed to the school's aims that are rooted in its Christian foundation and include a strong emphasis on personal as well as academic development. The essence of the school's mission statement is evident in all aspects of its work.
37. The delegation of responsibilities to staff is very effective and efficient. The subject managers check planning, scrutinise completed work and monitor teaching and learning in their subjects. Through their delegated responsibilities, they quickly address any minor issues that arise and complete an annual action plan showing how they will drive their subject forward in the coming year. They maintain a good range of quality resources for learning and provide expert support for their colleagues. The headteacher, in conjunction with the assessment manager, gathers, analyses and evaluates a wide range of assessment data. The subject managers then use this valuable information to check that pupils are making the expected progress, to set new targets and to identify any area of the curriculum that may need improvement. This is a major and very effective element in the school's evaluation system.
38. Very thorough staff guidelines underpin the consistency in routines and expectations. The school makes excellent use of ICT in its management systems. In order to keep paperwork to a minimum, each teacher has a CD-ROM that contains all the day-to-day information, lists, schedules and policies that are needed. This is an extremely efficient system that saves money and time and allows for changes to be made very quickly. Staff development is a very strong feature at the school. Teachers' performance is monitored closely. Training schedules are based on individual requirements and whole-school needs as identified in the school development plan. Very good communication and strong teamwork are particular strengths in school. Staff have regular interviews where they discuss professional development with the headteacher. Classroom assistants and non-teaching staff are valued highly; all have a clear list of responsibilities and share in the corporate vision of excellence. The caretaker ensures a very high standard of maintenance and cleanliness. The administrative team cover a wide range of routines, provide a helpful first point of contact and play an essential role in the smooth day-to-day running of the school. In turn, this frees up the headteacher's time for his regular 'walk-about' and to deal with educational matters. The quality of leaflets, newsletters and written communication sent out from school is exceptionally high.
39. The headteacher, governors and all staff work as an effective team in ensuring that all pupils have full access to all the school's facilities. There is good, easy access to all parts of the building and governors are committed to providing adapted or specialist equipment wherever needed. At the moment, there is an amplified sound system installed in one classroom and one teaching assistant is extending her expertise in Braille. These are just two examples of measures taken to ensure that pupils can take full advantage of their lessons. Pupils who are gifted or talented are identified and have the challenges that they need, whether they be of an academic, sporting or artistic nature. All the school's data is analysed to check that all groups of pupils are achieving equally and to enable swift action where differences appear.
40. There is a positive and productive relationship between the governing body and the school. Governors are well informed about attainment and target-setting as they check data and have regular reports. They have great confidence in the headteacher but expect him to be accountable and ask some searching questions. Through their named governor system, they are able to keep abreast of developments and play an active part in school improvement. They are actively involved in the evaluation of how well the school is performing and check that spending decisions lead to improvements in provision. Long-term strategic planning at the school is very good and allows the

governors and headteacher to think ahead about the potential impact of issues, such as falling birthrate numbers. Financial planning is very good and spending is monitored through the detailed reports that governors receive. The headteacher seeks out grants and every opportunity for additional funding to improve facilities. Two recent examples are seen in the new garden area and computer suite, both of which were made possible through the pursuit of grants. The effectiveness of the school is very good because of the high quality of teaching, very good attainment, high standards in personal and social education and very strong leadership and management. The cost per pupil is relatively low and the school provides very good value for money.

41. Systems of self-evaluation at the school are very good. Their overall effectiveness is borne out by the fact that the inspection process found no evidence of significant weaknesses. The views of pupils, parents and staff are sought during the annual cycle of evaluation. All findings are considered and form the basis of school development planning. This is part of the constant striving for excellence.
42. Management is very successful in maintaining very good and valued links with parents. During the year, there are three days and two evenings set aside for parent interviews so that they are kept well-informed about their children's progress. The flexibility in timing is especially useful for working parents. The school's open-door philosophy is effective and parents said they felt confident in approaching the class teachers or headteacher with a problem. They expressed great confidence in the way issues are dealt with. A vast amount of information is available for parents. The prospectus and informative leaflets cover all aspects of school life and are freely available from the display in the entrance hall. The school website is continually updated and is easy to use.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

43. The inspection team did not identify any major areas for improvement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

44. There are no significant weaknesses at the school and therefore no key issues identified.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	32
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	16

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	19	8	2	0	0	0
Percentage	9	60	25	6	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than three percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR-Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	416
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	42

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR-Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	41

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	28	32	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	25	25	27
	Girls	31	31	30
	Total	56	56	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (97)	93 (97)	95 (94)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	25	26	27
	Girls	31	30	31
	Total	56	56	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (92)	93 (91)	97 (97)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	38	30	68

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	27	29	34
	Girls	29	29	30
	Total	56	58	64
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (91)	85 (96)	94 (97)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	27	29	33
	Girls	30	29	30
	Total	57	58	63
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	84 (93)	85 (97)	93 (99)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
402	0	0
2	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
5	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
2	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Average class size	30

Education support staff: YR– Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	289

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002/2003
	£
Total income	840,065
Total expenditure	853,850
Expenditure per pupil	2,067
Balance brought forward from previous year	45,656
Balance carried forward to next year	31,871

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	412
Number of questionnaires returned	132

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	33	5	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	58	38	2	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	44	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	45	8	4	2
The teaching is good.	66	31	0	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	44	8	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	31	2	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	34	0	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	41	46	9	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	56	38	1	2	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	40	0	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	47	8	4	11

Other issues raised by parents

- Parents at the pre-inspection meeting and those interviewed during the course of the inspection expressed satisfaction with the type and amount of homework, the information for parents, the way in which the school works with parents and the activities arranged out of school time. It was not possible therefore to gain further information as to why these areas had the highest percentages of 'disagree' replies. Inspection findings are that all four areas are very good.