

St Vincent's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111376
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	337672
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Eithne Proffitt

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	295
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Karen Pickavant
Headteacher	Mr Greg Barker
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons, observing nine teachers and also inspected the Early Years Foundation Stage. The majority of time was spent looking at learning. Meetings were held with the senior and middle leadership team, chair of governors, a representative of the local authority, staff, pupils, parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including the school improvement plan; a wide range of school policies; safeguarding procedures; records of pupils' progress including individual education plans for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the school's self-evaluation procedures and tools. Inspectors also took account of responses to questionnaires returned by 81 parents and carers and a further 17 who completed the questionnaire online, and 50 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of pupils' learning and progress in all subjects and how well their achievement prepares them for their futures
- the extent of pupils' awareness of the culturally diverse society in which they live and how this can support their understanding of the challenges faced by others in the local, national, international and global communities
- the quality of teaching and how it can sustain above average attainment
- whether teaching and the curriculum across all subjects and aspects is sufficiently robust to ensure sustained momentum and added value for all pupils
- how effectively leaders and managers at all levels contribute to the overall effectiveness of the school and whether any of the above areas for exploration impinge on the school's evaluated good capacity to improve.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average primary school, situated in the village of Penketh, Warrington. The school has very few pupils in receipt of free school meals and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. The number of pupils who enter or leave the school within each key stage is above average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and within the very small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups; there are two pupils at an early stage of learning to speak English. St. Vincent's has achieved the Healthy Schools Award, Basic Skills Quality Mark 3, BECTA and NAACE awards for information and communication technology, the Foundation Level of the International Schools Award, the Activemark for exceptional delivery of physical education and sport and the Eco-school Bronze Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. 'Raising the bar' is a key phrase in the school's vision statement and this aptly reflects the many improvements that have taken place in St. Vincent's since its last inspection. The single-minded focus that leaders have given to this vision has been instrumental in raising pupils' attainment and achievement. Their diligent work has paid off. Standards of attainment by the end of Year 6 are above average overall.

In Key Stage 1 and 2, pupils' current work and the school's own data show that the progress they are making is good, including that of more able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school gathers a wealth of data about each pupil's performance in different subjects and tracks the percentage of pupils that are on course to attain the school's overarching target for progress. Current data analysis methods, however, are not as clearly focused on the small steps of progress that pupils make over shorter periods of time.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage progress well. This is because good quality provision and effective management ensure that the children's learning, development and welfare needs are well met in a safe, secure and happy learning environment.

Pupils are very polite, welcoming and keen to show off their accomplishments including their outstanding awareness of healthy lifestyle choices. Many examples of their good quality written work and attractive artwork are displayed in classrooms and on corridors, raising pupils' self-esteem and providing motivation. They say, 'We enjoy school a lot and we feel happy and safe in here.' This is borne out by their good attitudes to learning and their consistently high attendance. A very large majority of the parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire feel the same way.

Pupils' behaviour in class and around school is good and this makes a good contribution to their learning. The occasional instance of boisterous behaviour is managed well by staff. Pupils are keen to come to school and feel very well cared for, which illustrates the positive effect the school's provision has on pupils' learning. This is further enhanced through the excellent partnerships sought by the school that promote pupils' learning and personal development very effectively, providing them with opportunities to make a positive contribution in school, the local area and beyond.

Pupils have a good understanding of their local and some global communities through their studies and the charitable work they undertake. However, despite recent efforts by the school to promote pupils' awareness and understanding of other communities that make up the cultural diversity of the United Kingdom, they have only limited experiences of working and playing alongside children who are different from those represented in their local community.

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The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. The school, alongside its own support systems, has utilised the local authority's Improving Schools Programme. Teaching is now generally good overall, with some that is outstanding. However, while teaching is regularly monitored by senior leaders, this focuses mainly on the teachers' performance rather than the impact of that on the pupils' progress within the lessons. Again, there are missed opportunities for teachers and leaders to pick up on the pace of each pupil's learning; to target this more effectively and to ultimately further extend all pupils' progress.

The curriculum is currently under review and is satisfactory overall. It supports pupils' learning in the basic skills very well as reflected in their above average attainment. The organisation of other subjects is under development and, while the children enjoy their topics, not all teaching and learning elements are embedded.

The headteacher is well supported by proactive governors and an increasingly strong and effective leadership team. All have a clear picture of the school's performance and take positive action to address identified areas of weakness. This concerted approach has resulted in improvement planning that is firmly focused on further raising pupils' attainment. This demonstrates well the good capacity that the school has for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and realise all pupils' potential by:
 - providing pupils with individual, accelerated progress levels for their time in Key Stage 2 that will enable each to meet their potential
 - ensuring that relevant assessment information is used consistently to set challenging tasks to meet and extend the learning needs of individual pupils in every lesson
 - ensuring that the recent positive changes to the curriculum are fully and consistently implemented
 - extending opportunities for pupils to experience the diverse cultures of society that are not represented in the community it serves.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

'The best thing about school is having fun things to do with my friends and my teacher helping me to get it right'. This comment from one of the school's youngest pupils reflects the positive attitude that is evident throughout the school. Pupils generally make good progress in lessons, responding well to the challenges set, showing good levels of engagement and sustained concentration and enjoyment. This is particularly evident where teachers set work which challenges pupils to elaborate on their thinking, extend their skills and work independently. In a few less successful lessons, however, work is not planned closely enough to move pupils' learning forward and they begin to lose interest, progress slows and, occasionally, behaviour needs correcting.

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When they begin Year 1, most pupils are working beyond the levels expected for their age. Pupils' good progress continues and by the time they leave Year 6, standards of attainment are above and sometimes well above average in all subjects and pupils are well equipped for their next stage of education. The school recognises the need to prepare pupils for the world of work and is currently exploring appropriate business and enterprise links to extend pupils' experiences of employment, education, training and technology. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as other pupils because of the good support they receive.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of the benefits of regular exercise and a healthy diet. They speak proudly of their 'homemade' school dinners and their involvement in attaining the Healthy Schools Award. They participate in a wide range of sports, with excellent take-up of sport-related extra-curricular activities. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that while they acknowledge there is occasional bullying, they are confident that it is quickly dealt with and readily name an adult to whom they would turn if they have a problem.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. While they have a growing awareness of different customs, traditions and faith groups in the world, pupils are not as well versed in understanding the contribution these groups make to their own culturally diverse society.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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How effective is the provision?

Relationships in school are good and there is an atmosphere of keenness as pupils clearly want to do well for their teachers. In the best lessons, teaching is designed to capitalise on that keenness through providing exciting, stimulating learning opportunities, incorporating modern technology. For example, pupils in a Year 1/2 class were totally captivated during a video-link with the Big Bad Wolf, effectively engaging in dialogue that became more detailed and sophisticated as the lesson progressed. Excellent progress was assured. Occasionally, where teaching is less effective, the pace of learning and progress is slow and activities are not sufficiently challenging to enable all pupils to reach their potential. Teachers use marking well to show pupils how to improve their work, although guidance as to the next steps in pupils' learning is not so clear.

Highly-skilled teaching assistants deliver intervention programmes that ensure pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in their learning. The core curriculum for English, mathematics and science is effective in supporting pupils' above average attainment and their good personal development. The delivery of other subjects is in a period of transition. Some clear links are beginning to be made between subjects to help to develop pupils' skills in a range of different contexts and bring their learning to life but this is not consistent for all pupils. The teaching of Spanish across the school adds a cultural dimension to pupils' learning that broadens their horizons. Pupils greatly enjoy the opportunities to visit places of interest that spark their enthusiasm for learning. A good range of additional activities after school adds extra interest for pupils and extends their skills.

'The school strives extremely hard to produce well-rounded individuals. They have a caring, supportive staff that listen to my concerns and those of my children and act on them.' This parental comment aptly summarises the inspection findings with regard to the care, guidance and support provided by the school. Senior leaders are keen to extend this and acknowledge that more work is to be done to provide for the wide-ranging needs of pupils who are vulnerable to a range of different influences that can affect their well-being and progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

There is a strong shared sense of responsibility and commitment among staff, which emanates from good leadership by the headteacher and senior leaders. The leadership team has a clear and shared vision of what they want pupils to accomplish. Governors support and challenge the school in equal measure and regularly visit school, monitoring its work. Leaders have brought about some considerable improvements since the last inspection, particularly in raising attainment and achievement across all key stages; improving the achievement of more able pupils and not least in extending the role and effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels. The headteacher has ensured that senior leaders have the skills to monitor and evaluate the work of the school and this has brought about a sharp focus on assessing pupils' movement towards the school's overarching single target for achievement. This single measure of expected progress, however, does not allow for the varied capabilities of individual pupils.

With support from the local authority, the school has been successful in improving the quality of teaching and learning which is now good overall. This priority continues through scrutiny of pupils' work and lesson observations. Formats for lesson observations are under review. However, current formats are more heavily focused on teaching rather than on the contribution this makes to the pace of progress for individual pupils.

The school is a harmonious community and has a good reputation in the local area. Discrimination is not tolerated. Links further afield are developing, and the school's International Award recognises pupils' research about different countries. However, evaluation of the impact of provision for community cohesion is at an early stage.

Safeguarding procedures are securely in place. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are appropriate and child protection arrangements are secure and updated regularly. All staff have a comprehensive knowledge of processes and procedures and receive regular training. Consequently, all pupils know that they are safe in school.

The school involves parents and carers well in their children's learning and they feel they can approach any member of staff for help and support. Outstanding partnerships with external agencies and providers ensure an extended range of provision and services and increased pupil enjoyment, confidence and self-esteem. These partnerships are also supporting the school in its drive to promote and provide equality of opportunity for all pupils.

The school uses its budget and other resources efficiently to enhance its provision and ensure good outcomes for its pupils. As a result, it provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<p>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning</p>	<p>3</p>

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in the Reception class with levels of skills and knowledge expected for their age, with a good proportion of children beyond this. Good links with the considerable number of pre-schools and in-house assessment tools, help staff to build up a clearer picture of the children's starting points. Children quickly settle into routines, behave appropriately and play well with each other. Recent changes to the leadership, management and staffing of the Early Years Foundation Stage has resulted in the setting needing some time for new staff and systems to be embedded into practice. However, profiles, assessment information and observations indicate that the children are currently making good progress towards the early learning goals across all the different areas of learning. The school has ambitious plans for the outdoor areas. In the interim, management and practitioners are carefully considering how best the school can develop the outdoor curriculum so that it provides exciting, large-scale activities to promote excitement and engagement across all the areas of learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about the school. In particular, there were a significant number of

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complimentary comments about the quality of the care, support and encouragement that pupils are given and the approachability and hard work of the headteacher and the staff, teaching and non-teaching. Comments include: 'St. Vincent's has given my children a love of learning' and 'the staff are friendly and approachable – always with an attitude that no problem is too small to sort out'. The inspectors found no reason to disagree with these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Vincent's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 98 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 295 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	69	70	26	27	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	71	72	26	27	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	55	56	40	41	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	53	54	35	36	10	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	53	54	41	42	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	59	60	36	37	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	56	57	41	42	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	47	48	39	40	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	51	52	42	43	3	3	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	49	50	39	40	7	7	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	44	49	50	4	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	62	63	32	33	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	62	35	36	0	0	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



18 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Vincent's Catholic Primary School, Warrington, WA5 2PN

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and listening to what you had to say. We agree with you when you say yours is a good school!

These are the main things we found out when we visited you:

- you and your teachers have worked hard to make sure that by Year 6, you attain above and sometimes well above average standards in English, mathematics and science
- you are taught well and your teachers are working hard to make sure that your lessons are interesting and that you make good progress
- it is good to know you are very happy with the way all the adults look after you, care for you and help you to feel safe in school
- your headteacher leads the school very well and all the staff and governors work well together in a strong team.

To help your school to improve even further, we have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to do the following:

- take time to understand how clever you are and just how much you are capable of achieving
- make sure that you make better progress in lessons by encouraging your teachers to think about how you are learning and to point you in the right direction to make that learning even better
- ensure that your topic lessons are really exciting and help you to learn lots of new things really well
- broaden your experiences of how people from different cultures live and work together by extending links beyond the area where you live.

You, too, can help your school by continuing to be the best that you can be!

Thank you once again for being so kind and friendly – we really enjoyed seeing you at work and play!

Yours sincerely

Mrs Eithne Proffitt

Lead inspector

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