



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Inspection Report



Name of School: St Vincent Catholic School

LEA: Barking and Dagenham

Inspection Date: 29th November 2017

Reporting Inspector: Pamela Brannigan

This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of School: Primary
School Category: Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils: 4 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 234
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: October 2012

School Address:
Burnside Road
Dagenham
Essex
RM8 2JN

Tel. No. 020 82706695
Headteacher: Mrs C. Scott
Chair of Governors: Mr P. Salisbury

Information about the school

St Vincent's Catholic Primary School is one form entry in the London borough of Barking and Dagenham and part of the diocese of Brentwood. It serves the parishes of St Vincent's Becontree and St Thomas More. There are currently 234 pupils aged 4-11 on roll and the school is over subscribed. The proportion of Catholic pupils is 93%. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with the largest number being Black African who form 46% of the total. A number speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average. The school is an active member of a diocesan partnership with other Catholic primary and secondary schools.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires Improvement 4: Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Vincent's is an outstanding Catholic school. It has a strong Catholic ethos which is at the heart of all it does. Outcomes for pupils are good and the provision for Catholic education and the capacity for sustained improvement are excellent. Opportunities for spiritual and moral development are part of religious education and the wider curriculum. Pupils are given many opportunities to understand what it means to be part of a Catholic community through opportunities for prayer and worship and charitable outreach. Leaders are excellent role models and are fully committed to all aspects of the Catholic life of the school. Teachers and support staff set high expectations for pupil behaviour which is generally very good. Governors are well informed, have a range of expertise and are well placed to challenge and support. Pastoral care is given a high priority by all members of the school community at every level. Relationships within the school are good and pupils interviewed said they feel safe and well cared for. There are many opportunities to develop a wide range of interests through extracurricular activities. Parents welcome the high standard of religious education, the Catholicity of the school and the way their children's prayer life is supported and developed. Pupils' standards of attainment are in line with diocesan expectations.

The school has a very good capacity for sustained improvement. The last inspection in 2012 identified three areas for development linked to teaching, learning and assessment. These have all been well addressed and since then standards in religious education have risen for all groups. There are moderation meetings with other Catholic schools in the deanery to share judgements and further improve assessment. The school gives a high profile to religious education and provides in-house induction for new teachers as well as encouraging attendance at diocesan training.

The headteacher, her deputy and governors have a clear vision for the Catholicity of the school and the central place of prayer, worship and religious education. The headteacher ensures that all staff are given opportunities to extend their knowledge and improve their skills through staff meetings and attendance at diocesan led training. Eight teachers hold the CCRS or equivalent qualification. Governors work with the headteacher in evaluating the Catholic life of the school. The parish priest is also a governor and intends to give the same high level of commitment to the school as his predecessor. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school through frequent visits and meetings with subject leaders.

The current leadership has a very good capacity to maintain effectiveness. The experienced headteacher shows outstanding leadership of the school through the way she ensures that self-evaluation gives staff and governors an accurate understanding of itself as a Catholic community. She is very well supported by all staff. There is a clear focus on prayer and worship throughout the school. Effective systems are in place to develop and strengthen initiatives which lead to good outcomes for all groups of pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to implement the areas identified in the religious education action plan especially those linked to assessment and moderation in the light of changes anticipated in the coming year.

Outcomes for pupils are very good. From a low beginning, pupils make good progress year on year so that by the end of Year 6 attainment reaches diocesan expectations. All lessons observed during the inspection were good or outstanding and pupils worked with interest and commitment. Early years pupils are given an excellent start with a focus on religious vocabulary and a wide range of cross curricular activities. Older pupils have access to class sets of bibles which enable them to become familiar with scripture. Pupils spoken to said they like religious education and the wide range of activities offered during lessons. They work well together and have a good understanding of the liturgical year. They are also able to apply the teachings of Jesus to their own lives. Workbooks are well presented, show coverage of the curriculum and indicate good progress made by all groups. Pupils show a good level of understanding of the sacraments, Catholic teaching and moral issues appropriate to their ages. Behaviour for learning is very good and pupils are polite to adults and each other.

Pupils make a very good contribution to the Catholic life of the school. The mission statement is on display in every classroom and reviewed regularly. It is well known by pupils as are the core values of the school, Compassion, Co-operation, Perseverance, Respect and Inspiration. There are many opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities including membership of the school council, peer mediators, play leaders and buddies for Reception pupils. Pupils are given opportunities to suggest the charities they wish to support. In recent years these have included Cafod and Brentwood Catholic Children's Society as well as a Macmillan coffee morning and a Harvest festival collection for the local foodbank. They have a good understanding of the theology underpinning their actions and are encouraged to see themselves as part of a community with responsibilities for other people and the environment. They value the sense of friendship and belonging created within the school.

Prayer and worship are central to school life and have an impact on pupils' understanding of their faith and their personal, moral and spiritual development. All pupils are given opportunities to participate in assemblies, Masses and collective worship. A number of pupils are altar servers and others are readers, offertory bearers and compose bidding prayers. Each class begins the day with prayers and reflections. The centrality of the Church's liturgical year with its seasons and celebrations are leading to a good understanding of the links with the sacraments and life of Christ. This year a pupils' Chaplaincy group is learning how to lead worship, prepare for Masses and help to maintain the school's prayer garden. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 pray the Rosary in October. Each class has an attractive prayer table which includes key religious vocabulary and pupils' work. Pupils are developing the ability to pray in different ways and at different times. They use the traditional prayers of the church, meditation and their own prayers, many examples of which were seen during the inspection. The parish priest from St Vincent's is a frequent visitor to the school for a programme of Masses as well as services of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. The introduction of the 'Wednesday Word' is enabling parents and families to support their children's prayer life. As they develop, pupils are able to apply aspects of Jesus' life and teaching to their own lives and understand that a sense of service is part of being a member of a Catholic community.

Pastoral care is very good and shared by all members of staff and governors who work closely together to promote the spiritual development of pupils and the Catholic life of the community. Pupils feel safe, well cared for and know that all members of staff are there to help if they need support. Brentwood Catholic Children's Society provides counselling support for identified pupils and members of staff have been trained to support pupils through the Rainbows Bereavement Support group. Pupils value their school and all it offers. They know they are respected, listened to and encouraged to help each other. Parents speak very highly of the school, the headteacher and the care given to their children. One parent wrote, 'This school has a wonderful, caring Catholic ethos. We are so grateful that our child can come to St Vincent's.' Parents also appreciate the support the school gives to pupils through extra-curricular activities. They praise the good quality of education and are overwhelmingly positive about the support given to their children's prayer life and the commitment and approachability of staff.

Leadership is outstanding. The headteacher in partnership with the governors demonstrates excellent leadership of the school by the way she directs its Catholic identity through religious education and collective worship and prayer. She ensures one staff training day each year is devoted to religious education or the Catholic life of the school. She works closely with the local priest and parents to promote excellent relationships with home, school and parish. Staff and governors are all committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. The headteacher ensures that the School Improvement Plan gives priority to Catholic Life and religious education. The current system of self-evaluation is detailed and accurate.

The subject leader has very good knowledge of areas for development in religious education and is very well placed to support colleagues. Along with the headteacher she monitors religious education by means of lesson observations, work scrutiny and joint planning which is followed by feedback to individual teachers. Along with colleagues she attends moderating sessions with the deanery group to share good practice and discuss areas of improvement. The impact of rigorous monitoring results in good standards in religious education. The school constantly seeks to put in place strategies to give further challenge to all groups of pupils. Much emphasis is placed on staff development which includes teaching assistants who play a key role in the school.

Governors work closely with senior leadership and have a very good understanding of strengths and areas for development. They are active in their support of the Catholic ethos of the school through frequent visits and showing support for school events. They regularly review the school's aims and Mission Statement. The new link governor for religious education liaises with the headteacher and subject leader to inform herself about standards in religious education and plans for future development. The parish priest offers very good support and visits regularly to act as an additional resource in classroom religious education. Governors are able to challenge as well as support. They attend appropriate training to enable them to fulfil their role effectively.

Leaders ensure that the school is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. Diversity is celebrated and pupils are taught to respect other faiths. There are good links with other schools, both deanery and local authority run, through visits, sporting and cultural events. Opportunities for spiritual development ensure that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences. Parents are invited to all liturgical celebrations including Masses, prayer services and the annual Nativity play as well as a Christmas Carol Service which is held in the parish church. They are also kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress through termly meetings, curriculum information evenings and newsletters which enable them to support their children's education and faith journey. The school makes every effort to maintain and develop good parish links. This helps pupils, families and parishioners to see home, school and parish as one community.

Provision**Grade 1**

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. During the inspection lessons observed were good or outstanding. They are planned carefully with clear learning intentions and an excellent range of activities. The school has made a major investment in resources including class sets of bibles which are supporting pupils' understanding of scripture. Pupils benefit from the high profile given throughout the school to religious education lessons. In all classes observed pupils were engaged and made good progress. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and respond well to pupils' comments as they take every opportunity to develop understanding. Good support by teaching assistants enables all groups of pupils to make progress. This support is a feature of lessons throughout the school. Marking is positive, interactive and enables pupils to identify next steps in their learning. Good monitoring, assessment, planning and tracking support the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is outstanding. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education which follows the 'Come and See' programme supported by 'Journey in Love.' The central place of religious education in the life of the school is demonstrated by the budget devoted to it and the current level of resources. Engaging religious education displays around the school emphasise the centrality of faith to the work of the community. The curriculum enables pupils

to become aware of their responsibility for each other and their environment. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral development. Other faiths are taught well and include a visit to the local synagogue. In addition, the Imam from Becontree mosque visits to talk to pupils about aspects of Islam. The support given to families through a wide range of extra-curricular activities also gives a strong sense of community to the school. There is every indication that current high standards are likely to be maintained or improved.

Provision for prayer and worship at St Vincent's is excellent. Assemblies and liturgies are well planned and contribute greatly to pupils' spiritual development. They often include visual presentations, bible readings drama, singing and music. At the time of the inspection the headteacher led a powerful assembly linked to expectations during Advent. She described how people had expected a warrior king rather than a vulnerable baby. She did this in a way that even the youngest pupils could understand. She linked it with the way we prepare for the birth of Jesus. Pupils took part in the assembly and the school choir led very good singing. Many parents were present. Pupils are involved in collective worship several times a day in their classrooms and are given opportunities for meditation and personal reflection. Each classroom has a very attractive prayer focus with religious artefacts and display boards which include children's work. Pupils attend Mass several times a term. They prepare for this by composing bidding prayers, reading and as altar servers. Music is a strength of the school and singing is of a high standard. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to Masses and other celebrations and attendance is very high. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their knowledge of Catholic traditions through Reconciliation services during Advent and Lent, Stations of the Cross and Rosary as well as visits to the local parish church.

The inspector would like to express her thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.