



St Vincent's Catholic Primary School

The Ridgeway, Mill Hill, NW7 1EJ

Date of inspection: 2nd July 2014

A. Classroom Religious Education

What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?

Overall Grade I

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education is very good. The curriculum is well planned and meets all the diocesan requirements. Pupils' achievement in religious education is very good; by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils reach or exceed diocesan expectations. Overall teaching is very good, with some outstanding lessons. Pupils make good progress and achieve well over time. Teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils, regularly praising as well as challenging pupils to go further in their thinking through excellent use of questioning. High quality displays within classrooms and in corridors make a significant contribution to learning. There is a very strong culture of regular marking of religious education books. The leadership and management of religious education is outstanding. The subject leader for religious education has a clear vision for the curriculum and has been exemplary in leading the moderation of pupil work within the school as well as at a deanery level. The subject leader has an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school and has made significant progress in raising achievement across the school.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?

Overall Grade I*

The school is outstanding in its effectiveness in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing. Religious education is valued and generously resourced and thus has a very high status in the school. The experience of Catholic worship is outstanding; Mass and daily prayer lie at the heart of the school experience for pupils and staff. Teachers ensure that pupils experience high quality acts of worship; there are very clear links made between Scripture and the everyday life. The commitment and contribution to the Common Good is outstanding; the example of St Vincent has a strong influence in the life of the school. Pupils excel in taking responsibility to care for others by supporting charities. The school's key relationships with parents, parishes and the diocese are outstanding. The school enjoys very high levels of support from parents. The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The headteacher has a passionate commitment to achieving the best for every pupil in her school "the love of Christ urges us to care for each other and to strive for excellence". The governors of the school make a significant contribution to ensuring St Vincent is a continually improving Catholic school.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent 1 day in school, visited 8 lessons, engaged in learning walks and 3 assemblies, and carried out 5 interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St Vincent's Catholic Primary School, Barnet was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Cardinal. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

Inspection Team

Mr Matthew Dell	Lead Inspector
Miss Joy Mowat	Associate Inspector

Description of School

St Vincent's is a 1½ form entry school in the LA of Barnet and the locality of Mill Hill. The school serves mainly parishes of Sacred Heart and Mary Immaculate, Mill Hill and St Anthony's, Edgware. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 98%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 2% and from Other Faiths 0%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 87%.

There are 323 pupils on roll, with 9 pupils with statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is above average. There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals. 48 of pupils are entitled to receive the Pupil Premium.

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Headteacher:	Ms Marie Tuohy
Chair of Governors:	Mr Tony McGrath

Date of previous inspection:	23 rd June 2008
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Key for inspection grades:

<i>Grade 1*</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Very Good</i>
<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Good</i>
<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Requires improvement</i>
<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Causing Concern</i>

A. Classroom Religious Education

How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?

What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?

At the last inspection, the school was asked to improve the induction of new staff to the religious education schemes of work. This issue has been addressed very successfully. The subject leader has been proactive in arranging appropriate guidance to new members of staff, as well as providing a comprehensive ongoing programme of support. The school was also asked to continue to develop assessment for learning in religious education. This issue has also been addressed successfully as seen in lesson observations. For example in a lesson on the Kingdom of God the teacher ensured that one of the key learning objectives had been understood by pupils before moving on to the next task.

How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?

Grade 1

The content of classroom religious education fully meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. The school uses a combination of the 'The Way, The Truth and the Life' and units written by Margaret Carswell as a basis for the religious education curriculum. To further develop pupils' understanding of the demands of Catholic social teaching, resources from CAFOD also supplement the content of the curriculum. The four areas of the Curriculum Directory are mapped effectively by the subject leader for religious education and progression of knowledge and understanding is effectively planned for. Staff are confident in using the Curriculum Directory and as a result lesson planning is very thorough. The implementation of the curriculum in the classroom engages pupils very well as it matches accurately pupils' needs. Resources are imaginative and shared effectively among the staff to support the curriculum effectively. Teaching of other faiths is carefully planned and resourced, for instances, speakers from the Jewish Museum and also the local Mosque gave presentations to pupils.

Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education

Grade 1

Pupil achievement, attainment and progress in religious education are very good. The school's own assessment procedures are robust and very thorough. Both internal and external moderation of pupil work is used to ensure judgements are accurate. Teachers are becoming more confident in using the Diocesan Agreed Levels of Understanding and as such there is greater precision in assessing pupils' progress. Pupil achievement has been maintained over the last three years with a rise in the number of pupils achieving Level 2 at the end of Key Stage 1 and Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2. Assessment opportunities are built into lesson planning and in lessons observed pupils were actively engaged in their learning. Pupils had very positive attitudes to learning in religious education and demonstrated a very secure understanding of how well they are doing. At all levels across the school pupils' work in exercise books is very neat and it is clear that pupils take great pride in their work. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils reach or exceed diocesan expectations.

The quality of teaching

Grade I

Overall teaching is very good; it is consistently good, with some outstanding lessons. Teachers' planning is very good with robust learning objectives that encourage pupils to make very good progress. Behaviour for learning is very good in lessons; pupils have excellent learning habits that ensure that lessons run smoothly. Teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils, regularly praising as well as challenging pupils to go further in their thinking through excellent use of questioning. In a lesson on moral dilemmas, the teacher's skilful use of questioning pushed pupils to justify their ideas by making links to the teaching of Jesus. Pupils have very positive attitudes about their experience in religious education lessons; they enjoy the subject. In a lesson on the church as a place of worship, excellent use was made of 'Godly play' to develop and reinforce pupil's knowledge and understanding. ('Godly play' is an approach to religious education that encourages pupils to create narratives through playing with objects that link to religious themes.)

Outstanding lessons were characterised by teachers demonstrating strong subject knowledge and confidence which inspired pupils. In a lesson on how to follow the example of Jesus, the teacher executed an exciting plenary that involved a deep period of reflection that culminated with the pupils actually planting seeds in the school grounds. In an excellent starter activity, pupils were given time to reflect on what it would feel like to work for the Kingdom of God, this reflection enabled pupils to make rapid progress as well as providing a very good opportunity for spiritual development. High quality displays within classrooms and in corridors make a significant contribution to learning. In an observed lesson on the Kingdom of God, the display was used to reinforce the learning objectives, as well as a forum for celebrating pupil work. Where teaching was less effective, the pace of learning slowed due to overly long teacher instruction.

There is a very strong culture of regular marking of religious education books. The school has developed a new system of response marking, in which teachers' feedback to pupils is often in a question that challenges the pupil to go further in their learning. Many pupils respond positively to the feedback; however this needs to be consistent as some pupils are not always making a response.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade I*

The leadership and management of religious education is outstanding. The leadership of religious education, Governors, headteacher and subject leader, are all committed to delivering and achieving high standards so that pupils achieve the best that they can. As a result religious education has a very high profile in the school and staff benefit from excellent support. The subject leader for religious education has a clear vision for the curriculum and has been exemplary in leading the moderation of pupil work within the school as well as at a deanery level. A significant strength of religious education is the systems and processes that ensure teachers make accurate judgements about pupil work. The diocese has utilised this strength to support other local schools as well as assist in the professional development of diocesan officers. Teachers have improved their confidence in assessing pupil work and now need to challenge pupils to achieve the higher levels. There is a strong culture of monitoring the quality of teaching and pupil progress; staff have been observed regularly and given detailed feedback to support their continuing professional development. The subject leader has an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school and has made significant progress in raising achievement across the school. For example, the innovative 'Godly play' has been successfully introduced in the school to support the curriculum.

What should the school do to improve further in classroom religious education?

- Further develop the new system of response marking, so that all pupils routinely respond to teacher feedback, in order for all pupils to make rapid progress.
- Further develop teachers' confidence in applying the agreed levels of understanding in order that pupils are challenged to achieve higher levels of learning

B. The Catholic life of the school

How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last inspection, the school was not given any improvement issues to do with the Catholic life of the school. Since the last inspection a number of key areas have been developed. The school has continued to embed the school's mission statement so that pupils, staff and parents are very familiar with it. The liturgical life of the school has been enriched with the development of phase (e.g. upper key stage) collective worship where pupils gather to pray and reflect on the Sunday Gospel reading.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget

Grade I*

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum is outstanding. The school meets the requirements for pupils to receive the weekly entitlement of 10% curriculum time. The budget for the department is very generous in relation to other core departments. The subject has an excellent profile in the school as seen in the quantity and quality of religious education displays, as well as the time devoted to staff religious education training needs. Every classroom has a prayer corner that is of a high quality and some are very interactive showing that they are used effectively. The leadership team and governors provide excellent support and guidance to the development of religious education and ensure that it has a high status in the school.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community.

Grade I*

The experience of Catholic worship is outstanding; it has a very strong impact on the pupils' spiritual and moral development. Mass is central to the experience offered to the pupils; there is a programme of class Masses as well as whole school Masses, although there needs to be one scheduled for the spring term. The local parish church is used as an excellent resource for the regular class Masses. Pupils participate in all Masses by reading and singing. Parents are welcomed to Masses as well as class assemblies. Pupils are offered regular opportunities to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation which has high levels of take up.

Prayer lies at the heart of the school for pupils and staff. Pupils have a strong understanding of the importance of the prayer life of the school. The tradition of praying is very well embedded as a daily core experience for pupils: in the morning, before lunch, after lunch and at the end of the day. Pupils' experience of prayer reflects the full range of the richness of the Catholic tradition of prayer and worship; from traditional prayers such as the rosary to spontaneous prayer and meditations, although there is more scope for silent prayer. There were some outstanding examples of morning prayer time; pupils were confidently making prayer requests which the teacher was skilfully able to qualify and enhance so that pupils could focus effectively. In assemblies pupils experience high quality acts of worship; there are very clear links made between Scripture and the everyday life; pupils take an active role in preparing class assemblies as well as leading them. An assembly on the Kingdom of God was characterised by high levels of pupil engagement and reverence; the teacher leading the act

of worship used Scripture with precision to help pupils make connections from Jesus' parables to their lives. To further develop opportunities for spiritual development pupils would benefit from having a retreat day.

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice.

Grade I*

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good is outstanding. The school is committed to the legacy and tradition of the Daughters of Charity who founded this Vincentian school and thus 'caring for others' is at the core of the school. The example of St Vincent de Paul has a high profile in the school and the recent DVD made with the Daughters of Charity and the Diocesan Director for Vocations is an excellent testimony to the school's commitment to continue the work of St Vincent. The school communicates a very good understanding of the call to human flourishing and provides an excellent range of opportunities for pupils to develop and celebrate their gifts and talents as individuals and as a community. The school has a successful chaplaincy group that ensures that pupils are actively involved in taking responsibility for liturgical celebration and prayer. Pupils are actively encouraged to take the initiative and are well supported in their service to others. For example pupils will take responsibility for organising the cake sales, selling bracelets, running 'shops' to raise money for charities such as the local children's hospice Noah's Ark, CAFOD, The Passage and Save the Children, they also sing carols for the local care home. Lent and Advent are times when the pupils are encouraged to serve others and through the liturgies given the rationale for why this is a core activity for Christians. The school has a very strong partnership with Thigio Primary School in Kenya, which fosters in pupils a deep respect for other peoples' culture. There have been exchange visits between teachers that have led to joint curriculum projects that complement charity work.

Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf;

Grade I*

The school's key relationships with parents, parishes, other Catholic schools and the Diocese are outstanding. The school enjoys very high levels of support from parents; this was clearly evident in the responses to diocesan parent questionnaire sent out earlier in the year. There is good communication with parents; regular newsletters for parents as well as the Wednesday Word (a weekly sheet that is a resource of reflections and activities based around the Sunday readings) help engage parents in the life of the school. There is a vibrant parent teacher association and parents are welcomed to liturgies and celebrations throughout the year. The school works very successfully with two main feeder parishes. The local clergy are very supportive of the school through saying Mass and hearing confessions. There are excellent links with the local convent, the Daughters of Charity are the schools' neighbours and as such there is a lot of meaningful contact. There are good links with local Catholic primary schools; the headteacher regularly meets with other headteachers. There are very good links between staff and diocesan officers, as the school is used by the diocese as an example of excellent practice with regard to levelling and to support the training of diocesan officers as well as other local Catholic schools. There are very good levels of attendance at diocesan meetings and the school fully implements diocesan guidance and policies.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school.

Grade I*

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The headteacher is held in very high regard by the pupils and she has communicated successfully a passion and commitment to achieving the best for every pupil in her school. The mission statement is very visible in the school, “The love of Christ urges us, to care for each other and strive for excellence in everything we do”, and it is at the heart of the school and a clear driving force. The school improvement plan prioritises the importance of religious education. There are excellent systems for induction of new staff into the Catholic life of the school. The staff pilgrimage is significant feature that provides excellent opportunities to enrich staff understanding of the Catholic life of the school. The staff are excellent role models for pupils, living out the mission in their daily lives; the impact can be seen in the outstanding behaviour of pupils in the school. The governors of the school make a strong contribution to ensuring St Vincent’s is an outstanding Catholic school. They take very seriously their responsibility to safeguard and promote the Catholic life of the school. The governors have high levels of expertise and use this to support and challenge the school to continue to improve. The governors have a very good understanding of the place and importance of religious education as the core of the curriculum.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- To further develop opportunities for spiritual development for pupils by having a retreat day.