



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for
St Vincent De Paul Catholic Primary School

URN: 117498

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archdiocese of Westminster on:

Date: 02-03 March 2023

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The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- Provides effective support and inclusion to its most vulnerable pupils.
- Offers varied experiences and opportunities for prayer, particularly through pupil-led worship.
- Develops religious literate pupils who are confident in sharing their knowledge and understanding of the faith.
- Shares its faith-filled joy and energy with its local and wider communities.
- Provides bespoke support for staff which enables them to develop the skills necessary for the teaching of religious education.

What the school needs to improve:

- Continue to support pupils in their understanding of the principles underpinning Catholic Social Teaching.
- Ensure that high expectations are consistent in every class to enable pupils of all abilities to fully express their learning in religious education.
- Develop feedback for all pupils across the school that is regular, consistent and challenging so that pupils know how to improve their work in religious education.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1



Pupils feel a strong identity to the values and ethos of their school and are proud to live out its mission: 'We are called to be the hands and face of Jesus, as we learn, love and grow together.' They are guided and nurtured to become confident learners and they clearly flourish under the care they receive. They are inspired by the charisma of St Vincent de Paul and they immerse themselves in the Catholic life of the school, gladly embracing their personal responsibility to help others. One pupil remarked, 'God called us to be His hands and face, like in our mission statement.' Through the school's pupil parliament, pupils are regularly involved in serving others through supporting local food banks and charities such as the Catholic Children's Society, Cafod, and partner charities in Uganda. Pupils are very respectful of each other, and they value difference and are taught to support the most vulnerable in their community. They regularly interact with members of The Red Shed (a neighbouring organisation for adults living with dementia) and help them by completing gardening tasks for them. Members of the school parliament nominate their peers for the 'common good ambassador award' when they notice those pupils who demonstrate 'a heart that sees'. Pupils would benefit from further support in gaining a deeper understanding and articulation of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching which underpin their actions.

Pupils are able to sign and say the school's mission statement as a prayer. One staff member observed that 'the pupils are immersed in their mission statement and live it with a tangible passion.' There is a lived sense of community, a welcoming approach to various cultures and belief traditions and a striving to be exceptionally supportive to all members of the community. The school actively supports the Syro Malabar (Keralan) Catholic community by sharing its premises for the group's pastoral functions. The provision for relationships, sex and health education is carefully planned to ensure that it is firmly rooted in the teachings of the Church. The school environment

strongly witnesses to its Catholic character. Sacred spaces are created both indoors and outdoors, inviting pupils to pause for prayer and reflection. The 'Be Spirited' Lenten initiative provides ten prayer stations exploring Gospel themes on a three year cycle." Relationships between staff and between staff and pupils are excellent. All staff are positive role models. There is a commitment to vulnerable pupils, and additional adults are highly effective in supporting them. Each class has a beautiful display which celebrates pupils' growing and learning in faith, inspiring the pupils, and contributing to their formation in human flourishing.

There is a tangible commitment by leaders to develop the Catholic life of the school. Governors are fully involved and are articulate, passionate and ambitious for the future of the school. They are ready to offer highly-effective challenge, as well as support, in strategic matters. The link-governor for religious education ably supports the school in its development through regular monitoring visits. Leaders and governors care deeply about offering the best possible education to their pupils. There is a dynamic partnership with the diocese through attending training opportunities and deanery meetings, and accessing advice, policies and new initiatives. There is a flourishing partnership between the school and its parish. An example of this is when the school recently hosted other Catholic schools for a day of spirituality focused on welcoming the relics of St Bernadette to the parish. There are excellent links with the parents who share the leaders' commitment. One parent commented, 'The school is a dynamic and diverse school which promotes the Catholic mission in the children and families where faith and action go together.' The head teacher's newsletter is brimming with information for parents about Catholic life. Twitter is also used as an effective social media tool for information and communication. The head teacher and RE subject leader offer the highest pastoral care for staff. One staff member appreciatively remarked, 'The individuality of each member of our community is welcomed, respected and nurtured. Everyone belongs here.'

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

Pupil outcomes

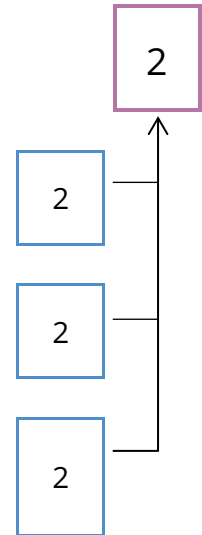
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....



Carefully-planned, creative and engaging activities ensure that pupils enjoy their learning in religious education. As a result, behaviour in lessons is good. Pupil responses in lessons demonstrate that they are developing secure knowledge and understanding of the subject. They are able to use subject-specific vocabulary in their responses. A bespoke curriculum connecting the strands of scripture, teaching, worship and life enables them to spiritually reflect on their learning in the subject. In a Year 6 class, the use of a visualiser was used to model and display a pupil's work in order to help pupils evaluate and improve their learning. However, more regular opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work are needed so that they have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve. Pupils often refer to Bible stories from prior learning in discussion and can use Bible references to quickly locate scripture passages. Pupils are able to work successfully, both collaboratively and independently in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are supported in their learning by differentiated tasks which enable them to succeed. In Reception class, children can confidently speak about their learning over time, and are able to recall the characters and stories of the Annunciation and the Nativity. Pupils' achievement in religious education is good when compared with other core subjects.

Teachers are committed to the value of religious education and they communicate this effectively during lessons. Leaders provide regular, high-quality professional development for all staff. The head teacher and religious education subject leader are committed to developing teachers' skills in the subject and the Foundation Stones diocesan course is helping teachers to develop their subject knowledge. In the best lessons, teachers use questions skillfully, adapting tasks to lead pupils to a better understanding of their faith. Pupils would now benefit from greater consistency in the use of

probing questioning during lessons to extend pupils' understanding and encourage deeper learning. Adults supporting pupils with the highest level of need enable the most vulnerable pupils to achieve learning success. Pupils are able to express their learning in a variety of creative tasks in art, music, technology and drama. Good quality resources are provided for use in lessons (Bibles, online resources, Chrome books). Pupils' achievements in RE are celebrated in classroom displays and shared through the school's Twitter/Instagram feeds, as well as the weekly Pupil Post.

Leaders and governors ensure that the curriculum is fully aligned to the *Religious Education Directory* and that it provides progression and is effectively planned to meet the needs of all pupils. Religious education enjoys a parity with other core subjects. Professional development, resources and accommodation are generously supported. Senior leaders share plans and policies with governors so that monitoring, review and evaluation informs decisions and promotes development. A staff member noted that 'senior leaders are ambitious in their approach and are constantly seeking to improve and innovate.' The subject leader for religious education has a clear vision for teaching and learning in the subject. She gives generously of her time to provide targeted support to teachers to enable them to deliver the curriculum effectively. The use of coaching, regular planning sessions and continued professional development in developing skills, strategies, creative resources and engaging activities helps teachers to ensure good outcomes for their pupils. Individualised tasks have been developed for use with pupils with specific learning needs.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement

grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

.....

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

.....

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

.....

1

Prayer and worship are at the heart of the school. There are a number of engaging, innovative and creative experiences offered to the pupils for prayer. Pupils have a detailed understanding of the wide variety of ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition. Pupils in Year 1 can confidently recite the Hail Mary. The Hail Mary is written in Tagalog in Year 3's classroom prayer book. Pupils enjoy full participation in prayer and are given ample opportunities to plan, lead and evaluate classroom worship, as evidenced in their classroom worship files. Pupils show reverence and respect during class prayer times and enjoy singing a wide repertoire of hymns. The liturgical year is expressed through the prayer life of the school. Weekly assemblies focus on the richness of the Gospel message and the mission it inspires. The school offers its pupils many different spaces to pray. In the 'prayer posting' areas throughout the school, pupils are prompted to leave prayer intentions. Their written responses are reflective, heartfelt and inspiring. The sleeping St Joseph statue, an initiative inspired by the words of Pope Francis, encourages pupils to leave their worries under the statue: 'Place your worry or special intention with St Joseph. While he sleeps, he will listen to your words.' Following pupil voice suggestions, the Marian area has become a focus for praying for peace in the Ukraine. Outdoor prayer areas such as the Marian Shrine, Prayer Garden, Lenten Lines Shed and the Wellbeing Walk allow pupils to grow spiritually as they appreciate the wonders of Creation. Scripture is always used as a focus during prayer and pupils are encouraged to 'listen to, learn from and live by the Word of God'. A member of staff commented, our 'Prayer life is truly amazing and provides the whole community with time to reflect and celebrate in a manner of different ways.'

The centrality of prayer is evident in all areas of school life. Pupils have a good knowledge of the daily prayers and there is a planned progression of prayer as pupils move through the school. Each

class has a designated prayer area, reflective of the liturgical season, with symbols of the faith used to engage and inspire pupils (Bible, cross, candle and crucifix). The use of Scripture enhances the school's prayer life and deepens pupils' spiritual experiences. Music is carefully integrated with prayer to reinforce and heighten the richness of worship in both classroom liturgies and assemblies. In Nursery, pupils formed a circle to sing 'Lent time is purple time'. They then reviewed the promises on their Lenten promise tree and were able to dance and sing with actions, 'I will make you fishers of men'. Pupils attend Mass on a rota basis at the nearby St Joseph's Church. A Year 3 pupil stated that 'We go to Mass to feel the love of God.' Another pupil describes one of the purposes of attending Mass 'to celebrate the Gospel of Our Lord'. The parish priests are frequent visitors to the school to support pupils' spiritual growth and practice of the faith. The school promotes an excellent partnership with its parents who are invited to attend Mass and special celebrations. Staff, including senior leaders, are exemplary models to other staff and pupils. They are confident in planning and leading prayer and worship. In assembly, they join the pupils as active participants in singing and praying. During the head teacher's Gospel assembly, Titian's 1560 painting, 'Transfiguration' was chosen to inspire pupils. One parent commented, 'My children are always talking about God, Jesus, RE lessons and saying prayers, so I know that it is taught well in the school.' Another parent remarked, 'The senior leadership team and all staff work in harmony to strengthen all children's understanding of Catholic life.'

Leaders, including governors, place the highest priority on the spiritual formation of staff, parents and pupils. There are policies on collective worship and spirituality. There is a planned school calendar and timetable based on the liturgical year. Leaders and governors have a thorough understanding of the Church's liturgical documents, such as the Lectionary and the Missal. The school is well-supported by the parish priests and pupils have frequent opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist on holy days and through a rota of class Masses. Pupils from all faith backgrounds benefit from the flourishing parish-school partnership. The school offers the opportunity to celebrate the charism of St Vincent de Paul annually in September through a week's focus on his life and legacy. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered during Advent and Lent. One pupil observed, 'when we sin, we take a step away from God' and suggested that 'we can go to Reconciliation' to restore the relationship with God. Leaders support staff to plan and lead experiences of prayer through school policies, ongoing training, documentation (Catholicism Unpacked, the Order of Mass) and online resources. The religious education link governor works closely with senior leaders to evaluate provision and offer termly feedback to governors. In addition, provision is monitored through regular pupil voice feedback and parent surveys. There is a generous budget allocation to develop high-quality, varied and engaging experiences of prayer and liturgy. Parents commented on the priority prayer is given in the life of the school: 'My son enjoys telling us about his worship time' and 'Even the first Nursery meeting starts with a prayer for parents.' A staff member observed, 'There is a vibrant rhythm to worship and prayer.'

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	117498
Full postal address of the school	Bedwell Crescent, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 1NJ
School phone number	01438 729 555
Name of head teacher or principal	Jonathan White
Chair of governing board	John Sloan
School Website	http://www.stvincent.herts.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Westminster
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	26 May 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Norah Flatley	Lead inspector
Aisling Willis	Team inspector
Patricia O'Donnell	Team inspector
Paul Higginson	Team inspector

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement