

St Vincent's Catholic Primary School

URN: 145325

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Northampton

03–04 October 2024

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

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

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- All areas for improvement outlined in the previous diocesan inspection report have been addressed in full.

What the school does well

- Leaders, including governors, work conscientiously to ensure St Vincent's is an inclusive environment where the whole school community embodies its vision of 'Growing in faith: loving and learning together with Jesus.'
- Pupils are religiously literate and proud to discuss their learning in religious education.
- The centrality of prayer and liturgy in the school encourages pupils to have respect for one another and to take responsibility for their actions.
- Leaders' and governors' self-evaluation is an honest and accurate reflection of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- The leadership of religious education is outstanding in developing systems for analysing and monitoring provision, challenging staff to deliver positive outcomes for pupils.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase opportunities for pupils to demonstrate independence and creativity in religious education in order to challenge their thinking.
- Strengthen pupil voice in the school to promote a wider range of actions in response to the demands of Catholic social teaching.
- Enable pupils to carefully plan a range of prayer and liturgy experiences which expose them to a variety of ways of praying.

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

Pupil outcomes

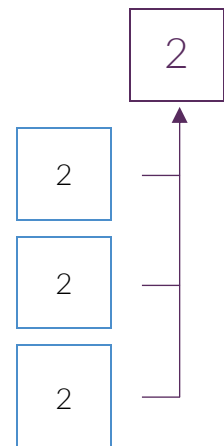
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

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

Leadership

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



The mission of St Vincent's, 'Growing in faith: loving and learning together with Jesus', is central to the school's ethos and vision. Pupils know and understand it and can give examples of how it helps them in their daily lives. One pupil explained that, 'It shows us Jesus is always with us.' The mission statement is displayed throughout the school and supports the school's integration of Catholic virtues. During the inspection, the virtue explored was 'love' and a pupil was able to articulate how the virtue of 'love' was shown in the break-time when pupils helped others to join in various playground games. Pupils were able to articulate how the school's mission supports their faith. Encouraging pupils to have a strong and active voice to share ideas will support putting this faith into action. The pupils enjoy activities such as picking up litter around the school in response to their understanding of stewardship and are now eager to do more to support social action. Pupils know how this can be achieved, for example suggesting a 'switching off lights campaign' in response to their learning around Pope Francis' encyclical, 'Laudato Si.' Pupils recognise that Christ is at the centre of their school, explaining, 'Even in our hard times, we have Jesus in our heart – if you're sad, God is still there, you aren't alone.'

St Vincent's is a welcoming and inclusive school where staff ensure that pupils feel valued. There is a clear commitment to supporting the most vulnerable. Pupils see staff as positive role models and explained that 'teachers lead us on the right path by teaching us about God's love,' and 'they ask us to reflect on what we can do to make the world a better place.' The school provides opportunities for the pupils to take on leadership roles within the school, for example, prayer pals, school council, faith ambassadors and the newly formed Mini Vinnies. Opportunities are also provided for pupils to participate in activities that reflect the mission and ethos of the school, for example, visiting the local care home, welcoming grandparents to prayer and worship for

'Silver Sunday' and supporting charities such as the local foodbank, Cafod and Caritas. A comment from the staff survey revealed that, 'Relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils are warm, positive and supportive.' The school has recently appointed a chaplain to support opportunities for engaging the pupils in responding to the demands of Catholic social teaching and, although pupils are active participants, encouraging them to use their voice more proactively will enhance this provision even further.

Leaders and governors are well informed about the Catholic life of the school and take an active part in monitoring and self-evaluation activities. They seek the views of pupils, parents and staff in carrying out self-evaluation and have regular reviews. As a result, the school's self-evaluation document is an accurate reflection of the school's strengths and areas for development. The provision for relationships, sex and health education meets all requirements and is faithful to the teachings of the Church. Leaders and governors recognise the importance of developing new leaders as well as ensuring support is in place for new staff. Leaders work hard to develop links with the parish and wider community – parents and parishioners are invited to liturgical events and links have been made with the local care home through visits from the choir and faith ambassadors. A comment from the parent survey stated, 'I am pleased that worship, prayer and the Catholic faith are central to the life of the school.'

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

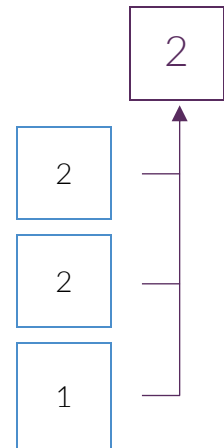
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Pupils enjoy their learning in religious education and are religiously literate. In lessons where they are given the opportunity to challenge their thinking, they are enthusiastic in sharing their ideas and can reflect on prior learning, supported by the school's 'flashback three in RE.' For example, in a lesson discussing a life of mission, pupils were able to refer to inspirational people they had previously learnt about, such as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr, referring to them standing up for people's rights through peaceful protest. Pupils also recognised the mission of their own parents - 'My mum's mission is to take care of me and be faithful to God'. Pupils were also able to link the qualities of a life of mission to those described in St Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Enabling pupils to become increasingly independent, with less teacher direction, as well as the inclusion of more creative religious education lessons in art, drama and music will enhance outcomes across the school and provide greater challenge to the pupils. The best examples of creativity seen during the inspection involved role-playing a baptism and hands-on experiences in continuous provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A good example of pupils showing independence was a lesson on 'Laudato Si' which promoted discussion and interaction between pupils who had to give their own opinions and reasons for and against buying cheap t-shirts. Increasing opportunities such as these will further develop pupils' critical thinking. Pupils learn about other faiths and invite parents to come in and share their own faith backgrounds with pupils.

RE teaching is generally good. Where practice is strongest, expectations are high and teacher subject knowledge is strong. Where practice is less effective, classroom discussions were less focused, with learning time and opportunities missed and questioning which did not encourage pupils to think for themselves. In some lessons, pupils were heavily directed by the teacher and not given adequate time to reflect on their thoughts. Pupils' work in books is good and there are

some excellent examples where pupils have been challenged to explain how believers show actions in everyday life and how they can link scripture to behaviour. Questions such as, 'Why should Catholics care about climate change?' invited independent thought and reflection. Pupils understand and value the school's approach to marking and feedback and enjoy the opportunity given to share good examples of their work. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and data suggests they are making good progress.

The leadership of religious education by the headteacher is outstanding. There is an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the subject area and this ensures that staff subject knowledge is kept up-to-date through regular training and detailed, informative class subject information files which provide staff with all relevant information regarding the teaching of religious education. As a result, all staff can participate fully and contribute effectively in their roles. The school works collaboratively with the diocese to ensure they are up to date with the latest curriculum developments of the *Religious Education Directory*. Leaders and governors use a range of evidence sources to evaluate the quality of religious education including pupil voice, observations, data analysis and the expertise of external advisors. Leaders ensure that religious education is coherently planned, in line with diocesan expectations, and that it revisits and builds on prior learning. Training has taken place on adaptive teaching and a range of support is available for lower attaining pupils to access the curriculum. Leaders have acknowledged that training is needed to develop a greater consistency across the school in providing challenge for pupils to reach greater depth in religious education.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

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

2

2

Pupils and staff at St Vincent's respond with enthusiasm to being part of a prayerful and inclusive community. Pupils enjoy participating in acts of worship and are becoming increasingly accustomed to playing a role in planning and preparing for it. Prayer and liturgy observed during the inspection was well planned according to the liturgical year and, with growing expertise, pupils are encouraged to use creatively scripture, silence, reflection and music. Pupils are respectful and engage reverently in prayer. This begins in the early years where song and action are used to engage pupils in learning the sign of the cross and where they begin to learn class prayers and the school's mission statement. Older pupils are encouraged to read from scripture and explain why they have chosen particular readings. In the Celebration assembly observed during the inspection, a pupil explained that they had chosen a reading with a link to the school focus on the virtue of love, and because they wanted everyone to know that 'God's love never stops.' Newly elected 'prayer pals' deliver opportunities for prayer and liturgy at lunchtimes and staff understand the need for supporting pupils in developing a structure to these sessions, which will help them to provide a more enriching, prayerful opportunity for their peers.

A comment in the staff survey, 'From the first time pupils learn the sign of the cross until their last prayer in this school, our role is to help them grow in faith,' highlights the staff commitment to the quality of collective worship provided by the school. There is a strong relationship with the local parish and the parish priest is a regular visitor to the school. The newly appointed chaplain is benefiting from the support and expertise of the headteacher in preparation for taking on the role and has a clear vision for pupils having an independent role in leading prayer sessions for their peers. The new prayer room provides a dedicated, welcoming, prayerful environment for both pupils and staff. Older pupils are keen to use their gifts and talents to enrich the prayer life of the school and opportunities have been developed for them to do so. They show maturity,

care and consideration towards the younger pupils who attend the sessions. Parents and parishioners are encouraged to take part in the prayer life of the school through attendance at Masses and celebrations of the word. School staff and pupils are actively involved in the life of the parish through the promotion of events, support of sacramental preparation, serving on the altar and supporting flower arrangers.

Leaders have a clear strategic plan for prayer and liturgy across the school year which includes the celebration of the Eucharist and opportunities for Reconciliation at key times in the liturgical year. Leaders and governors ensure that staff access a range of training to support their planning and leading of prayer and liturgy. There is a comprehensive list of traditional prayers that pupils should learn as they progress through the school. Key members of staff, including members of the leadership team and the newly appointed chaplain, support the staff and pupils in developing their leadership of prayer and liturgy. Feedback from pupil surveys show evidence of leaders' commitment to regularly review the impact of prayer and liturgy. Responses from the pupils, including, 'We are always told that we are special, and that God has a plan for each of us,' and 'Gospel assembly helps me learn more and the chance to pray,' indicates the influence prayer and liturgy have on the lives of pupils.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Vincent's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	145325
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8233348
Full postal address of the school	St Vincent's Catholic Primary School, Hammersmith Gardens, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 5RG
School phone number	001582862456
Headteacher	Amanda Dowling
Chair of local governing body	Colette Donohue
School Website	www.stvincentshr.org
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	March 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Monica McCarthy
Jane Zamora

Lead
Team

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