



St Vincent De Paul Catholic Primary School

Morpeth Terrace, Westminster, London, SW1P 3EP

Date of inspection: 10 December 2014

A. Classroom Religious Education

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

Overall Grade 2

Overall, the effectiveness of classroom religious education is good. The quality of teaching is typically good and sometimes very good. Schemes of work are well supported by a published series and informed by the Curriculum Directory. The pupils' engagement in learning is excellent. As a result, pupils' progress in acquiring religious literacy is generally good. Regular participation in training, including those within the diocese, are much appreciated by all staff. All pupils, including those with specific learning needs, feel valued in lessons which are regularly monitored and staff well supported by the senior team, together with the coordinator. The school is driving forward its work to ensure that the most able pupils have sufficient challenge to reach the highest available levels in religious education and to embed the good initiatives on marking and tracking of progress. The work in lessons is supported well by the work of the chaplain and the coherence of the whole-school approach to its Catholic life. Governors have a clear grasp of the areas for improvement and work assiduously with the senior team to support the development of the pupils and staff.

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 1*

Pupils receive an excellent Catholic education and have exceptionally worthwhile experiences of the faith and of Catholic traditions. Their understanding of what it means to live according to the Church's traditions and teachings deepens as they progress through the school. Religious education is highly valued as the heart of the curriculum and all the requirements of the Bishops' Conference are in place. Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school and this is clearly evident in the priority given to the chapel, the displays and the strong links with the cathedral and the diocese. Parents are welcomed readily into the school through formal and informal gatherings. Links within the family of Catholic schools are growing. There is an outstanding commitment to the Common Good with pupils aware of the work of St Vincent de Paul and the underlying social teaching of the Church. The head teacher and senior team ensure that a Catholic ethos permeates all of its work. Governors make a very positive contribution to the work of the school and its Catholic life.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, head teacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent one day in school, visited an assembly and eight parts of lessons. They carried out interviews with the head teacher and deputy head teacher, the assessment coordinator, the religious education coordinator, a governor who is also the link member from the cathedral clergy, and the chaplain from the cathedral. Inspectors also spoke with pupils both in and out of class. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of the St Vincent de Paul School, Westminster, 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 Archbishop. 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

Sheila Nolan	Lead Inspector
Jackie Cox	Associate Inspector

Description of School

The St Vincent de Paul School is a one-form entry primary in the local authority of Westminster and the locality of Victoria. The school serves the cathedral parish of Westminster but some pupils attend from adjacent parishes. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 99%. The remainder, 1%, are from other Christian denominations. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is close to a hundred percent. Four members of staff hold a Catholic qualification.

There are 241 pupils on roll, with one of the pupils having an educational and health care plan. Forty-one pupils receive additional support for their learning needs. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is also well above average but the percentage of families claiming free school meals and in receipt of the pupil premium, additional government funding, is below average. A total of 30 pupils are in receipt of the pupil premium.

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Headteacher:	Mr J O'Neill
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Date of previous inspection:	26 June 2009
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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?

Since the last inspection, the school has developed the ways in which pupils' work is assessed and recorded. In-school procedures for assessing pupils' performance are in place and work is increasingly well moderated among teachers in each Key Stage. Pupils' attainment and progress are assessed and recorded termly in line with other core subjects. Marking quality has improved and in Key Stage 2 the pupils understand well how to respond to teachers' guidance. The Wednesday Word has been introduced and the subject leader has begun on a programme of monitoring the quality of classroom practice. Greater attention than previously is given to making sure work is at the right level for groups of pupils. The school is aware that it has more work to do to challenge the most able of the pupils.

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

Grade 2

The religious education curriculum fulfils the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. The school uses a published scheme which matches these requirements closely. In their medium-term and short-term planning teachers explore the Curriculum Directory further so that they are aware of covering all the main areas. A good range of resources are used well to enhance the delivery of religious education. The progression through topics is carefully mapped and supported through the published scheme. There is scope, however, to strengthen the study of scriptural texts, particularly for those who are more able. Nevertheless, there is a clearly successful focus on developing the pupils' religious literacy both orally and in their written work. The study of other faiths, including Judaism, Hinduism and Islam, is incorporated into the work of year groups. There is a particular emphasis on Judaism. However, the potential of this work is not used fully to extend the work of able pupils and build in-depth comparisons of common elements in major world religions.

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

Grade 2

Pupils achieve well in religious education and mostly similarly to their achievement in other core areas, except at the highest available levels. There is a termly assessment in place, some internal moderation of pupils' work, deanery and diocesan moderation and a growing partnership with another local school for moderation. The diocesan levels of attainment, although increasingly successfully used to support checks on how well the pupils are doing, are not yet fully embedded in teachers' on-going records of pupils' performance, nor in their marking. Too few pupils achieve the highest available levels for their age groups. This is mainly because although pupils have a good awareness of the scriptures, and much attention to scriptural sources is present implicitly in their work, they have not had the opportunities to formalise their use of scripture in their major assessment tasks. Similarly, although pupils gain experience of other major religions, both monotheistic and polytheistic, they are not yet guided effectively enough to make well-argued comparisons across a range of faiths. Underachievement is sometimes picked up too slowly because teachers are not expected to keep an on-going record of learning against the very useful 'steps to success' for each child.

Pupils generally show many growing strengths in their ability to talk about their work, to answer questions and to use a rich vocabulary in discussion, particularly the language of narrative, liturgy and morality. Written work is improving rapidly and pupils are clearly gaining in confidence in writing at length.

The quality of teaching

Grade 2

Teaching is typically good. Staff throughout the school have established a very positive ethos for learning to which pupils respond outstandingly well. They show a genuine pride in their work and take great care of their religious education exercise books. They also respond very well, particularly in the older year groups, to teachers' marking and written guidance. Their 'green pen' responses are admirable in some classes.

A genuine strength of the teaching in St Vincent de Paul's is the coherence between the day-to-day life of the school, the assembly and homework themes, and the liturgical life of the school. This was clearly evident in the work in classrooms on the Annunciation and the Visitation, the advent assembly and the role of St John the Baptist, as well as the visit for a year group, for example, to the cathedral baptistery. Children were able to make effective links between their different experiences.

Staff uses questioning well, as in Year 4, for example, who were able to build on their earlier knowledge of Advent well, to deepen their understanding of Gaudate Sunday and the theme of looking forward to a joyous occasion. All the pupils were confident enough to ask for further explanation or help. Generally, support assistants are well deployed to help those who are at the early stages of learning English or who have barriers to learning. As a result, every pupil is well engaged in whatever the activities. For the very youngest children, for example, support staff were able to use a child's home language to clarify ideas and instructions. Despite the good emphasis on vocabulary, oral and written work, however, planned activities and tasks for able pupils are not always detailed enough or thoroughly planned to make sure they can reach the highest levels available. The lack of on-going clear records aside from the pupils' work books sometimes limits the ability of staff to spot underachievement early enough.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade 2

The leadership of religious education is currently under the umbrella of the senior leadership team. There is much well-meaning work in the efforts of the staff team and the coordinator to develop the pupils and help them to grow in understanding of their faith. Although some essential systems to assess progress are at the early stages of development, the work of the mainstream assessment coordinator is successfully building the checks on pupils' performance in religious education into the same systems as the other core subjects. Currently, the assessment of the pupils' progress between the termly assessment points is not rigorous enough in the way staff are expected to record their checks. As a result, underachievement of some pupils is not picked up rapidly enough.

Useful training supports staff at many levels in developing their understanding of their work in religious education. For example, some initial training has helped staff to begin to explore the Curriculum Directory. However, there is scope to provide greater guidance to staff on the links of the published scheme with the Curriculum Directory so that there is a common understanding of these links. All staff engage well with training and with any monitoring and evaluation of the departmental work. They participate generously in the schools very good links with parents and other external groups. Aspects of the religious education curriculum are shared with parents through the school's weekly newsletter. Communication with the cathedral parish and local clergy is

excellent. The senior team and governors are providing very good support for the coordinator of religious education in the management of classroom religious education.

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

- Embed further the recent assessment and marking initiatives and extend what is expected of teachers with regard to the recording of pupils' performance.
- Extend the work already begun to link with other schools on the moderation of the pupils' work.
- Develop further the scheme of work and teachers' understanding of how the most able can reach the highest available levels by:
 - providing well-considered opportunities to build on the good work on other faiths so that pupils are able to make informed comparisons between other major religions
 - formalize the work on scriptural sources for those pupils who are ready for it and make sure staff have the knowledge and understanding to support pupils in this area.

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?

Since the last inspection, the school has introduced Latin in Years 4, 5 and 6 to help pupils appreciate the rich history and tradition of the Church. Staff prayer services have been introduced to match the topics in the new scheme of work. The school continues to develop new ways to help the pupils explore the many traditions of the Church.

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

Grade I*

Religious Education receives the full weekly entitlement of 10 percent of curriculum time as directed by the Bishop's Conference. Besides this, there are very regular slots for assemblies, worship and liturgical celebrations. Throughout the school, religious education is given a high priority in displays and the stimulating range of artefacts throughout the building. The budget is well in line with other core subjects and training is given high priority. Despite the high proportion of Catholic staff, however, few have a Catholic qualification. Governors are very well informed about the quality of Catholic life, greatly enhanced by the excellent links with the adjacent cathedral. Senior leaders are exceptionally supportive of the school's Catholic life, be it through publishing texts, the development of the staff, or the welcoming ethos for the local clergy.

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

Grade I*

Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school. Besides the regular celebration of Mass and the sacraments throughout the school year, there are many and varied opportunities for both traditional and personal prayer and reflection. Not least among these are the 'rosary in the pocket', the May procession, the ready access to the school chapel, the visits to the cathedral, family masses, Founder's day, the 'Wednesday Word, shared with parents, and the encouragement of prayer corners in the pupils' homes. Each year pupils receive a miraculous medal to celebrate Founder's day. The school follows exceptionally well the annual liturgical calendar of the Church. Members of staff pray together regularly, particularly before a new topic. The vivid displays around the school continually re-enforce the school's Catholic identity. The school is also considering establishing retreat days for staff and pupils.

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

Grade I*

The school, following in the footsteps of its patron, St Vincent de Paul, puts the Common Good at the heart of all that it does. The pupils flourish in an environment where each is valued and

respected. Their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is excellent and enhanced by their work for others. In discussion, the pupils demonstrated a clear understanding at their own level of the Church's mission for justice and peace. One commented, 'that's the way St Vincent de Paul lived, and we should live too'.

The school supports a wide range of charities, locally, nationally and internationally. Some examples include funds for the treatment of a local child suffering from cancer, a range of hospitals and hospices, the Catholic Children's Society, the Poppy Appeal, the Life Boats, and sponsorship for a guide dog. A mission in Zambia has benefitted from the children's efforts through the school's regular 'Missio' fundraising.

The School Council encourages pupils to take responsibility for the good of others. 'Mini Vinnies' have regular links with the cathedral's St Vincent de Paul's group. Pupils are regularly encouraged to do 'just that little bit more'.

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*

Partnerships with parents, the parish and the Diocese are an integral part of life at St. Vincent de Paul's school. The overwhelming majority of parents are extremely positive about their experiences of the school and the opportunities provided for the pupils and their families. A high number of families, 85, returned the inspection questionnaire. Many parents feel that their children have an excellent foundation on which to build when they move on to the next stage of their education. The school works very closely with parents and carers, not least through regular meetings with the head teacher and the staff. The head teacher's open door policy ensures that parents feel comfortable to visit at any time and no problem is too small to be dealt with. Informative newsletters, with a sharply focused theme, are distributed each week along with the 'Wednesday Word', helping to support and develop parents' knowledge and understanding of the school's religious education programme.

The school chaplain is very involved in school life and pupils speak hugely positively about his impact, and that of his predecessor. The work of the chaplain, based securely in the cathedral, fosters very well the school's already very good links with the diocese. Staff attend regular training and moderation opportunities and also welcome members of the diocesan team to their daily work. There are good plans to partner with other diocesan schools for moderation purposes. The school is fortunate to be situated beside the cathedral and the school leadership is proactive in working with the local clergy, parish institutions, and in the uses of the excellent facilities of a great cathedral church. Each month a pupil from the school writes the prayer focus article in *Oremus*, the cathedral magazine. Pupils from the Nursery through to Year 6 were privileged to perform their recent Nativity play within the cathedral. There is a close link with the Sisters of Charity, the original founders of the school.

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

Grade I*

The head teacher, the senior team and governors are absolutely determined to preserve and promote even further the school's Catholic life. All aspects of the work of the school are underpinned by the Church's mission as expressed in the school's mission statement, 'Love one another as I have loved you.' The school is very aware of its privileged position in close proximity to

the cathedral. It makes exceptionally good use of these links. Senior leaders support staff at all times in their training needs and ensure that all have a very good understanding of their roles and the distinctive nature of this Catholic school. The school acknowledges that more could be done to ensure staff access courses that lead to a Catholic qualification. Staff new to the school are well inducted, not least through mentoring by an established staff member, particularly newly qualified teachers. The school knows its strengths and areas for development very well. Its self-evaluation is generally accurate, and reflects the strong capacity of the school to improve even further.

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

- Take forward plans to involve pupils and staff in annual retreats.
- Ensure that more staff acquire a Catholic qualification.