

Inspection of a good school: St Vincent's Catholic Primary School

The Ridgeway, Mill Hill, London NW7 1EJ

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 July 2024

Outcome

St Vincent's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy, friendly and welcoming community. Pupils said that the school is a good place to be yourself. They feel that school offers a safe space to talk openly, as staff welcome and respect their views and opinions. Pupils also said that they value how staff support their mental well-being. They enjoy the opportunities to learn about difference, including building awareness of a range of cultures.

Right from the time children join Reception, the school teaches and continually reinforces the school's values. These include being compassionate, caring and respectful. Pupils behave in a sensible, calm and kind manner. For example, a group of Year 5 pupils give up half their lunchbreak to read with children in Reception. Pupils appreciate the school's restorative approach to their occasional disputes. Staff bring the two parties together to talk and work out a peaceful solution.

The school strives to make sure that pupils' academic achievements and social skills are strong. It successfully supports pupils to leave this school well prepared for their secondary education.

Pupils cherish the opportunities that they have to represent their peers' voices and to work with the school to make improvements. This includes being ambassadors for children's rights and mental health champions, as well as working to help others in the school community.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum. It is underpinned by helping pupils to develop a strong set of social values. This is intended to stand them in good stead for leading a principled life. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. The school has well-established systems for identifying, assessing and planning to meet their bespoke needs. The school ensures that staff receive training on how to best cater for the differing needs of pupils with SEND. Parents and carers are

consulted along the way. School and family support are thus harmonised. Pupils with SEND are included in all aspects of school life. They benefit from accessing a suitably rich curriculum.

The teaching of reading is high on the school's agenda. Staff have the expertise to teach the school's chosen phonics programme effectively. It starts when children first arrive in Reception. Staff give extra support to any pupil who falls behind. Pupils enjoy story time and taking books home from the well-resourced library. All children and pupils take part in the annual poetry recital assembly. Pupils become confident and fluent readers.

The school's curriculum is organised and designed effectively to reflect its context of being a one-and-a-half-form entry school, with classes of mixed ages. In the core subjects, pupils' learning is based on year-group-specific aims from the national curriculum. They achieve well in these subjects. For the wider curriculum subjects, the school has put much thought into running a two-year teaching cycle. The school has identified the knowledge it wants pupils to know and the order it should be taught. There is much emphasis on training and development for teaching and support staff. They have the subject-specific knowledge and skills to teach the subjects well. They also use assessment effectively to identify pupils who are not keeping up. Extra support is then put in place to help those pupils to close their knowledge gaps. However, in a few subjects, the school has not made clear enough the precise knowledge that it wants pupils to gain. Also, on the odd occasion, the intended curriculum has not been fully implemented. As a result, although pupils' overall attainment across the subjects is secure, there are some gaps in their knowledge. The school is starting the next two-year cycle shortly. It has identified where improvements are needed. Leaders and staff are working to bring these about.

The school sets high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Staff get children into routines from the time they join in Reception. By the end of Reception, children are able to concentrate on activities for extended periods. They play together and share well in the purposeful classroom environment. Pupils are keen to learn. They follow instructions and are attentive during lessons. These positive attitudes play a key role in their achievements. Pupils' absence and persistent absence rates are low.

The provision for pupils' personal development is wide. The school teaches pupils, in an age-appropriate way, about how to form healthy relationships. Educational visits include going to museums, theatres, zoos and significant places locally, such as the Dutch war graves. Pupils have opportunities to take part in sports tournaments, dance festivals and debating competitions. Visitors to the school include pilots, poets and organisations that provide workshops on mental health. Pupils organise charitable events, such as collecting food for the homeless. Learning to help others begins in early years. For example, children in Reception baked cakes. They sold these to parents. The money raised funded the playground sandpits. These activities encourage pupils to develop into responsible citizens.

Staff appreciate the steps that the school has taken to reduce their workload. They feel that what they are required to do is meaningful. They value the atmosphere of community and friendship across the school. They are able to concentrate on their core roles of teaching and supporting pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few wider curriculum subjects, the school has not been explicit enough about what knowledge they want pupils to gain. In a few instances, the planned curriculum has not been fully implemented. This means that pupils do not routinely gain as much knowledge as they could across the subjects. The school should continue its work in refining the curriculum to make sure that pupils are taught, in depth, the full range of subject-specific knowledge that they need to gain to achieve their potential.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2019.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	101334
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10345727
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	289
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Phillippa Weekes
Headteacher	Marie Tuohy
Website	https://stvincents.school
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is taking over the running of the current independent on-site nursery school from September 2024.
- The school has a Catholic ethos. The school's last section 48 inspection of its religious character was on 5 September 2018.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and humanities (geography and history). For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some

pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also considered other subjects as part of the inspection.

- The inspector spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders. He also spoke with the chair of the governing body and other governors, as well as a representative from the local authority and from the Westminster Diocese.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation and had formal meetings with groups of staff and pupils.
- The inspector took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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