

St Vincent's Catholic Primary School

Manor Park South, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 8AL

Inspection dates 8–9 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, they know how to keep themselves safe, and their relationships with each other and their teachers are exemplary. Pupils are considerate, caring, cooperative and very welcoming.
- Pupils achieve well in writing and mathematics. Their achievement in reading is outstanding.
- The school's systems for checking pupils' progress are strong and so no one falls behind. All groups of pupils make good progress. In Key Stage 2 many pupils are now doing better than this.
- Teaching is typically good over time. The majority of teachers plan lessons which are interesting and challenging. They provide activities that get the best out of all pupils.
- The headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and governors are committed to ensuring that pupils are given as many opportunities as possible to be successful. There is a clear focus on the continued improvement of teaching and raising pupils' achievement further.
- Governors keep themselves well informed and help the school to maintain a good, and improving, standard in the quality of teaching.
- Parents play a very active role in the school. The Parents in Partnership group give their views on many aspects of school life and play a significant role in ensuring that parents' views are heard.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The expertise of outstanding teachers is not sufficiently well shared across the school to raise the quality of teaching further so that achievement is outstanding overall.
- The quality of marking is not yet consistent enough to ensure all pupils correct errors, know how well they are doing and how to improve their work.
- Planning for learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not always as effective as it could be. Currently, children do not always have the opportunity to develop and practise their skills through exploration and play.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons as well as small-group activities, parts of lessons and the teaching of phonics (the links between letters and the sounds they make). Two joint observations took place, one with the headteacher and one with the deputy headteacher.
- Collective worship was observed.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read from Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 and held discussions with two groups of pupils from across the school.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised during lessons and separately with the headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- Inspectors took account of 51 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own surveys of parents' views. Questionnaires completed by 16 members of staff were taken into account.
- A telephone conversation took place with a representative from the local authority.
- Two meetings were held with a total of seven governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Various school documents were examined. These included the school's view of its performance, external school evaluation reports, monitoring records of the quality of teaching, development plans, school data on pupils' progress, minutes of the governing body's meetings, records of pupils' attendance, behaviour records and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Lenford White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Geoffery Lawrence

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium is well below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection two new governors have been appointed, a new entrance area for the school has been built, security has improved and additional work-space has been developed for small-group teaching activities. Currently, two part-time teachers cover the school's Reception class; the school is currently recruiting for a full-time, permanent teacher to take up this post.
- At the request of the local authority the headteacher supports two schools as a local leader in education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching further, so that more is outstanding and so that pupils' learning and achievement are outstanding overall, by:
 - ensuring that the expertise of outstanding teachers within the school is shared to develop the skills of all teachers
 - improving the quality of marking and feedback to that of the best within school so that all pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work
 - ensuring that pupils always respond to feedback in order to help them correct errors and increase their understanding of how well they are doing.
- Ensure that enough opportunities are planned in the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure children can fully develop their skills and learn more through exploration and play.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most children enter Reception with skills and abilities which are at least in line with those expected for their age; they have particularly well-developed skills in numeracy but less well-developed skills in writing. They make good progress through the Reception year and achieve well.
- Regular meetings to check how well pupils are doing ensure that those in danger of falling behind are quickly identified. Small-group teaching activities, one-to-one and 'nurture' support boost pupils' progress and help them to catch up. These strategies ensure that pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 continue to achieve well and enjoy their learning. This demonstrates the school's success in ensuring equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils.
- Progress in Key Stage 1 is good. Through Key Stage 2 pupils' progress is also good and has improved considerably this academic year, with many pupils now making better progress than this. School records and the scrutiny of current Year 6 workbooks show that pupils have already exceeded national expectations, and a significant proportion are already working at the highest levels in mathematics and English. Overall, attainment is above average when pupils leave Year 6.
- Strategies such as small-group teaching activities ensure that pupils known to be eligible for free school meals achieve well. The school has worked well to ensure that any gaps that exist between the attainment of pupils who are entitled to support through the pupil premium and that of their non-free-school-meals classmates are quickly narrowing, and that their attainment and progress compare favourably in all year groups. The school can point to examples of pupils who have made outstanding progress in reading in Years 6 and 2.
- The school works well with a number of specialist partners to ensure that it provides the best learning opportunities possible for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The school's records and inspection evidence show that a number of pupils with more complex needs in Key Stage 2 have made outstanding progress from their starting points to achieve standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are at least in line with those of their classmates.
- The school is careful to ensure that no pupil is disadvantaged because of their language or ethnicity. Pupils from minority ethnic groups, including the small number who speak English as an additional language, are fully integrated into the school and achieve as well when compared to other pupils in the school and to similar groups nationally.
- Pupils' achievement in reading is outstanding. Leaders have taken account of governors' recent recommendations from their audit and implemented successful strategies that have accelerated the progress and attainment of many pupils. Pupils who read for inspectors said that they enjoyed reading. The skilful way in which less confident readers sounded out and read unfamiliar words provides clear evidence of the school's outstanding teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make).

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching observed during the inspection varied, although the vast majority was good and some was outstanding. Evidence gathered from pupils' books and the school's own records show that teaching is typically good over time.
- The vast majority of teachers take care to ensure that pupils find things out for themselves. They do this through good-quality questioning and ensure that pupils always explain their answers. In mathematics pupils are always encouraged to think about the methods that they have used in calculations and to explain these clearly.
- The majority of teachers are very careful to plan lessons which are interesting and engaging for the pupils. Such lessons provide a range of different activities that ensure that all groups of pupils make at least good progress.

- Teachers have very high expectations of pupils and provide opportunities for them to comment during lessons on what they have learned and how well they think they have done. However, the quality of teachers' marking is not yet consistent enough in all year groups to ensure that all pupils know how to improve their work.
- Year 6 pupils are adept at assessing the quality of their own work and that of their classmates. In one lesson they were able to look at aspects of a previous piece of descriptive writing, improve it and say exactly what had made it better. However, this outstanding practice is not shared as widely across the school as it could be; too few opportunities are provided for pupils to comment on their written work and to correct any errors made.
- The school prides itself on its performing arts, which is taught separately and incorporated well into mathematics and English lessons. This focus helps to ensure that pupils are very confident and eager to learn and share their work with their teachers and classmates.
- In an outstanding and briskly paced Year 5 persuasive writing lesson, for example, pupils proudly shared their highly developed and well-thought-through written adverts for chocolate, breakfast cereals and polish. Without being asked, many pupils presented their products using 'television commercial' voices, and various accents, to the delight of the whole class.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and other adults work well together to plan lessons and to ensure that any pupil who benefits from small-group teaching activities, outside of the classroom, does not miss out on any aspects of their learning. As a consequence, their learning is good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour over time is outstanding, and their relationships with each other and their teachers are exemplary. In the majority of lessons observed, behaviour was outstanding and never less than good. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning and like to be challenged.
- Pupils enjoy collective worship; they enjoy learning and playing together, show great maturity in their concern for others and are very enthusiastic about taking on responsibilities. Pupils' caring nature is further exemplified through the knowledge and understanding they have of discrimination. Pupils who engaged in discussions with inspectors were adamant that no one in school was ever treated badly because of the colour of their skin or because of where they are from.
- Year 6 pupils are excellent role models for younger pupils and support midday staff at lunchtime play in organising and supervising play activities. They enjoy welcoming new children into the school and take on befriending responsibilities, ensuring that children in the adjoining pre-school find coming into Reception a less daunting experience.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who completed the online questionnaire (Parent View) strongly agree that behaviour is consistently good, and that poor behaviour is rare and always dealt with effectively. All staff are of the opinion that pupils' behaviour is at least good, and often outstanding; the school's records confirm this.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and arrive punctually and ready to learn; their attendance is above average and they enjoy competing for the 'Buzzy Bee' which is awarded each week to the class with the highest attendance.
- Pupils are well-known and respected within the community for their charity work. They are also known for their exemplary behaviour while on school trips or participating in residential activities.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors were adamant that bullying rarely, if ever, takes place in school. They demonstrated a good awareness of what constitutes safe and unsafe situations, and an excellent understanding of internet safety. This is because the school ensures that they are taught how to remain safe and because the school website has very clear guidance for all pupils and parents regarding e-safety.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led and managed by an ambitious headteacher who wants the best for all pupils and all members of the school community. All leaders, managers and governors demonstrate an ambitious vision for the school and ensure that its Christian ethos enhances both the educational and spiritual development of pupils.
- The leadership and management of the school are not outstanding because teaching and pupils' overall achievement is not yet outstanding.
- Leaders have accurately identified the school's strengths and areas for further development. There is, rightly, a strong focus on raising standards further by improving the quality of teaching as its main priority.
- Challenging targets are set for all teachers, whose performance is regularly monitored and assessed. Teachers are only awarded pay increases, or offered promotion, if they have met their specific targets which also relate to school priorities, including raising levels of achievement.
- Training opportunities are offered to teachers in order to support them in their teaching practice and help them to continue improving their skills. Most training and development are delivered in-house or identified through the school's independent consultant who has recently recommended trainers who have worked with the school on assessing the quality of teaching. As a result of this, the school has an accurate view of the quality of teaching and of what it needs to do in order to improve it further.
- The local authority provides light-touch support. It is very confident in the school's leadership and has recently called on the services of the headteacher to support two local schools as a local leader in education.
- The curriculum offers many memorable experiences for pupils. Most Year 5 and 6 pupils who spoke to inspectors said that the best thing about their school was 'the learning'. They were particularly fond of residential opportunities and visits to Delamere Forest and Beeston Castle. The school offers a range of after-school clubs including drama, country dancing and basketball.
- Pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a very strong feature of the school. Pupils are taught about world religions and the school ensures that art, music and sport are an integral part of the curriculum.
- Senior leaders are currently in the process of developing the school's Early Years Foundation Stage in order to ensure that all planning for learning is effective and that children are given as many opportunities as possible to develop and practise their skills through investigation, exploration and play.
- The school's Parents in Partnership group is very active. It has been involved in supporting transition arrangements between Year 6 and the high school and in analysing parents' views of the school.
- The school's safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors undertake regular training and are fully aware of their responsibilities. They know the school well because of the information they receive. Governors understand that the headteacher's performance management has been closely linked to improving the progress made by pupils in Key Stage 2 and are aware that good gains have been made in this area. Governors have a good understanding of the school's finances. This includes allocating the pupil premium funding wisely to raise levels of achievement for this group of pupils. Many governors play a significant role in the life of the school. For example, governors recently initiated a reading audit and listened to several pupils read in every year group. Their recommendations, and subsequent action taken by the school, have helped to maintain reading as an outstanding feature of the school. Governors are aware of the quality of teaching and only authorise promotion and pay increases when they are satisfied that teachers have met their performance objectives.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	111358
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	412399

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Damian Grieves
Headteacher	Roisin Moores
Date of previous school inspection	14 July 2008
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