

Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Vincent's Catholic Primary School, Altrincham

URN: 136087

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Mark Davies, Bishop of Shrewsbury on:

Date: 12-13 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....

1

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.....

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education.....

1

Collective worship (p.7)

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

1

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

N/A

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- A tangible sense of community and culture of welcome at St Vincent's Catholic Primary School enables all to participate fully in school life.
- Leaders and governors demonstrate exemplary leadership in all aspects of school life – they are ambitious and lead by example.
- The strength of relationships at all levels, but especially between staff and pupils ensures all within the school community feel secure and valued.
- The high attainment of all pupils from their various starting points enables all pupils to be the best they can be.
- The quality of the environment, including prayer spaces and prayer focal points within the classrooms enriches provision for all.

What the school needs to improve:

- Consider ways of demonstrating the sacredness of scripture within prayer and liturgy.
- Disseminate the outstanding practice seen in some classrooms to support the development of all staff.

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

St Vincent's Catholic Primary School is an outstanding, joy-filled school which celebrates the uniqueness of all within its community and strives to live out daily its mission statement, 'Let Your Light Shine'. All pupils are known and recognised and, as a result, this large school feels like a close-knit loving family. Pupils say they love their school and feel that it is a very special place; they say they feel safe, secure, nurtured and encouraged to be the best they can be. They are happy to come to school and they enthusiastically participate in the many pupil groups and activities the school provides, including the very active Mini Vinnies group where concern is turned into action. Pupils are involved in supporting the Cyril Flint Befrienders charity, demonstrating their response to the needs and demands of Catholic Social Teaching. The recently introduced four values, make a difference, be kind, be respectful and be passionate about learning, support the pupils in living out the school's mission statement. The school composed song, 'Let it shine', is a joyful testament to how central the mission statement is to everyday life in school. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, and they respect and care for all within the school community. Parents recognise how much their children benefit from the emphasis placed on Catholic life and mission and one said: 'It is an outstanding school. The Catholic faith is central to everything it does, and my children are learning from a young age how to be loving and kind to everyone.' Another commented: 'St Vincent's provides a wonderful, joyful environment for the children and exemplifies Catholic life put into practice to help the local community and those in need.'

Staff are fully committed to the vision and mission of St Vincent's and their dedication to continuing professional development, and enthusiastic attendance at parish Masses and other community events demonstrates this. Parents value the contribution staff make to the formation of their children and they consider staff to be, 'Excellent role models.'

Pastoral care is outstanding; it is well resourced, with specialist staff who ensure the needs of the most vulnerable pupils are always prioritised, by, for example, offering after school places and priority at school events. The school environment enriches the Catholic life and mission of the school with beautiful displays, high quality resources and carefully arranged prayer focal areas that support pupils' understanding of the church's liturgical year. St Vincent's benefits from the support of a highly visible and very active team of clergy who visit the school regularly. The school's very effective relationship and health education programme is bespoke and fully complies with all diocesan requirements.

Leaders and governors are dedicated to the development of the Catholic life and mission of St Vincent's, feeling they are all, 'Strong Catholic educators.' They set aside time every three years to focus on their vision and mission, to evaluate the progress the school has made, and identify ways to develop. They then produce a three-year plan, identifying priorities which are shared with the whole school community. Governors see these events as: 'Safe spaces to share honest comments.' Partnership between leaders, governors and parents is a significant strength of the school; parents are glowing in their praise of the school's ethos and environment and very appreciative of all the school does to support pupils' faith journey. Some of the many comments received in the parent questionnaires indicate how highly parents value the work of the school: 'St Vincent's is a beautiful and nurturing environment. It represents love and community in the best possible way. We are blessed to be part of it.'

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

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

1

Provision

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

1

Leadership

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

1

Pupils' knowledge and understanding is excellent, fully supported by recap and recall practices at the beginning of lessons. This ensures pupils remember what they learn and as a result make at least good and often outstanding progress. Pupils love learning in their religious education lessons, thanks to teachers who share their excitement about learning with their pupils. For example, in one lesson the teacher commented, 'I'm really excited about our next task.' Attainment is high because of the secure subject knowledge of teachers and the use of well-considered questioning that extends pupils' learning. The standard of work in books is very good and much thought is given to presentation, including the use of special workbooks showing the value placed on religious education.

Planning of the curriculum within teams ensures there is consistency of content being taught across the classes, and appropriate priority is given to ways of developing pupils' abilities to understand, respond and discern. Effective use is made of time to promote learning and as a result lessons are paced with strategies such as visual time reminders on the interactive whiteboard to remind pupils of the expectations their teachers have. In the best lessons seen, teachers have high expectations and pupils understand this and are keen to do well. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are a real strength of St Vincent's. Pupils' achievements are celebrated and verbal feedback and feedback within books motivates pupils to do well. Pupils are keen to earn rewards such as the bronze, silver and gold awards which are linked to the school's four values. Lessons are creative and engaging using drama, art, music, and visits to a variety of places of worship to enrich provision. Pupils are encouraged to think ethically and theologically and as a result they are religiously literate and very engaged in their lessons. For example, during a lesson about Creation, pupils were discussing how to be good stewards of Creation and were encouraged to use scripture and the writings of Pope Francis to reflect on their learning and to develop their thinking. Adaptations are

made to lessons to ensure all pupils can access the curriculum, including, in some cases, pupils with significant needs who are included very effectively within lessons. Continuing professional development, both external and in-house, supports staff, including less experienced teachers who grow in expertise through coaching and mentoring practices.

Lesson monitoring by senior leaders, including religious education leads, keeps track of areas for development and feedback is given to staff both collectively and individually to support development. Many staff have accessed middle and senior leadership training with a significant percentage of staff having gained a religious education qualification or are currently in the process of doing so, indicating the value the school places on developing staff. Leaders and governors see the importance of 'growing' future Catholic leaders and this also applies to the development of governors with succession planning in place. Senior leaders, together with subject leaders and prayer leaders, have embedded a range of monitoring practices to ensure the curriculum is in line with the agreed syllabus and the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. They are inspiring role models who have a clear vision for the school's continuing development; they are meticulous in ensuring that religious education has parity with other core subjects and priority is given to religious education within the school's improvement plan. Senior leaders, led by a highly effective head teacher and inspirational subject leaders, whose involvement in the diocesan working party benefits many other diocesan schools, are committed to ensuring religious education is outstanding and meets the needs of all.

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



Pupils actively participate in and enjoy the many opportunities school provides for prayer and liturgy and they are supported well to plan and lead prayer with growing independence, appropriate to their age and capacity. The school has created a very comprehensive prayer and liturgy progression document which makes clear the expectations school has for each year group so that by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are able to plan and lead prayer and liturgy independently. One parent commented: 'They love taking part in their worship with their class which they have prepared at home and have talked about how they have set it up for their class to pray together.' Being able to prepare worship at home extends the opportunity for parents to be more fully involved in their children's prayer life. During times of prayer, pupils are reverent and responsive and sing joyfully and beautifully, especially when they sing the school composed song, 'Let your light shine'. Such singing enriches the experience for all. Pupils feel confident in contributing spontaneously during prayer as witnessed in an early years' class when a child stood up voluntarily and sang a song about Jesus and then said: 'That's a prayer, isn't it?'

Prayer and liturgy is central to the life of the school with well-established daily prayer routines, weekly teacher led and pupil led prayer and liturgy within classes, half termly school Masses, and opportunities for pupils to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The school has created beautiful prayer spaces and focal points within classrooms which enrich the environment for prayer and liturgy. Pupils are confident in joining in with traditional prayers, responding appropriately during other forms of liturgy and they are becoming more confident in reflecting on and evaluating their experiences. They show excellent knowledge of the church's liturgical calendar and the importance of the choice of scripture to reflect the seasons, however, not enough distinction is made between scripture and other texts. The use of prayer journals, begun in early years, encourages pupils to write personal prayers and to demonstrate their growing religious literacy. Parents are very

appreciative of the opportunities school provides for them to be actively involved in the liturgical life of the school, with one parent commenting, 'Masses are celebrated frequently and with great joy. I appreciate the way the parish priests are involved at the school in meeting and educating the children as well as engaging with parents.' The Catholic life section on the school's website is a valuable resource for parents with its wide range of information and a gallery of pictures showing pupils' involvement in prayer and liturgy. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities in the prayer life of the school as prayer leaders, being members of the Mini Vinnies and their involvement in the Faith in Action programme.

Leaders and governors are highly skilled, dedicated and have a very clear vision for prayer and liturgy within the school and as a result provision is outstanding. They have a thorough knowledge and understanding of prayer, pupil ministry, Catholic tradition, and the Church's liturgical calendar. As a result planning, monitoring and evaluation processes are rigorous, strategic and bring about continuous improvement. Governors are kept well informed of school developments through regular meetings and reports from the link governor and senior leaders. Leaders and governors prioritise provision for prayer and liturgy, ensuring that time is set aside for the celebration of the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and other significant opportunities for communal prayer. Staff are supported appropriately in their liturgical formation and all leaders and governors, including the local clergy, are inspirational role models.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Vincent's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	136087
Full postal address of the school	Orchard Road, Altrincham WA15 8EY
School phone number	0161 911 8040
Name of head teacher or principal	Anita Harrop
Chair of governing board	Joanne Donnachie
School Website	http://www.stvincents.trafford.sch.uk/
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Trustees	Diocese of Shrewsbury
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	14 th March 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Roisin Moores	Lead inspector
Carol Morgan	Team inspector
Emily Cahill	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