

DIOCESE OF MIDDLESBROUGH

Inspection of Religious Education
Collective Worship
and
The Catholic Life of the School



School: St Vincent's VA Academy

Address: Queens Road
Hull
HU5 2QR

URN: 140848

Head of School: Mr Francis McDonnell

Chair: Clare Smith

Date: 7th & 8th July 2014

Inspector: Mrs Margaret Swinhoe

Date & Grade of Last Inspection: March 2013 - Grade 4

Overall Grade for this Inspection: Good

INTRODUCTION

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The report of the inspection is produced for the Bishop of Middlesbrough (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school. The Inspection reviews, evaluates and plans further improvements in the school's witness to the Catholic faith and Curriculum Religious Education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation. The Inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers.

What Inspection Grades mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding Catholic school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a Catholic school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Requires Improvement	These features, though of adequate quality, require improvement to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate Catholic school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils.

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Vincent's Voluntary Roman Catholic Academy is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils live in St. Vincent's parish. The school and the church share the same site. The Parish Priest is Vice Chair of the Governing Body and Chair of the Religious Education committee. 78% of pupils are baptised Roman Catholics. There are 3 of the 9 teachers who are Catholic.

The proportion of pupils, who are from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language, is well above the average. A higher number of pupils than average join the school at other than expected times.

The proportion of pupils with special education needs supported in school is below national average. The proportion of pupils entitled to pupil-premium funding is well below national average.

St. Vincent's has very recently become part of a Catholic Multi Academy Trust, along with two other Catholic primary schools. The Head of School has responsibility for teaching and learning within the school and an Executive leadership team has overall responsibility for teaching and learning within the Catholic Multi Academy Trust. The Head of School of at St. Vincent's, in partnership with a part-time teacher, is also the schools' Religious Education Leader. The Head of school has been in place for two months, having previously been Deputy/Acting Headteacher at St. Vincent's. The other Religious Education Leader is leaving the school, but will remain in contact with St. Vincent's on a consultancy basis.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Evidence for the Inspector was taken from: Lesson observations in all classes; observation of acts of Collective Worship in all classes; whole-school act of Collective Worship; scrutiny of pupil's work-books from all classes; scrutiny of Foundation Stage Portfolios; meeting with School-Council; meeting with school Chaplaincy Group; discussion with year 6 pupils; discussions with individual and groups of pupils; meeting with parents; meetings with Head of School, Executive Headteacher, Religious Education Leader, Parish Priest and Chair of Governors; scrutiny of School Development plan, Religious Education Action Plans, Reviews, H.M.I. Monitoring Reports, Subject Leader File, Data Files, Assessment Portfolio, Self-Evaluation Document, Self-Evaluation Form, and other documentation.

Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll:	204
Planned Admission Number of Pupils:	209
Percentage of pupils baptised RC:	78%
Percentage of pupils from other Christian Denominations:	10%
Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths:	3%
Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation:	9%
Percentage of pupils with special needs:	13%

Teaching Staff:

Full-time Teachers:	8
Part-time Teachers:	1
Percentage of Catholic Teachers:	33%

Support Staff:

Full-time Classroom Support Staff:	8
Part-time Classroom Support Staff:	4
Percentage of Catholic Classroom Support Staff:	50%
Percentage of teachers with CCRS:	11%

Percentage of learning time given to R.E: 10%

FS	Yr 1	Yr 2		
Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6	

Parishes served by the School:

St Vincent's

1. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

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MAIN FINDINGS

St. Vincent's is a good school. The school is a welcoming and attractive learning environment. The environment has been recently improved through redecoration and renovation. Outside equipment has been purchased to greatly enhance the pupils' play-time enjoyment and more is planned for them.

A tremendous amount of work, led by the able and committed Religious Education Leadership, has resulted in all teachers now feeling confident to plan, assess and improve their Religious Education lessons. This work has been key to the progress which the school has made. Consequently, outcomes are improving. Attainment in Religious Education of pupils at the end of Key-Stage 2, are broadly average. Progress is good across the school. A lot of work on improving the quality of pupils' basic skills has resulted in greatly improved presentation and attitudes to learning. This will need to continue. Teachers have also worked hard to set tasks and use differentiated target-setting to ensure the learning matches pupils' ability. Pupils are now expected to be much more productive in their lessons and this is seen in the depth of response which pupils are now giving, both written and verbal. Further work in clarifying learning objectives and use of more open-ended questioning is necessary in order to embed the good progress made.

All pupils know the St. Vincent motto, 'Kindness is the Key to all Hearts' and this is reflected in the very caring atmosphere in the school. Relationships are excellent amongst pupils and adults. Pupils demonstrate kindness and understanding towards one another. The percentage of pupils in St. Vincent's who speak English as an additional language is very high. The support which these pupils receive is of a very high quality and they make very good progress because teachers plan carefully to ensure that the tasks match their ability and language level. The bilingual teaching assistants which the school employs are a great asset to the school and the families. All of the well-trained support staff, across the school, have been essential to the good progress made.

The behaviour of the pupils is very good and a consistent Behaviour Policy is now in place across the school, which all pupils know and understand. There is a very happy atmosphere amongst the pupils in the play-ground. Parents are extremely happy with the changes which the school has undergone and feel that their children are safe and making progress.

Parents and carers feel very welcome in school and know that any concerns will be dealt with quickly. They expressed great confidence in the new leadership of St. Vincent's, particularly in the Head of School, who is a well-known and recognisable figure in the community. As one parent put it, 'The sparkle is now in the school'.

Relationships and communications with the parish are excellent. The Parish Priest is a frequent and welcome visitor to the school. Parents and pupils spoke of the recent First Holy Communion Day, the May Procession and the Polish Fayre, all of which were well attended, greatly appreciated and much enjoyed. A wide variety of extra-curricular activities and an annual residential for Year 6 pupils is now in place. This

widens the experiences of the pupils. Parents and pupils expressed a great appreciation for these opportunities.

Pupils enjoy daily acts of Collective Worship, both in the class-room and whole-school. They participate well and sing with joy and enthusiasm. However, most of the Collective Worship is adult-led and pupils now need to be encouraged to plan, prepare and lead more in acts of Worship. An embryonic 'Minnie Vinnies', which is a junior branch of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, has been established. A Chaplaincy group is also in place. Both of these groups need to be further developed so that their purpose is known and understood across the school community.

All leaders, managers and Governors have worked together on action planning and evaluations of St. Vincent's. They understand the level of accountability required of them. Communication at leadership level is excellent. The leadership of St. Vincent's is totally committed to the Church's Mission in Education and it has a very clear vision for the future of the school and its' community. Structures must now be put in place to ensure sustainability and increase leaders' capacity to critically challenge all aspects of Religious Education and Catholic Life and Worship at St. Vincent's.

What the school needs to do to improve further:

1. Ensure that all adults in the school share the responsibility for Religious Education and Catholic Life and Worship through:
 - a. whole-school professional development
 - b. the development of robust structures within and out of school which will support the Religious Education Leader/Headteacher
 - c. encouraging all teachers to be empowered in leading liturgy and worship in whole-school gatherings

2. Ensure that the very good progress is maintained through:
 - a. clearly focussed action-planning
 - b. developing the Leaders' capacity to critically challenge all aspects of Religious Education and Catholic Life and Worship

3. Continue to develop the teaching of Religious Education through:
 - a. clarifying all learning objectives
 - b. ensuring that there is meaningful dialogue in partner-talk and discussion
 - c. use of open-ended questioning to further develop pupils' reasoning skills to make links with Scripture and their own lives

4. Continue to develop Collective Worship in the school through:
 - a. enabling pupils to plan, prepare and lead Collective Worship
 - b. using a greater variety of prayer-forms; music, dance, guided-meditation, art, technology, collective prayer-books, prayer-journals, Lexio-devina etc.

2. PUPILS

How good outcomes are for pupils, taking into account variations between groups.

The outcomes for pupils at St. Vincent's are good. Pupils take on responsibilities in and beyond the class-room, as in the buddying system and particularly in support of new pupils and those who have language difficulties. Pupils express their support for their school as a Catholic school and its special link with the parish and other Faith communities. They recognise the close links which the parish makes with the Polish Church. The oldest pupils can articulate their personal views about their faith, and are very reflective. Pupils showed a good understanding of the importance of the religious life to others. They showed particular respect for a Muslim pupil who was undertaking Ramadan fasting. They need now to use these skills of enquiry and reflection to evaluate and influence decisions about the Catholic Life of the school. Pupils show great care towards one another and the easy, joyful atmosphere in the playground is testament to this.

All teachers, guided by the Religious Education Leaders, have worked extremely hard in all aspects of their teaching to raise standards and ensure good progress. Pupils achieve well in their final key-stage and standards are generally above average. Pupils work well in lessons and usually try to produce their best work. Staff work very hard to make sure that their planning matches the abilities and level of language of all pupils. Teaching assistants are key in facilitating the teaching to children with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language. Consequently all groups make good progress and all pupils are engaged in their Religious Education lessons.

Pupils readily take part in the prayer-life of the school, and act with reverence and respect during acts of Collective Worship. All pupils, even the very youngest, sing joyfully and with enthusiasm. Pupils have a good understanding of the major feasts and seasons. Pupils appreciate what is taking place during prayers and acts of Collective Worship. However, though pupils are able to compose their own prayers, most of the leadership currently comes from the staff.

Pupils are not yet sufficiently involved in the planning, preparing and leading in acts of Worship. Pupils do not yet experience a sufficient variety of prayer forms.

• The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school	2
• How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	2
• How well do pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	3

3. PROVISION

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How effective the provision is for Catholic education

Almost all of the teaching is effective in ensuring good progress across the school. A lot of work has been undertaken by the Religious Education Leaders to make sure that all teachers are now confident in planning lessons and in making accurate judgements on the levels that pupils are working at. Assessments are regular, and whole-school moderation is embedded practice. This has greatly increased staff confidence. Investment has been made into buying resources to support the Religious Education curriculum, and staff make good use of them in lessons.

Expansion of resources will encourage teachers to plan even more imaginative and engaging lessons. Support given to all pupils across the school is of a very high quality. Marking is consistent, regular and effective. It helps pupils to understand what they have achieved and how to improve further and pupils appreciate this. Teachers have very good knowledge of the 'Come and See' curriculum. However, their general knowledge of all Catholic doctrine is not yet strong enough.

Religious Education curriculum is central to the life of the school and all staff recognise that it is the core of the school's curriculum. It provides good opportunities for spiritual and moral development which staff capitalise upon. The oldest pupils now have the opportunity to spend time together on an annual residential, in which they expressed great delight. Extra-curricular clubs are flourishing and include a wide variety of activities. All pupils and parents greatly appreciate the time and effort which the staff give in order to provide the pupils with these opportunities.

High profile is given to acts of Collective Worship. Adults associated with the school are encouraged to attend and all parents said that they are made to feel very welcome. Class-based acts of Worship follow a fairly routine pattern, which has yet to become personalised. Whole-school gatherings provide greater variety of prayer-forms. Teachers seize the opportunity to make links with the curriculum and the act of Collective Worship. In the best of lessons, this excites and energises the pupils. Some staff are involved in leading whole-school acts of Collective Worship and pupils are involved in delivery. However, little time is yet given to innovation and encouraging pupils' leadership of Collective Worship.

The Catholic Life of the school clearly has the highest priority. All the work and activities in St Vincent's spring from this Faith belief. Greater emphasis on imaginative displays of pupils' work and sacred spaces relating to Catholic Life and Worship would make this more immediately apparent to all visitors to the school. All pupils know and understand St. Vincent's motto 'Kindness is the key to all hearts' and try to live it out in their daily lives. Harmonious relationships are seen across all age-groups and all staff and pupils.

• The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education	3
• The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning	2
• The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	3
• The quality of provision for the Catholic life of the school	2

4. LEADERS, MANAGERS AND GOVERNORS

How effective leaders, managers and governors are in developing the Catholic life of the school

Leadership at St. Vincent's is good. All leaders, managers and Governors are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. They have worked hard to ensure that this commitment is made manifest to the whole school community and particularly within the parish community. The parish news-letter contains information about the school and there is a display-board in St. Vincent's church which is dedicated to school news. Similarly, the school's news-letter contains information about the parish. A range of monitoring activities are in place and a Religious Education working party is established, which is chaired by the Parish Priest. The Governing Body is given regular updates of all that is happening in school. The data and evidence they receive is comprehensive. The Governing Body is becoming increasingly confident to challenge and analyse all aspects of school performance. All leaders have been closely involved in tackling the areas of weakness within the school and recognise these areas. The capacity for all leaders to critically challenge the schools' performance must be developed in order to ensure rigour within St. Vincent's. If not, there is a danger that leaders will become too dependent on others within the new Academy structure. Leaders celebrate achievement and improvements.

The newly-appointed Head of School is widely recognised within the community and has the full support of parents and staff. The Religious Education Leader, whom he works alongside, has worked tirelessly to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Staff development in Religious Education, led by the Religious Education Leaders, takes place weekly and is fundamental to improvements. Systems have been put in place to monitor planning, progress and attainment, basic skills and attitudes to learning. These systems are now firmly embedded. The monitoring and analysis must now be extended to include the Catholic Life and Worship of the school.

Governors have ensured that all canonical duties are met. Religious Education is given 10% of curricular time throughout the school. Religious Education is given financial support as is necessary, resulting in improved resources. Great improvements have been made in the fabric of the school buildings and the learning environment.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well leaders, managers and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school, including collective worship, and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well leaders, managers and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils 	2