



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: St Vincent's Catholic Primary School

Unique Reference Number: 101239

Inspection Date: 1 October, 2012

**Reporting Inspectors: Dr Michael Sutherland-Harper
Mrs Penny Rickard**

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

**Type of School: Primary
School Category: Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils: 3 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 232
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection:
9/10/2009**

**School Address:
Burnside Road
Dagenham
Essex
RM8 2JN
Tel. No. 020 8270 6695
Fax No. 020 8270 6696
Chair of Governors: Mr Brian Tobin
Headteacher: Mrs Rachel Mahon**

Introduction:

The Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education (Schools) Act 2005 by two inspectors appointed by the Diocesan Bishop at the request of the Governing Body of the School.

The Inspectors acknowledge and are appreciative of the full support, co-operation and courtesy they enjoyed from the Governors, Headteacher, Staff and Pupils of the School both before and during the Inspection. The Inspectors wish to express their gratitude to all concerned.

The focus of the Section 48 Inspection was:

- Classroom Religious Education
- The Catholic nature of the School through:
 1. Worship
 2. Links with the Catholic and wider community
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development

The Section 48 Report

**St Vincent's Catholic Primary School
Burnside Road
Dagenham
Essex
RM8 2JN**

Head Teacher: Mrs Rachel Mahon

Date of Inspection: 1 October 2012

Description of the School:

St Vincent's Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided Catholic school situated in Dagenham in the county of Essex and in the diocese of Brentwood. The school is an average-sized primary school. The school serves the Catholic parish of St Vincent's in Becontree and is heavily oversubscribed.

Record of Evidence Base:

Two Diocesan Inspectors were in the school for the equivalent of two inspection days.

- The study of pre-inspection documentation including the Self-Evaluation Form/ Denominational Provision (SEF/DP).
- The observation of eight lessons.
- Participation in an assembly.
- Scrutiny of pupils' written work.
- Meetings with the Headteacher who is currently also the Head of Religious Education (R.E.), the Chair of Governors and the School Council.
- Observations of R.E. displays in the classrooms and around the school.

What the School does well:

St Vincent's Catholic Primary School is a good Catholic school. Its clear sense of purpose is effectively summed up in the simple but profound mission statement, 'Together with Jesus', agreed by the whole school community. This motto is subdivided into the four parts of a circle around the crucifix, stating: 'we welcome, we love, we learn, we grow' and asking St Vincent de Paul to pray for us. The school has a strong focus on bringing out the whole child in a happy, secure environment. Pupils, staff and visitors are made to feel valued, included and nurtured from the moment they enter the door. This priority was well demonstrated in the peaceful and reflective start made to the day at the staff prayer service where colleagues felt able to offer up their concerns and hopes and gave the sense of staff pulling together to take their school forward. Parents and carers, to whom an inspector spoke at the start of the inspection, commented favourably about the positive behaviour and clear expectations promoted by the school.

Teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of their Catholic faith. Pupils are well managed because expectations of behaviour are high. The school is working on new systems to improve the tracking and monitoring of progress in R.E. Staff meetings discuss the themes taught and these are delivered in such a way as to ensure equality of opportunity.

Learning is good. Children enter the school with variable starting points and make steadily upwards progress as they move through the school and deepen their knowledge and understanding of their Catholic faith. Parents and carers feel their children are well taught and inspectors agree. The majority of the teaching seen was good with some outstanding lessons where delivery, use of questioning and resources enabled pupils to fly with their learning but lessons are sometimes teacher dominated. In these lessons, opportunities for pupils to work independently and reach the highest levels are more limited and activities are not closely timed to add challenge. Pupils were keen to share their excitement about learning with inspectors and had many ideas about how their learning could be taken forward, for example, through the use of drama and more visual prompts. These are ideas which the school is now taking on board as it introduces the

new programmes in Religious Education with a view to ensuring the best possible match of work to pupil abilities. Support staff are generally well used in lessons to assist with learning but there is room for sharing of best practice to fully develop their roles.

The curriculum is clearly set out, based on Gospel teachings and values, and adds to the focus on creating a sense of family within the school. Religious Education (R.E.) is at the heart of the school's work. The R.E. curriculum is based on the 'Come and See' Religious Education programme of study, recommended by the Bishop of the Diocese, and is being fully implemented. The headteacher is at present also the Head of Religious Education but is preparing to hand over this responsibility to a colleague whose role is being carefully prepared. The school meets both the national and diocesan requirements for the allocation of curriculum time for taught R.E. Teachers make good use of information technology (ICT) and of a range of colourful resources to engage pupils with their learning in R.E. Pupils' own experiences are brought into the lessons so that they see R.E. in the context of their own lives. Provision for R.E. is good and sometimes outstanding. The school is now looking at ways to develop delivery of the subject through further sharing of best practice and opportunities to see how other schools are delivering the syllabus on a pupil-friendly level.

Provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school is good. Each class has a focus area for prayer and reflection which the school continually seeks to improve so it remains meaningful to pupils. Prayer and reflection are reinforced across the school in good shared acts of worship, such as the one on St Therese of Lisieux led by the headteacher on the day of the inspection. In these shared acts, time is built in for silence so everyone has a chance to pull their thoughts together. Pupils join readily in the singing on these occasions, enjoy helping to present aspects of an assembly and would welcome more chances to take a lead. Further opportunities to think about one's faith are provided by the good displays around the school. The school is working to deliver a prayer garden and outdoor area to enrich what goes on in the classroom.

The school is well led by its experienced head who works closely with the knowledgeable and well-briefed chair of governors. Governors are increasingly prepared to challenge, as well as to support, the school as it seeks further improvement. The work of the school is enriched by its close links with the local parish priest and its work with parents and carers who feel that communication is good and developing.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and a growing strength of the school. Pupils are very well behaved, have a clear sense of right and wrong and are well instructed in their faith. Lessons offer a growing number of occasions when the sense of awe and wonder in learning can be developed not only through delivery of the subject but through the pupils' response to it. Links with other schools in this country and abroad are at an early stage of growth and the school has yet to fully exploit the rich resources offered for learning by its varied multi-cultural community.

The school is a harmonious and effective learning environment because of the high standards set by the headteacher, staff and governors and the close links fostered with the parish and local community to develop the sense of family. Pupils feel valued and listened to as individuals. The school's capacity for further improvement is good and rising.

What needs to be improved?

- **Develop the match of work to pupil abilities. Increase opportunities for pupils to take a lead in evaluating and directing their own learning.**
- **Fine tune the use of assessment to provide clearer indications to pupils of the next steps in their learning and how to maintain and improve on their present good learning.**
- **Continue staff training on the implementation of the Come and See programme. Allow room in all planning for review and evaluation of activities.**

The Inspectors endorse the areas identified by the school for improvement in the Section 48 Self-Evaluation Form.

St Vincent's Catholic Primary School is a good school. The strong sense of family and self-confidence which it nurtures is valued by parents and carers. Achievement is good, staff, pupils, governors and parents are committed to the school and the experienced headteacher knows her school well. The school is ready to move further forward towards the outstanding status to which it aspires.