



St Vincent's School

URN: 104734

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Liverpool

24 June 2026 – 25 June 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education RE

Collective worship (p.7)

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

3

3

3

3

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

No

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

N/A

Compliance Statement

- Not compliant due to insufficient allocation of RE curriculum time: below the required 10% at KS2, KS3 and KS4, and below the required 5% at KS5. Not compliant with relationships, sex and health education expectations, as delivery relies on Personal, Social, Health and Economic Association resources and does not consistently apply a distinct Catholic lens.

What the school does well

- The specialist status of St Vincent's is enriched and highlighted by the provision of strong pastoral care for its pupils, demonstrating a clear commitment to supporting their individual needs and protecting the most vulnerable.
- Leaders and governors respect the dignity of workers and prioritise staff wellbeing through supportive policies and structures.
- Pupils demonstrate respect for themselves and others, and show a well-developed respect for those of other faiths and beliefs, including those of no faith.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school, contributing positively to a respectful and orderly environment.
- Pupils engage in lessons and show a willingness to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills.

What the school needs to improve

- Conduct a thorough review of the mission and vision of the school to ensure it is known and lived by all.
- Ensure religious education is 10% of the school's curriculum, effectively sequenced to build upon prior knowledge, with effective continued professional development for staff.
- Prioritise collective worship by providing training for pupils and staff in its delivery and ensure effective quality assurance takes place regularly.

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

Pupil outcomes

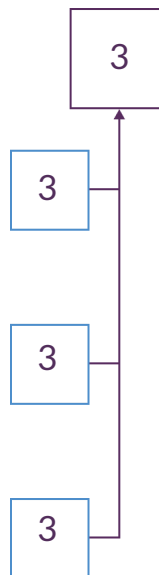
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



Pupils frequently struggle to understand and to explain how the Catholic identity of the school serves their specialist needs. Consequently, they often exhibit indifference toward the school's Catholic character, and their active participation in the Catholic life and mission of the school remains limited. Pupils find it difficult to fully understand what belonging to a Catholic school community is all about. As a result of these combined factors, the pupils' sense of personal responsibility is underdeveloped, and they respond in a limited way to the call to care for our common home, to pursue the common good, and to serve those in need. Despite these challenges, pupils consistently demonstrate a foundational respect for themselves and others as individuals made in the image and likeness of God, maintaining a well-developed sense of respect for those of other faiths, religions, and none. Additionally, the behaviour of pupils is good both during lessons and throughout the wider school. However, pupils have limited levels of participation in the Catholic life and mission of the school.

The mission statement is not well thought through, and its expression lacks depth. Knowledge of its existence and meaning is limited throughout the school, and the extent to which the word of God informs and shapes the school's life and mission remains underdeveloped. Furthermore, whilst staff understand some of the demands of this mission statement, there are clear inconsistencies in its implementation across the curriculum, which is not yet fully aligned with the school's broader specialist provision for pupils. There is some sense of being a Catholic community. This is evident in relationships and a culture of welcome that seeks to

value each other however, this is limited in its Catholic nature. A significant number of staff do not always witness to the school's Catholic identity. Even so, staff do provide supportive pastoral care for pupils, and a commitment to the most vulnerable remains intact. The school environment contains signs of its Catholic character, but these have become utilitarian with little actual impact on daily life. Opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of pupils and staff are limited in either regularity or quality, and the provision for relationships, sex and health education is inconsistent in how well it reflects diocesan requirements and Church teaching.

Leaders and governors struggle to articulate the Church's mission in education. This limits their ability as guardians of Catholic life and mission, which is not viewed as a leadership priority. Consequently, the school's policies and procedures insufficiently reflect its Catholic identity. They also demonstrate limited recognition of the principle that Catholic schools are at the service of the local Church, resulting in inconsistent efforts to work with local parishes. The witness of leaders and governors to the Gospel and to Catholic social teaching is inconsistent. Despite these challenges, they do demonstrate respect for the dignity of workers, ensuring that policies and structures are in place to provide supportive pastoral care and a commitment to the physical and mental wellbeing of staff. Meanwhile, the school's taught curriculum only partially expresses its Catholic character. Whilst some of the whole school curriculum encourages pupils to reflect on human dignity, moral responsibility and the common good, this approach is not consistently evident across the school. Although governors make contributions and effort to maintain the school's Catholic life, these efforts are not strategic and lack a process of evaluation within its self-evaluation process that sets clear priorities for development and impact. This is compounded by the fact that professional development in this area rarely occurs or is limited in its effectiveness, leaving staff with a limited understanding of the school's mission.

Religious education

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

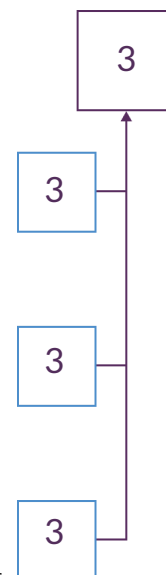
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

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

Leadership

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



A notable minority of pupils have yet to fully develop the necessary knowledge, understanding, and skills outlined in the Religious Education Directory. Nevertheless, the recent roll-out of new curriculum resources is beginning to support pupil progress, helping them better secure their core learning. Depending on their age and individual abilities, pupils are starting to apply these skills to engage in basic spiritual reflection, as well as limited ethical and theological thinking regarding what religious commitment looks like in daily life. Several pupils can discuss their learning confidently. For instance, older pupils demonstrate familiarity with scriptural accounts of the Last Supper, the Resurrection, and the apostolic mission; with some assistance, they compose original prayers to share during assemblies. Meanwhile, younger pupils can identify that St Paul's letters offer guidance on living together harmoniously. When recording their thoughts, pupils utilise tools like brailers, writing frames, and assistive technology to work independently for short intervals. Ultimately most pupils engage at a level tailored to their specific needs, and behaviour throughout these lessons remains positive.

Teachers are striving to be sufficiently skilled and confident in their subject knowledge in religious education to enable pupils to make good progress. However, some teachers are passive in their commitment to religious education, and this is communicated to their pupils. Planning is not always linked to pupils' current assessment in religious education, which limits the learning of pupils. In some classes, teachers use questioning to identify where pupils are

in their understanding. Where this is effective, explanations and tasks are adapted to ensure successful learning. Pupils' efforts and ideas are celebrated and frequent praise is given. Teachers' verbal instructions and explanations enable pupils to record their ideas using brailers. Provision of large print documents and writing templates enable those who are partially sighted to record their thoughts. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to present their work in creative ways. Through recent collaborative work with the archdiocese, the school is fully aware of the need to further enhance the religious education curriculum. A clear process of school improvement is now underway, and our evaluation recognises that the school is showing signs of beginning to turn itself around. This strategic work is starting to drive the necessary changes to ensure the curriculum meets the required standards and supports strong pupil progress moving forward.

Leaders and governors have recently introduced new programmes of work in religious education that align with the requirements of the Religious Education Directory. Although these initiatives are at an early stage of development, they represent a key step in the school's improvement journey. To support this transition, all staff would benefit from targeted training and ongoing support from the archdiocese as these new curriculum resources and plans are implemented. However, significant adjustments are still required to ensure long-term success. The timetabling of religious education must be urgently improved to establish core parity with other curriculum areas, providing pupils with the necessary time and space to make good progress. Additionally, leaders and governors must address the fact that self-evaluation of religious education is currently ineffective. Experiential learning also requires attention. Opportunities for enriching the subject are limited, and pupils would benefit significantly from a well-planned, annual cycle of educational visits and external visitors to enhance their learning. Prioritising these structural changes, staff development, and enrichment opportunities will allow the school to build successfully on its current momentum.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

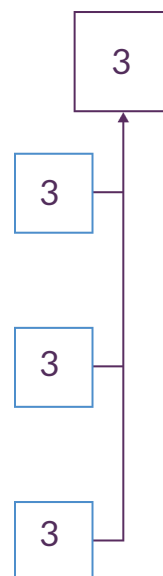
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship



Pupils frequently respond passively and without enthusiasm to the prayer and liturgical life of the school. They demonstrate a limited awareness of the rich variety of prayer traditions within the Catholic faith. Their primary experience consists of speaking about prayer at the end of assemblies or recalling occasions where they have said prayers. This reflects a minimal understanding of the Church's liturgical year. Because they are given few opportunities to work collaboratively to prepare prayer and liturgy, and rarely, if ever, undertake active liturgical ministries, pupils struggle to make meaningful connections between these spiritual practices. Furthermore, even when appropriate consideration is given to the specialist needs of pupils, pupils are not consistently provided with sufficient opportunities to reflect meaningfully on their personal experiences of prayer and liturgy. While pupils display an awareness that these experiences can inspire positive external action, they ultimately struggle to provide any concrete examples of this connection in practice. However, during form time prayer linked to St John the Baptist, pupils were seen to use appropriate objects such as candles, crucifixes and white cloths to support their reflection, which demonstrated that they do participate in collective worship when it is suitably structured and resourced.

Prayer and liturgy is technically part of school life. However, it is peripheral to main activities and is insufficiently planned to provide a meaningful part of daily routine. The daily pattern of prayer remains inconsistent and offers a limited range of ways of praying that fail to exemplify the richness of the Catholic tradition. Furthermore, scripture does not always hold a central

place, and its selection often indicates a lack of depth and breadth in responding to either the liturgical calendar or the capacity of the participants. Pupils report that the Chapel is “like a church and when we go in we are quiet, we say good morning, and we do the prayer at the end”. Pupils report that the Chapel is used weekly and for seasonal prayer. It forms the physical and spiritual heart of the school and is well cared for by members of staff on a voluntary basis. However, the potential for pupils and staff to enhance the school’s spiritual life is not fully realised. Additionally, music and other art forms are not always appropriately used or reflective of the riches of the Church. Few attempts have been made to establish partnerships with local parishes to strengthen this provision.

The school has a policy on prayer and liturgy, but it is superficial, resulting in a limited impact on the guidance and support for relevant staff. This issue is underscored by the fact that leaders, including governors, have little understanding of the different levels and skills of participation. Furthermore, limited effort is made to provide opportunities for the celebration of holy days of obligation and other significant feasts and memorials. Leaders and governors are also inconsistent in their provision of continued professional development in prayer, liturgy and worship for the whole staff community. Consequently, its importance is not widely understood, and relevant staff are left insufficiently trained and supported in their own classroom leadership and ways by which to motivate maximum pupil involvement. Leaders overall possess a limited understanding of the variety of ways of praying within the Catholic tradition. Whilst governors are willing to support the development of prayer and liturgy, they now need to become highly strategic in the quality assurance of its provision. This will be the vital shift to ensure that the prayer life of the whole community underpins a renewed offer of Catholic life and mission that is identifiable and celebrated at St Vincent’s.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Vincent's School
School unique reference number (URN)	104734
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3417018
Full postal address of the school	Yew Tree Lane, West Derby, Liverpool, L12 9HN
School phone number	0151 228 9968
Headteacher or Head of School	Mr David Swanston
Chair of Governors	Mrs Bernadette Buckle
School Website	www.stvin.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	All Through
Type of school	Non-maintained special school
Admissions policy	
Age-range of pupils	4 - 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	21 November 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The Inspection Team

Anthony Pontifex

Lead

Christine Mason

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