

St Dominics RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133669
Local Authority	Hackney
Inspection number	360559
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Chris Kessell

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	408
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wayne Brennan
Headteacher	Deirdre Finan
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 25 lessons and visited 15 teachers. Meetings were held with senior leaders, teaching staff, pupils and governors. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including the school's self-evaluation, assessment and tracking information, development planning and pupils' work. They also examined the school's arrangements for safeguarding. Staff and pupils' questionnaires were analysed, along with 55 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- Are learning and progress consistently good in the key subjects of English and mathematics, across key stages and for all pupil groups?
- What is the quality of oral and written feedback, and to what degree are pupils involved in this process?
- How effective is target setting for individuals and groups of pupils?

Information about the school

St Dominic's is larger than the average primary school. Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils from Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds represent the largest ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very high. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these pupils have speech, language and communication needs or moderate learning, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Over the last year, a significant number of teachers have either joined or left the school.

On-site childcare provision, managed by a private contractor, operates every day after school.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Dominic's provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Throughout the rest of the school, pupils' learning and progress are satisfactory. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, attainment in English and mathematics is broadly average. Pupils do not do as well in their writing as they do in reading and mathematics. The progress of individual pupils and groups is monitored carefully, especially by senior staff. The school has been successful in improving attainment in mathematics and for some pupils in writing, although it does not yet ensure that all pupils have enough opportunities to practise and develop their writing skills in different subjects. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory, in line with their peers.

There is not enough good teaching at present to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Pupils are keen to learn and prepared to work hard. Despite accurate assessment information being available, activities are not consistently pitched at the correct level for all pupils. Consequently, there are times when pupils find their work either too easy or too hard. Teachers do not always expect enough of their pupils and often talk for too long at the start of lessons. This slows the pace of learning because pupils have insufficient time to undertake their work. Year 1 pupils find this especially difficult because the activities they complete are not as interesting or varied as they could be.. Good oral feedback is often offered to pupils during lessons although written feedback in pupils' books is less effective. Pupils respond well to opportunities to show whether or not they have understood their work. They talk confidently about their group targets for English and mathematics, although these are not always sufficiently challenging for all individuals.

The school provides good pastoral support and guidance to pupils and their families. Pupils say they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Pupils make a good contribution to their school for example as school councillors. They have good ideas on how to improve playtimes which are being considered by the school. Pupils are keen to participate in a wide range of popular sporting and physical activities which help them to lead healthy lifestyles.

The senior leadership team is ambitious and provides effective direction for the school. School self-evaluation is accurate and this, together with improvements since the previous inspection in, for example, mathematics and the quality of teaching, means that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. School priorities are appropriate and accurately identified in the school development plan as targets for improvement. However, as with the targets for pupils, they are not sufficiently challenging to drive up standards.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good teaching to at least 40% by the end of the current academic year and 60% by December 2011 by:
 - improving the use of assessment information so that all pupils are given work that is tailored closely to their level of understanding
 - increasing the pace of lessons
 - ensuring that lesson activities demand more from the pupils.
- Raise standards in writing by:
 - building on the work carried out to reduce differences in attainment in writing between different groups
 - providing planned opportunities for pupils to consolidate their writing skills in different subject areas.
- Improve the curriculum for Year 1 pupils so that they have more opportunities for independent learning and are provided with activities that are more varied and interesting.
- Improve the effectiveness of school target setting by ensuring that:
 - clear individual targets are set in English and mathematics
 - whole-school targets are more specific and more challenging.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are below those levels expected for their age. Their language, communication and social skills are often at low levels. As a result of effective provision, the children make good progress and do especially well in developing their language skills. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils were generally seen to be making satisfactory progress in lessons regardless of their background or ability, although progress was better in classes where the quality of teaching was consistently good. In a Year 6 class, pupils learnt well and made good progress as they devised and asked questions to their teacher who was playing the role of Macbeth. The pace of learning was good, pupils worked well together and were excited by their learning. Similarly, Year 2 pupils learnt effectively as they identified different two-dimensional shapes because work was pitched accurately to their individual needs and understanding. Where teaching was more typically satisfactory too much time was often spent on introducing lessons. While there are no significant variations in the progress made by different groups of pupils, teachers are not complacent and has been successful in helping the most able boys and pupils from Caribbean backgrounds do better in their writing.

Pupils enjoy all aspects of school. They look after each other well. For example, older pupils look after the younger ones at playtime. A few pupils demonstrate challenging behaviour but they are well managed by staff so that they do not affect the quality of learning. Although behaviour is often good in classrooms and as pupils move around the school, playtimes can occasionally be over-boisterous. This is because there is very limited space for the pupils and the morning break is longer than usual. Pupils' satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills, regular attendance and good social skills prepare them

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satisfactorily for the next stage of their education. Pupils develop a good understanding of service to the community. They enjoy responsibilities such as being playground buddies and assembly monitors. Pupils have been involved in local community projects to improve the environment, and they regularly raise funds for charities and projects in the developing world.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Throughout the school, relationships between staff and pupils are good. Consequently, pupils are keen to learn and enthusiastic about their work. Learning intentions are explained carefully so that pupils have a good understanding of what they are going to do. The introductions to lessons are sometimes too long and this limits the amount of time available for learning and pupils finding things out for themselves. Teachers are knowledgeable about the capabilities of their pupils but do not always take sufficient notice of assessment information when planning work. Teaching assistants support pupils effectively, especially those with behavioural and emotional difficulties. This enables them to take a full part in lessons. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but do not always provide sufficient information on how to improve or targets for improvement. Oral feedback through discussions with groups or individuals is informative and supportive.

The curriculum is suitably broad and adequately matched to pupils' needs, interests and aspirations. There is an extensive range of enrichment activities, and partnerships with

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other organisations contribute effectively to pupils' personal development. Although there is a strong focus on English and mathematics, opportunities to improve literacy and numeracy skills through other subjects are not yet planned sufficiently well to ensure such opportunities are maximised. Year 1 pupils in particular are not provided with enough opportunities to work independently or think for themselves.

All pupils are looked after and cared for well. They are confident that there is someone they can speak to if they have a problem. For example, pupils state that bullying is dealt with effectively when it occurs. The safety of pupils is given a high priority. Pupils who have emotional or learning difficulties are supported sensitively and effectively, enabling them to take an active part in school life. Strong links with outside agencies, such as social services, successfully enhance the successful work of the school with vulnerable pupils and families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior team is effective in monitoring the progress and well-being of all pupils. Consequently, it has a clear picture of the achievements of individuals and groups and is able to act decisively when any differences in progress between boys and girls or pupils from different ethnic backgrounds are identified. There is a good focus on improvement planning, although targets for improvement are often too general to be challenging. For example, there is very little reference to timeframes or the impact that improvement will have on pupils' outcomes and provision. A number of middle leaders are very new to their posts. Although they have settled in well, they are still developing their roles.

At the time of the inspection, all required safeguarding procedures were fully in place and followed recognised good practice. The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. Governors have clear roles and responsibilities and a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are involved in school self-evaluation and understand the importance of holding the school to account and offering challenge, but rely too much on the headteacher to provide them with relevant information. They listen to the views of parents and carers, and take actions to tackle any concerns. Relationships between the school and parents and carers are good, and staff work hard to encourage them to take a full and active part in their children's learning. The school is in the process of implementing good plans to enable pupils to gain first-hand experience of meeting and engaging with others from different communities, both nationally and internationally. The school is well regarded in the local community and pupils from different backgrounds get on well with each other.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Activities for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are varied and interesting. Consequently, they are enthusiastic and willing learners. The quality of teaching is good, particularly in the Reception classes. Teachers engage the children effectively, especially through purposeful discussion to extend and develop their speaking and listening skills. Progress in their language development is rapid. Activities are well planned with a good balance between activities children can choose and those led by the teacher. The outside areas in both Nursery and Reception are used well for children's learning because activities are planned and organised imaginatively to stimulate their interests. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

Staff place a strong emphasis on developing children's personal, social and emotional skills. Children are happy and confident. They behave well and successfully learn to share and cooperate as they play and work together. Welfare arrangements are good. There are, for example, well-designed care plans for children who have specific medical needs. Children's overall progress is tracked carefully through observations and individual needs are catered for well. Occasionally adult support is not used to best effect and the monitoring and recording of the range of activities that children complete during the day are not always systematic enough.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who returned questionnaires was relatively small. Those who did commented mainly positively about the school. A small minority expressed concerns regarding pupils' behaviour and how the school deals with it. Inspectors found that pupils' behaviour was satisfactory and that the school has effective strategies in place to deal with any challenging behaviour that may arise. A few parents and carers commented less positively about involvement in their child's learning and the school taking account of parents' views and suggestions. Inspectors judged that the school's engagement with parents and carers is good, and it provides a range of opportunities for parents and carers to become involved in their child's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Dominic's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 55 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 408 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	64	20	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	45	25	45	4	7	1	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	29	53	23	42	3	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	53	22	40	4	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	51	24	44	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	40	27	49	6	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	55	22	40	2	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	18	33	30	55	4	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	35	31	56	5	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	49	17	31	6	11	5	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	35	30	55	2	4	4	7
The school is led and managed effectively	28	51	23	42	2	4	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	60	17	31	5	9	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Dominic's Catholic Primary School, London, E9 5SR

Thank you very much for the warm and friendly welcome when we visited your school. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you to hear about your views, and watching you learn in your classrooms.

The school provides you with a satisfactory education. You reach average standards by the time you leave at the end of Year 6, and you make satisfactory progress during your time in school. You have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are provided with a good start to school. The school provides a good range of extra activities such as sports clubs. Teaching is satisfactory and all of the staff look after you well.

In order to improve the school, we have asked the headteacher, staff and governing body to increase the proportion of good teaching, improve your writing skills, make the Year 1 curriculum more exciting and provide you all with challenging targets in English and mathematics.

Staff are ambitious for the school to improve. You can help by working hard, coming to school regularly and behaving well at all times.

Yours sincerely

Chris Kessell

Lead inspector

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