

St Dominic Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	112029
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	378407
Inspection dates	12–13 July 2012
Lead inspector	Derek Watts

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	V Malsom
Headteacher	Angela Palin
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Derek Watts

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed teaching and learning in 12 lessons or part lessons, taught by four different teachers. He held discussions with the headteacher, the staff, members of the governing body, parents, carers and pupils. Pupils were heard reading. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View questionnaire in planning the inspection. He observed the school's work, and looked at the school's policies, assessment information, pupils' work, teachers' plans and school improvement planning. He analysed 26 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well as 23 from pupils and 14 from staff.

Information about the school

St Dominic Church of England is much smaller than the average sized primary school. Almost all of the pupils are White British. The overall proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average, but the proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. A lower than average proportion is known to be eligible for free school meals. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. Before-school provision is managed by the governing body and was part of the inspection.

The school is organised into three classes. Class 1 consists of Reception and Year 1 pupils. Class 2 has pupils from Years 2, 3 and 4 and Class 3 consists of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. St Dominic federated with St Mellion in January 2011. An executive headteacher leads both schools.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- St Dominic is a good school. It has made good improvements since the previous inspection. Most pupils achieve well because of good teaching. The school is not outstanding because of some inconsistencies in pupils' achievement, particularly in writing, and in teaching.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. Good progress continues throughout the school, particularly in reading and mathematics. Attainment can fluctuate because of the small numbers in each year group and the above average proportion of pupils who leave and join the school part way through the year. Attainment in the current Year 6 is above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing. There are inconsistencies in the quality of pupils' handwriting and pupils are not always given enough opportunities to apply writing skills across the curriculum.
- Teaching is usually good. Where the teaching is strongest, teachers convey high expectations and provide challenging and exciting tasks which are well matched to pupils' needs. Pupils are inspired, engaged and make good gains in their learning. In a few lessons, where teaching is no better than satisfactory, levels of challenge are not as high, especially for the more able, and learning lacks a brisk pace. Pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to plan and organise their own work.
- Pupils' behaviour is usually good and pupils feel safe at school. Pupils are courteous, friendly and considerate and enjoy learning. Attendance is average.
- The headteacher provides clear leadership and direction. The federated partnership enables good sharing of expertise and resources. Leaders promote good achievement and good behaviour and safety. Procedures to develop teaching and manage the performance of staff are effective. The school has a clear overview of its performance and is striving to raise achievement in writing and extend the more able.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing so that it is consistently good by:
 - improving pupils' handwriting across the school
 - extending opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills in subjects other than English.
- Improve the consistency of teaching so that it is always good or better by ensuring that in all lessons:
 - challenging tasks are carefully matched to pupils' different abilities, particularly for the more able
 - learning moves on at a brisk pace
 - pupils have good opportunities to plan and organise their own work.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is good overall. Almost all parents and carers who completed the inspection questionnaire stated that their children were making good progress. Attainment can fluctuate because of the small numbers in each year group and variations in the proportion of pupils with particular learning needs. Pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics and satisfactory progress in writing. In the current Year 6, attainment is above average in reading and mathematics. It is average in writing.

Most year groups of children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills broadly expected for their age but this can vary for the reasons above. Children make good progress in the areas of learning. They talk with enthusiasm about their learning. They enjoy books and stories. Their writing is developing well. Children recognise and name two-dimensional shapes correctly. They show coordination and effort in physical activities.

Across the school, most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Their needs are carefully assessed and they receive well-targeted individual support. The school is striving to increase the proportion of pupils who attain the higher levels. However, occasionally, activities are not sufficiently challenging to fully extend the more able.

Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening because they have well-planned opportunities to discuss their learning. Good progress is made in reading because of a regular and effective programme for the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). In the current Year 2, attainment is below average in reading but it is

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above average in Year 6. Pupils in Class 3 used a range of texts to find interesting and useful information about the Spartans and Athenians. In groups, they presented their findings clearly to the class. The presentations were articulate, informative and enhanced by constructive humour.

Raising pupils' achievement in writing is a priority as this area has trailed behind reading and mathematics. Grammar, punctuation and spelling are improving. Handwriting is underdeveloped and not all the oldest pupils are writing with a fluent and joined hand. While there are some good examples of pupils applying writing skills across the curriculum, the good practice is not consistent.

In mathematics, pupils made good progress in most lessons seen. Year 1 pupils in Class 1 used a range of practical resources to increase their understanding of halves and quarters. They used this knowledge effectively to solve problems in sharing food items. In Class 3, pupils used information and communication technology well to reinforce their understanding of line graphs. They produced clear and labelled graphs showing the rainfall of Athens and London. The data was accurately interpreted using correct mathematical vocabulary.

Pupils make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of science. They apply skills well in carrying out interesting investigations. Pupils in Class 2 created electric circuits and explored what happened when the components were changed. Pupils in Class 3 applied their knowledge and skills to design and make a pressure sensitive burglar alarm.

Quality of teaching

Teaching promotes good learning and enjoyment for pupils. Nearly all parents and carers who completed the questionnaire stated that their children were well taught. The pupils commented, 'Lessons are really fun'. In nearly all lessons, teachers successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They create a positive climate for learning and establish good relationships. Pupils' teamwork and ability to work collaboratively are particularly well developed in Class 3.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage there is a clear balance of adult-led activities and those initiated by the children. Children have good opportunities to explore and learn independently. Children make good progress because of the well-planned indoor and outdoor learning activities. The outdoor learning opportunities have been extended since the previous inspection.

Teachers' expectations of learning and behaviour are consistently high in most lessons and pupils respond well to these. Teachers' explanations and instructions are clear and informative. Questioning is used effectively to check pupils' understanding of new learning. The good opportunities provided for them to discuss their learning have a positive impact on their speaking and listening skills. The teaching of basic skills such as letters and their sounds is effective. For example, in Class 1, Reception children made good progress in consolidating the sounds 'ai', 'ow', 'oi', 'oo' 'igh' and 'ure'. The

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teacher's articulation of the sounds was clear and visual aids were used effectively. Children responded well to the teacher's brisk and lively approach.

In most lessons, assessment information is used well to plan teaching and to modify activities to pupils' different abilities and needs. In the main, pupils are challenged, their interest is sustained and they make good progress. Just occasionally, this is not the case, and in a few lessons the pace of learning slows. In most lessons, teachers encourage and promote independent learning. However, at times, learning is over-directed by the teacher and pupils do not have the opportunity to plan and organise their own work.

The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is mostly good. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and make good contributions to these pupils' learning. The marking of pupils' work is helpful and constructive. Good work is praised and useful comments guide improvement.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle well into school. They feel safe, secure and grow in confidence. They share and relate positively to adults and to their peers. Across the school, most pupils enjoy their learning and behave well. The school's records of incidents indicate that behaviour is typically good and this is confirmed by pupils. In Class 3, pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are sometimes outstanding and this has a very positive impact on learning. The attitudes and behaviour of a few pupils in Class 2 are sometimes less positive and this can hinder the flow of the lesson and the pace of learning.

All parents and carers who completed the questionnaire stated that their children feel safe at school and that they are well looked after. Pupils confirmed that they feel safe and that they are very well looked after by staff.

While most parents and carers stated that behaviour in the school is good, that lessons are not disrupted by poor behaviour and that bullying is dealt with effectively, a few parents and carers expressed concern in these areas. Pupils show a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including persistent name-calling. They know the steps to take to prevent bullying. Pupils told the inspector that bullying is very rare and that should it occur, it is swiftly dealt with. However, learning in Class 2 is occasionally disrupted by inappropriate behaviour while staff take appropriate action to deal with it. A parent summed up the situation well, 'The majority of children behave well, one or two can be disruptive.' The school has effective systems to monitor and promote attendance. Attendance levels are average.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and staff have created a positive climate for pupils to learn and develop. Staff work well as a team and all are focused on promoting good achievement and good teaching. The federated partnership with St Mellion benefits

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the pupils of both schools. Staff expertise, learning resources, training sessions and school journeys are effectively shared. Good emphasis is placed on safeguarding and all requirements are met. As a result, pupils feel safe and well cared for.

The school has a clear overview of its performance and takes effective action to bring about needed improvements. Professional development and training are well linked to the school's improvement priorities. There are clear procedures for the development of teaching, including sharing expertise and practice with teachers from the partner school, although leaders are aware of the need to build on this work to ensure that teaching is consistently good in all areas. The school has a good capacity to improve. Since the previous inspection, pupils' achievement has improved from satisfactory to good.

The curriculum promotes good achievement and enjoyment for pupils. A wide range of additional activities enrich pupils' learning, including choir, hand bells, netball, jewellery club and rounders. About a dozen pupils attend the well-organised before-school provision. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and discrimination is effectively tackled. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully. The vast majority of pupils are considerate, responsible and show considerable respect for others. The choir gave impressive performances in school and to the local community.

The governing body is supportive and has a good understanding of the school's performance. The school engages well with parents and carers. The survey indicates that most are pleased with the care and education provided for their children. They praised the approachability of the staff, the additional activities and pupils' attitudes to learning.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

16 July 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of St Dominic Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Saltash, PL12 6SU

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school. By giving me your views, including those some of you supplied in questionnaires, and showing me your work, you helped me to make all the judgements about your school. I enjoyed my visit. St Dominic is a good school. These are the main strengths:

- You enjoy school and most of you have positive attitudes to learning.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start.
- Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are making good progress because of good teaching and an interesting curriculum.
- Behaviour is mostly good and you relate well to others. Behaviour is sometimes outstanding in Class 3.
- You feel safe at school because teachers and other adults take very good care of you.
- The school is led well by your headteacher, and she receives good support from staff and governors.

There are a few points for improvement:

- I would like some of you to make better progress in writing. I have asked the headteacher and staff to help you with your handwriting and to increase opportunities for you to use your writing skills in different topics and subjects.
- In a few lessons, the teacher could challenge you more, especially for those who find learning easy. At times the lesson could move along at a quicker pace and you could be given more opportunities to plan and organise your own work.

You can all help by continuing to work hard, particularly on your writing.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts
Lead inspector

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