

Blessed Dominic Catholic Primary School

Lanacre Avenue, Grahame Park, London, NW9 5FN

Inspection dates

22–23 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked very effectively with other leaders, staff and governors to raise achievement and improve teaching. As a result, the school continues to improve its level of effectiveness. Leaders are setting the pace for it to improve further.
- Pupils achieve well from low starting points when they join the Nursery. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average by the time pupils leave Year 6.
- Children make good progress in the early years because there is a strong focus on developing their early language skills.
- Teaching is consistently good across the school. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and make learning interesting for them.
- Teaching assistants provide a good level of support to individuals and groups of pupils, which ensures they achieve well.
- Pupils have a great desire to learn. This is reflected in their outstanding attitudes and excellent behaviour.
- Pupils feel completely safe in school and have an extremely clear outstanding understanding of how to stay safe.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most able pupils are not always given sufficiently challenging work in mathematics.
- At times pupils are not given enough opportunities to write at length in different subjects.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 28 lessons or parts of lessons, including 15 jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Members of the inspection team heard pupils read and, with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and looked closely at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including improvement plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, monitoring files, safeguarding and subject materials, evidence of the school's partnership work and information for families.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils chosen at random. Discussions were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and other staff, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a parent governor, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 49 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also spoke informally to parents in the playground.
- The inspectors considered the 34 staff questionnaires that were completed.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Monica Raphael	Additional Inspector
Gareth Williams	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It is gradually expanding to become two-form entry. At the moment there are two classes in each year group up to and including Year 3.
- Nine out of ten pupils are from a range of minority ethnic groups, which is high. Three quarters of the pupils speak English as an additional language. This is also high.
- Almost one third of pupils are supported by the pupil premium (additional funding which in this school supports pupils known to be eligible for free school meals). This is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, at more than one tenth, is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, at less than one twentieth, is below average.
- Early years provision is full time in Reception and mainly part time in the Nursery. Some Nursery children attend full time one day per week.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- There is a major programme of home building going on in the local area. The school is looking to expand its premises as it continues to take on more pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all pupils, especially the most able, are given sufficiently demanding work to do in mathematics.

- Ensure that pupils are expected to write at length in a wide range of subjects in addition to English.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have successfully created a climate where all pupils are valued equally and can aspire to do their best. Their passion for the school is embraced by all staff who work together extremely well. As a result, teaching is consistently good and pupils' personal development, including their behaviour, is outstanding.
- The school has adopted its own 'learning model', which sets out key characteristics of highly effective learners. These are shared with pupils, who find a common language in describing their achievements and what they need to do next to improve. Teachers use this approach across different subjects, thus ensuring they are relevant to pupils and engage their interest.
- The leadership of teaching strongly develops all staff through rigorous checks on the quality of the provision. Teachers have challenging targets linked to pupils' progress. Their pay rates are aligned to the success of their work.
- The pupil premium is used effectively to ensure there are no gaps in attainment between eligible pupils and the others in the school. It is spent on additional teaching and enriching pupils' experiences.
- Middle leaders know their areas well and know what needs to be done to make them even better, such as writing, which is not extended enough across different subject areas. They play a full role in evaluating the effectiveness of the school's work and contribute substantially to school improvement activities.
- With its strong Christian values, the school promotes equality of opportunity very well and fosters excellent relationships both within the school and parish and further afield. There are very close links with the church, neighbouring primary schools and with the receiving secondary school. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The quality of the range of subjects taught is good. It gives pupils excellent opportunities to learn about different cultures. For example, the school holds regular international evenings to celebrate its diversity and arranges visits to different places of worship. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Pupils participate in regular fundraising events for charitable organisations both at home and abroad. Sensitive questioning helps pupils to reflect upon key issues and moral dilemmas affecting the world. In these ways, the school prepares pupils very well for life in modern Britain.
- A good many visits and visitors enhance the curriculum. A recent Comenius project, 'Europe on Stage', involved eight other European countries and visits to the schools. Pupils from each country exchanged e-mails, took part in conferencing and shared videos of staged theatre performances. There is also a wide range of clubs including Spanish, baking, chess and 'mad science'.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is being used effectively to promote greater participation in sport by pupils, and in ensuring their well-being. Staff are benefiting from coaching so that they are more confident in teaching sport. New sports are being introduced, such as rugby and Gaelic football. There are many physical activities after school, including street dancing.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet all statutory requirements and are highly effective. All training is up to date, and robust checks are carried out before anybody begins to work at the school.
- The school accesses support from the local authority and other providers when it needs it. It is recognised as a school that can sustain itself in providing pupils with a good education by the local authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are effective. They know the school's strengths and areas to develop well. They have a good understanding about the quality of teaching and how well pupils perform compared with other schools. They set targets for the headteacher and ensure that these inform the targets that are set for other members of staff when managing their performance, so all are held fully accountable for their work. They keep a close eye on the finances and ensure that additional funding, such as the pupil premium and the primary physical education and sport premium, is spent wisely and represents value for money. Governors use a wide range of skills to support and challenge the school's leaders in improving the school. They have been very helpful in planning for the future growth of the school and negotiating over additional accommodation. Governors are reflective and regularly review their own effectiveness to ensure they are making a difference to outcomes for pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are very positive about their learning. They take a real pride in their work and this is reflected in its very neat presentation. Their excellent attitudes create a culture in which learning is highly valued and contribute to their good progress.
- Pupils behave extremely well in class and around the school. They show one another respect and have excellent manners. For example, the older pupils are most helpful to the younger ones in the lunch hall. Pupils respond very well to adults.
- Behaviour is excellent in the breakfast club. Here pupils of all ages mix together and start the day with a nourishing hot meal. They get on very well together and staff support pupils well.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility through their roles as members of the school council, lunch monitors and house captains. They say that school leaders, 'listen to our ideas to make school a better place'. For example, the school accepted pupils' suggestions for a new school uniform and a gardening club.
- Attendance is well above average, reflecting pupils' great enjoyment in coming to school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils say they feel completely safe in school and free from bullying. Parents also support this view. They have a very good understanding of different kinds of bullying, including cyber bullying.
- Pupils are very knowledgeable about keeping safe, for example on the internet. 'Hector the Protector' makes sure all the sites they visit are safe to use.
- Pupils learn about the dangers of gang culture and illegal drugs and take part in child protection workshops. They have visited the new regeneration site around the school, where major building works are taking place. They gain an understanding of site safety through wearing hard hats and high visibility jackets. This equips them to stay safe in their local area.
- Pupils value the support they receive. One pupil said, 'The things that we struggle with they help us with.'

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers engage pupils well and make work interesting for them. They use questioning as one way to extend pupils' understanding. For example, Year 5 pupils studying the novel, 'Charlotte's Web' by E B White were asked, 'How was Charlotte underneath her bold and cruel exterior?' This made pupils consider the difference between outer appearance and what is going on inside.
- Teaching assistants provide skilful support for groups and individuals, which helps pupils to make good progress. They work well with teachers to share information about how pupils are getting on.
- Books show that pupils make good progress over time. Pupils have useful advice on how to improve their work. The school's 'green pen' policy means that pupils routinely act upon the guidance they are given and this accelerates their progress.
- Reading is taught well. Pupils read widely and often and can draw meaning from what they read. The impact of teaching upon literacy is good. Much work has gone into equipping pupils to write in a lively and interesting manner, particularly within English-based lessons. They are supported in using a wide range of vocabulary.
- Grammar and spelling are taught systematically, resulting in three quarters of Year 6 pupils attaining the higher levels in the national tests. In a few classes, however, teachers miss opportunities to extend pupils' writing skills in subjects other than English.
- While mathematics is mainly taught well, work is not always set at the right level, especially for the most able pupils. The school has focused on improving pupils' mental calculation with short, sharp daily sessions. This is having a positive impact on helping pupils to apply their knowledge in a range of different situations.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs benefit from specialist teaching, for example in supporting their speech and language, and dyslexia. The inclusion manager, together with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, monitors progress and ensures that pupils also receive high quality support in improving their physical coordination.
- The numerous pupils who speak English as an additional language are taught well. Teachers are very aware of their needs and use a wide range of strategies to help them become confident in reading, speaking and writing English. They have plenty of opportunities to practise their skills with their classmates.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Nursery with skills that are low for their age. A large proportion speaks very little English. They make good progress in the early years because teaching is consistently good and there is effective support for children's specific needs.
- Most children leave Reception with a good level of development, although some are more behind in reading and speaking.
- The proportion of pupils who reach the required standard in the Year 1 phonics check (the sounds that letters make) is average. From their low starting points, pupils make good progress in reading.
- Pupils achieve well in Key Stage 1. In 2014, unvalidated results show that Year 2 pupils reached average standards in reading, but above average standards in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress over time. In 2014, standards were above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. A high proportion of pupils attained a good Level 4, which is a marker for success at secondary school. All Year 6 pupils made the expected progress over their time in Key Stage 2. An above average proportion of pupils made better than expected progress.
- While progress is generally good across Key Stage 2, it is stronger in reading and writing than in mathematics in some year groups. This is because some teachers are more confident at challenging pupils to write well, particularly in English-focused lessons.
- The school has done much to raise the profile of reading. Pupils have been involved in setting up reading areas in each class, which are very inviting. They have lots of opportunities to read in school time. Each class has its own text linked to pupils' learning. For example, Year 6 pupils are reading 'Goodnight, Mr Tom' about the experiences of a young evacuee as part of their work on 'a child's view' of life during the Second World War. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their enjoyment of reading.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium make good progress compared to other pupils nationally. In 2014, they all made the expected progress and there were no gaps in their attainment with other pupils in the school in reading, writing and mathematics. They also performed well compared with other pupils nationally, so that there were no gaps. This was a considerable improvement on the position in 2013.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well because their needs are identified promptly and they receive good support. The school employs specialist teachers who make sure their needs are met fully.
- The most able pupils are well challenged in reading and writing. For example, those with the potential to reach the highest levels of attainment are taught separately in Year 6 in order to boost their performance. The higher attaining pupils performed well in the 2014 national tests. In some classes, however, the most able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently in mathematics and this slows their progress.
- The many pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well. This is because the school caters effectively for their needs and gives them plenty of opportunities to speak the language from the earliest age. They are also helped to learn new vocabulary so that they can keep up with their classmates.

The early years provision is good

- Children achieve well because the early years is led and managed effectively and all staff know the children as individuals. Children have good opportunities to catch up quickly from low starting points. Their early skills are developed systematically, for example through mark making and exploring their environment.
- Teaching is consistently good. Activities have a clear purpose and adults help children to develop their understanding. Outside in the building area children built a 'fire engine' out of blocks and arranged four tyres for the wheels. They said, when questioned, that it was 'full of our stuff'.
- The inside and outdoor areas are attractive places for learning. Staff celebrate children's work by displaying it widely. Children have access to a good variety of resources, which they can select for themselves, and this encourages them to use their imagination and sustain their concentration.
- Children are keen to learn and their behaviour is impeccable. Staff keep good records of their achievements. They communicate well with parents and involve them in their children's learning. As a result of the good provision in the early years, children are well prepared to join Year 1.

- They ensure that children are kept safe and do all they can to build their confidence. This is especially the case in helping children who join the early years speaking very little English to settle quickly.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	101339
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	448220

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	359
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter McNamara
Headteacher	Geraldine Pears
Date of previous school inspection	26–27 April 2010
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