

St Dominic's Catholic Primary School

St Mary's Hill, Inchbrook, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 5HP

Inspection dates

7–8 February 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- As a result of significant changes in leadership, staffing and governance since the previous inspection, actions taken by leaders to improve the school have not been implemented effectively or consistently.
- Pupils do not make sufficient progress during their time in the school. As a result, pupils' achievement and progress across year groups in mathematics and writing is inconsistent.
- Until recently, subject leaders have lacked the guidance and support they need to plan and effectively implement agreed approaches to improve standards in their subjects.
- On occasion, misconceptions in pupils' understanding go unchecked, which slows the pace of their learning.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet consistently good. In the past, the school's systems to track and record pupils' progress have not been effective. Consequently, teachers do not routinely plan work which challenges pupils, especially the most able, to achieve the highest standards.
- The curriculum does not support pupils to learn effectively. Teachers do not plan learning sufficiently well to enable pupils to practise their skills in writing and mathematics across a range of subjects.
- Over time, leaders have not provided governors with the detailed information they need to be able to effectively evaluate the school's performance and hold leaders to account.

The school has the following strengths

- The newly appointed headteacher is driving improvement at a fast pace. She has a deep and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Plans to improve the quality of teaching are starting to have an impact. A higher proportion of pupils are on track to reach the standards they are capable of at the end of Year 6.
- The quality of art work is of a high standard.
- Pupils behave well and are courteous and well mannered. They feel safe and secure and their attendance is good.
- The teaching of phonics is strong and pupils achieve high standards in reading and in the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- Children make good progress in the early years as a result of strong teaching and effective leadership.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that an increasing proportion of pupils make good progress across year groups and a range of subjects by ensuring that teachers:
 - raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially the most able
 - use information they keep about their pupils' learning and progress to plan work which provides appropriate challenge so that pupils make good progress
 - plan work which inspires and motivates pupils to learn effectively to reach the highest possible standards
 - consistently implement the new approaches introduced by leaders to improve the quality of pupils' work
 - address misconceptions in pupils' understanding and learning as they arise to ensure that pupils reach the highest standards.
- Improve pupils' learning and progress in mathematics and writing by ensuring that:
 - teachers receive the guidance they need to effectively develop their skills to be able to implement the school's approaches to the teaching of writing and mathematics
 - teachers plan work which challenges pupils to apply their calculation skills to solve problems in mathematics
 - pupils use their skills in writing in a range of subjects to produce work of a consistently high quality.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that governors receive high-quality information about the progress of all pupils, including the most able, so that they effectively hold leaders and staff to account for improved outcomes
 - developing the skills of subject leaders to ensure that they take greater responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and raising standards in their subjects
 - ensuring that the school's planned curriculum supports pupils, including the most able, to make good progress in a range of subjects.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management should be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school has experienced a significant number of changes to its leadership and staff team since the previous inspection. This has impacted on the school's capacity to improve its performance. As a result, pupils' progress across a range of subjects and year groups is inconsistent. Standards at the end of Year 6 are not yet good in mathematics and writing.
- The recently appointed headteacher has quickly secured an in-depth and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This work is building successfully on the improvements made by the previous interim headteacher. Leaders' plans for improvement correctly focus on the key areas for development. This is resulting in improved quality of teaching. Nonetheless, these actions are recent. Previous actions taken by leaders to improve the school have not been sufficient in securing good outcomes for the pupils.
- The headteacher has an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching across the school. Teachers are 'stepping up' to the increased demands and expectations. All staff now share her aspirations and determination to improve the school quickly. However, work in pupils' books confirms some inconsistency in the quality of work. This is slowing the progress pupils make, particularly in mathematics and writing.
- Until the start of this academic year, subject leaders have not been provided with the support and guidance they need to carry out their responsibilities effectively. This has slowed the pace of improvement and momentum required to fully implement the demands and expectations of the new curriculum, particularly in mathematics. Consequently, teachers' understanding and expectations of what pupils can achieve have not been consistently high enough over time. This has resulted in outcomes which are inconsistent across the school.
- The headteacher has implemented rigorous systems to track and monitor pupils' achievement and progress. Leaders now check the progress of every pupil and all groups of pupils, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, some staff are not yet confident to use the information they keep about pupils' progress to plan their next steps in learning. Consequently, the current assessment systems are not having sufficient impact on raising standards across the school.
- The curriculum provides pupils with appropriate learning experiences across a range of subjects. Teachers plan visits to engage pupils in their learning. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were excited to visit the local fire station to support their topic on 'The fire of London'. However, since the previous inspection, leaders have not developed the curriculum sufficiently well to take account of the changes and raised expectations. This has resulted in a lack of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils. In addition, some tasks do not sufficiently interest and motivate pupils to learn successfully. This is especially the case for a few boys. Consequently, in subjects such as history and geography, pupils do not make the progress they are capable of. By contrast, art work displayed around the school is of a high quality. This confirms the high standards pupils reach in this subject.

- The school provides pupils with a number of after-school activities and enrichment opportunities to develop their interests and experiences. For example, during the inspection, a group of pupils took part in a drama workshop to develop their speaking and listening skills and self-confidence.
- Leaders, including governors, ensure that the pupil premium funding is used effectively. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make at least expected progress. In addition, an increasing proportion, including the most able disadvantaged, make good progress as a result of leaders' increased focus on tracking the learning and progress of this group of pupils.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport funding is used appropriately to increase pupils' participation in sport. The school employs sports coaches to provide high-quality sports for the pupils and training for staff. This is supporting teachers to deliver PE with confidence and increased subject knowledge.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. The school's Christian distinctiveness and Catholic values underpin all aspects of the school's work. Pupils are polite and respectful to adults and to each other. They warmly welcome friends with traditions and beliefs which differ from their own. Pupils have a good understanding of British values. Older pupils are currently preparing to represent the school in a 'mock trial', debating current issues. This helps them to understand the principles of the rule of law and how our system of democracy works.
- Some parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire and text service recorded their concerns relating to previous leadership and the number of changes in staffing. However, many now recognise the immediate positive changes made since the start of this academic year and by the current headteacher in particular. They describe the school as 'moving forward in the right direction'.
- The school has received insufficient external support since the previous inspection. The local authority has provided 'light touch' support as the school is a stand-alone academy. However, the lack of in-depth external scrutiny since the previous inspection has resulted in a decline in the school's performance.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has experienced significant changes since the previous inspection. Consequently, governors have not tackled identified weaknesses, such as the historical weaknesses in leadership, with the urgency and rigour required. However, current governors have taken time to recruit an experienced and ambitious headteacher to drive the school improvement priorities. These actions have had an immediate effect on creating a cohesive staff team, resulting in an improvement in the quality of teaching.
- The most recent information given to governors sets out the school's current performance. This has not been the case previously. This increased rigour enables governors to ask more pertinent and challenging questions to hold leaders to account. Minutes of the most recent meetings confirm the depth of their understanding, especially relating to the achievement and progress of groups and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Nonetheless, although the capacity of the governing body has strengthened, the rigour of this work is not yet impacting

sufficiently on raising standards across the school. Governors have identified that further training would support their work to improve the school.

- Governors visit the school regularly and meet with leaders to check the impact of leaders' actions. For example, the safeguarding governor frequently monitors the school's work to keep pupils safe. Governors support leaders to reward good teaching but they have not shied away from taking some difficult decisions when the quality of teaching falls below what they expect for the pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff receive the required training on all aspects of safeguarding. This includes training on preventing radicalisation and extremism. Leaders with responsibility for child protection have completed additional training to support them in carrying out their roles and responsibilities effectively. All staff understand and implement the school's agreed safeguarding policies and procedures consistently. The school's single central record is kept up to date and staff files contain information relating to detailed recruitment checks. The school places the highest priority on keeping pupils safe. As a result, the culture of safeguarding is strong at St Dominic's.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet good. The changes in staffing since the previous inspection have impacted on the delivery of consistently high-quality teaching and learning across the school. In addition, the school has not sufficiently kept up to date with the changes to the curriculum, particularly in mathematics. As a result, over time, some teachers have not had the in-depth understanding of the requirements of the more demanding expectations for each age group. This has led to outcomes which are not yet consistently good.
- The headteacher, together with the staff, immediately implemented 'non-negotiables' to improve the quality of teaching. The school's information confirms pupils are now on track to reach higher standards at the end of Year 6, especially in mathematics. Nonetheless, on occasion, teachers do not consistently implement leaders' new approaches. For example, they do not routinely provide feedback to pupils, in line with the school's agreed systems. At these times, pupils are unsure how to improve their work, which slows their progress.
- Teachers do not consistently plan work that provides sufficient stretch and challenge for the most able pupils. For example, work does not sufficiently take account of what pupils already know, understand and can do. Work in books confirms that pupils sometimes repeat topics that they have already learned. Some pupils commented that the work was 'quite easy', especially in mathematics. As a result, pupils make slower progress than they should.
- Not all teachers are sufficiently confident to deliver the school's approaches to the teaching of writing and mathematics effectively. Until recently, teachers have lacked the guidance and support they need to improve the quality of their teaching. Although work in books confirms most pupils are reaching standards expected for their age, not

enough pupils reach the higher standards of which they are capable. On occasion, teachers do not address pupils' misconceptions as they arise. As a result, pupils continue to make the same mistakes and do not learn effectively.

- Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics across the year groups is inconsistent. Although pupils develop strong calculation skills, they do not yet learn to apply these skills effectively to solve problems in mathematics. Similarly, pupils make strong gains in learning spellings, grammar and punctuation. However, work in books across a range of subjects and year groups confirms that they do not consistently use this knowledge in their writing. Although the content of the writing can be of a high standard, teachers accept work which is sometimes incomplete or lacking basic punctuation.
- The teaching of reading is effective. The school's approaches to teaching phonics starts immediately in the early years and pupils quickly build their knowledge of letters and sounds. Pupils told the inspector they read at home and enjoy visiting the library in school. Outcomes across the school are strong in reading.
- Leaders analyse the learning and progress of every pupil entitled to pupil premium funding and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They quickly identify dips in achievement and plan interventions to ensure that they make at least expected progress from their starting points.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff build positive relationships with pupils which contributes to pupils feeling safe and secure. Pupils typically commented, 'We are kind to one another – we feel loved every day.' Several parents commented on the care given to their children which contributes positively to their enjoyment of being at this school.
- Pupils told the inspector they like school and want to come every day. As a result, attendance is typically in line with the national average.
- In discussions, pupils say there is very little bullying, but would know who to go to for help and support. Older pupils are very knowledgeable about how to keep safe online. They have a good understanding of the possible dangers of using the internet and gave their views to the inspector in a mature and measured way. They say that their lessons in e-safety help them to understand the dangers further.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and respectful to each other and to adults. Pupils hold the door for adults and greet visitors with warmth and pride at being a member of this school community.
- Breaktimes and lunchtimes are well supervised. Pupils enjoy time to come together to chat to their friends and play outside in the well-resourced play area.

- Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and contribute to the school's work. For example, pupils meet together as the 'Chaplaincy team' to plan collective worship and provide other pupils with time to be reflective and peaceful. This teaches pupils to take responsibility and develop leadership skills.
- The school's Christian distinctiveness is at the heart of its work. Pupils know, understand and put into practice the school's values, such as respect, friendship and justice. This has a very positive impact in promoting pupils' moral and social development. This is a well-ordered community where pupils are valued.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally positive. However, on occasion, pupils lose focus when the work is too easy or too hard. In addition, pupils do not take enough pride in their work because teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough. This slows their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The progress of pupils currently in the school is inconsistent across year groups and a range of subjects. This is because the quality of teaching is not yet typically good across the school. However, the school's own information and work in pupils' books confirm pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach at least expected standards for their age as a result of the improvements in teaching.
- Progress in mathematics across the school is inconsistent because pupils have not, until recently, been effectively taught to apply the skills they have learned. This puts a cap on their learning. Consequently, outcomes at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 were below the national average in 2016. Not enough pupils made the progress they were capable of. Work in books confirms that more pupils are now achieving standards expected for their age. Nonetheless, standards across the school are not yet good in this subject.
- Pupils do not consistently achieve high standards in writing or make good progress across a range of subjects. Historically, teachers have accepted work which is not of a sufficiently high quality. In addition, teachers have not routinely picked up mistakes and misconceptions. As a result, some pupils continue to make the same errors.
- The progress of the most able pupils is not yet good. Not enough pupils across the school make the progress of which they are capable. Work in their books confirms that teachers do not consistently provide challenge for this group of pupils to ensure that they extend their learning and deepen their understanding, especially in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils make at least expected progress in English and mathematics. Leaders focus sharply on the learning and progress of pupils that receive the pupil premium funding and plan targeted and focused support to successfully diminish the differences between these pupils and their peers. Consequently, these pupils make progress which is comparable with that of other pupils nationally. This ensures that the school effectively promotes equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is well above the national average. All pupils in Year 1 achieved a successful outcome in 2016. The teaching of phonics is a strength of the school. Pupils make rapid progress as a result of high-quality phonics teaching in early years and in Years 1 and 2. Pupils build on their knowledge of letters and sounds to become fluent

and successful readers. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above the national average.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive high-quality support from well-trained teaching assistants and higher-level teaching assistants. This support helps them to make at least expected progress from their starting points.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision provides a high-quality education for the children. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is typically good. This enables the children to make good progress from their starting points and to be well prepared for Year 1.
- Children start school in the early years with skills that are typically expected for their age. By the end of their first year in school in 2016, all children achieved a good level of development, which is well above that found nationally. The progress of children currently in the Reception class continues to be good, particularly in phonics. In addition, children learn to cooperate with each other and develop strong personal, social and emotional skills.
- Teachers plan a wealth of interesting and engaging activities to encourage children to learn. Some activities are led effectively by adults; others allow the children to choose activities to develop their own interests and test out their ideas. For example, a small group of the most able pupils successfully named a collection of three dimensional shapes and worked together to discuss and write down their properties. On this occasion, learning was highly effective.
- Children learn in a vibrant and well-resourced indoor and outdoor learning environment. For example, children could choose to 'write in the slime', or write labels for their police uniforms. These activities particularly appeal to the boys who took up the challenge to develop their independent writing skills.
- Adults support children effectively, using their knowledge of each child to pose probing questions. This work successfully extends children's thinking and understanding. However, on occasion, staff do not direct children back to the learning task. At these times, the children do not achieve the intended learning outcome.
- Leadership of the early years is strong. The leader uses her wide range of experience of working with young children to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment is of a high quality. In particular, staff assess the needs of each child when they start school. They use this information carefully to plan tasks and learning opportunities which precisely meet the needs of the children in the class. This includes targeted individual support for disadvantaged children and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, children make good progress in all areas of learning.
- The teaching of phonics is very effective. Children quickly learn their initial sounds and begin to use these sounds to read and write simple words. For example, during the inspection, a group of children wrote a letter to the wolf in their story. However, although most successfully completed the task, the teacher did not routinely check that the children were forming their letters correctly to ensure that they made the best possible progress.

- Parents confirm that their children receive a good education in the early years. Many commented on the helpfulness of the home visits prior to starting school and 'settling in' sessions in the classroom. As a result, children settle quickly and behave well. They develop very strong listening and communication skills, learning to take turns and be independent.
- Children play well together and learn safely in a secure learning environment. Staff in the early years are vigilant in ensuring children's safety in the classroom and outdoor area.

School details

Unique reference number	137373
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10025087

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Charles O'Neill
Headteacher	Jacqui Sollars
Telephone number	01453 832682
Website	www.st-dominics.gloucs.sch.uk
Email address	head@st-dominics.gloucs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 March 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the Reception Year attend full time.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are

supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after) is below average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. There are no pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- There have been a number of changes in staffing and governance since the previous inspection. The headteacher joined the school on 1 January 2017. The Years 5 and 6 teacher joined the school in January 2017.
- There are four classes. These include a Reception class and three mixed-age classes.
- There is a breakfast club and an after-school club on the school site. This provision is not managed by the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited lessons or parts of lessons during the inspection, most of which were jointly observed with the headteacher. The inspector also observed the teaching of phonics and listened to pupils read.
- The inspector spoke to pupils throughout the inspection, including at break and lunchtimes, to determine their views of the school.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work in their books to establish the current quality of their work and progress over time in a range of subjects.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the mathematics and early years leaders and spoke with teachers and teaching assistants during the inspection. In addition, the inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's improvement plans, the management of staff performance, information on pupils' progress, and records relating to attendance and safety. The inspector looked at minutes from recent governing body meetings and the school's records for monitoring teaching and learning.
- The inspector took account of 45 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. The inspector spoke with parents at the start of the school day. In addition, responses to the Parent View free-text service were analysed.
- Questionnaires were returned and analysed from 13 members of staff.

Inspection team

Catherine Leahy, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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