

St Dominic's Catholic Primary School

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

Inspection dates

11 to 12 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching has been inaccurate. This means that teachers have not received feedback that helps them improve their practice.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Stronger teaching in key stage 2 is not replicated in key stage 1 and the early years.
- Leaders' management of behaviour has been inadequate. Staff did not get the support they needed to manage the challenging behaviour of a minority of pupils.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not make the progress they should, because their needs are not accurately identified and planned for.
- Middle leaders have not had the support, guidance or time they need to make further improvements to teaching in their subject areas.
- Until recently, governors have not effectively held school leaders to account. As a result, weaknesses identified at the last inspection have not been addressed effectively.
- Over time, pupils' progress in writing is too slow. By the end of Year 6, few pupils can write securely at a deeper level.
- The teaching of phonics is inconsistent. Some pupils in Year 1 this year have not received the teaching they need to help them develop their phonics knowledge.
- Teachers' assessment of current pupils' writing at the end of key stage 1 is overgenerous.
- Pupils' calculation skills have improved in mathematics. However, pupils, including the most able, struggle to explain their reasoning when solving problems. This is because teachers do not model this well.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum. Science is taught well.
- Interim leaders' actions are improving teaching and learning quickly. They have an accurate view of what needs to be done.
- New governors have a clear vision for the school. They now challenge school leaders effectively.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved. Their behaviour is calm and orderly in school.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders' monitoring is accurate and provides teachers with the information they need to improve their practice quickly
 - ensuring that leaders correctly identify and plan for pupils with SEND so that their progress improves
 - making sure that systems for managing behaviour, including the management of records, are clearly understood and consistently applied to all pupils
 - making sure that middle leaders receive the support, guidance and time they need to make an effective contribution to improving standards in the subjects they lead
 - making sure that leaders of safeguarding ensure that record-keeping is streamlined so that information is available quickly to those who need it.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that assessment of writing in key stage 1 is accurate
 - making sure that the planning and delivery of phonics is well thought out across all of key stage 1 and the early years so that pupils can use their knowledge of phonics well in their reading and writing.
- Improve the standards pupils reach by:
 - making sure that teachers' modelling of technical language and reasoning in mathematics helps pupils of all abilities to explain their mathematical reasoning well
 - improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and use of grammar so that more pupils can securely write at a deeper level of understanding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Since the last inspection, there has been uncertainty and turbulence in the leadership of this small school. Senior leaders' actions have not improved the areas of the school identified as weaknesses at the previous inspection quickly enough.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching has been sporadic, particularly in the last year. Their feedback to teachers, including to those early in the profession, has not been timely or helpful. Consequently, the rate of improvement in the quality of teaching slowed in 2018. Teaching is not yet consistently good.
- Senior leaders' evaluation of teaching and learning has been inaccurate. There is a considerable difference between recorded evaluations of teaching and learning and evidence gathered during the inspection. Better teaching in key stage 2 has not been identified and shared across the school.
- Since the last inspection, a large number of pupils have left the school. Concerns about the management of the challenging behaviour of a few pupils then at the school contributed to the decisions of some parents to remove their children.
- Staff did not receive the support and guidance they needed to manage successfully an increase in the number of pupils with challenging behaviour. For example, professional development was provided too late in the day and was available only to teachers, and not to the support staff who often had to deal with difficult behaviour.
- A significant number of staff responding to the staff survey said that they did not feel well supported by senior leaders in dealing with challenging behaviour. Staff say that, until recently, senior leaders have not managed challenging behaviour well or consistently.
- Leaders introduced a new behaviour policy, but it was unclear and therefore not put into practice consistently. Record-keeping of behaviour concerns is inconsistent. Leaders are now revising these procedures. Governors have recently revised the behaviour policy.
- Some pupils with SEND do not make the progress they should, because their needs have not been accurately identified by leaders. In addition, for some, the provision they receive is not closely linked to agreed learning on their action plans. Regular reviews of pupils' plans have fallen by the wayside.
- Middle leaders who took up their roles during this academic year have not received the guidance they need to begin to carry out their roles effectively. Leaders have not allocated them the time to monitor the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility.
- Sports premium funding is well spent. The range of sports that pupils can learn has increased, including in extra-curricular clubs. Opportunities for pupils to represent their school at competitive events have increased. New adventure trail equipment adds another dimension to pupils' play. Daily participation in a whole-school walking activity helps ensure that all pupils are active during the day.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils at the school is small, commonly one or two per

year group. Over time, most disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most able, make the progress they should in reading and mathematics. Their progress in writing is not as strong.

- Interim leaders have quickly identified what needs to be done. Their evaluation of the school is accurate. Already, the feedback teachers now receive is helping them to improve their practice, including in key stage 1 and the early years. New leaders are overhauling the school's procedures and making sure that they are fit for purpose.
- As a result of new leaders' high expectations and support for staff, current pupils' progress in English and mathematics is improving, including in key stage 1 and the early years. The support teachers are receiving from expert teachers in writing and mathematics has been consistently applied and is making a difference to pupils' progress in all year groups.
- Pupils receive an appropriate and balanced curriculum. Topics generate pupils' interest and enthusiasm for learning. Science is well taught. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective.

Governance of the school

- Over time, governance has not been effective in challenging school leaders about the slow rate of improvement since the last inspection. Governors, and school leaders, have sometimes decided not to heed the advice of external professionals brought in to support the school. This includes on issues of recruitment.
- The governing body has recently been revitalised, including by the addition of experienced governors. The result is that the board have radically improved their challenge to school leaders. Governors now ask challenging, robust questions and address matters head on.
- Governors are now bringing a fresh strategic perspective. They are quickly addressing pressing questions about the school's structure and direction. Their decisions are guided by a clear commitment to improving the provision pupils receive. They are ambitious that pupils should achieve well.
- Governors have acted to gather the views of stakeholders, including parents. They have used this information to revise some school policies. They have focused on the behaviour policy, for example. As a result, this key policy is better understood and more consistently applied by adults. Behaviour has improved as a result.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff know what to do if they have a concern about a child. Staff have received relevant training. The school policies have recently been updated. The single central record is well kept.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school. They know whom to turn to if they have a worry. The school's curriculum includes specific teaching for pupils on how to keep themselves safe. The majority of parents responding to the online parents' survey agree that their children are safe in school.
- Governors check on the safeguarding work of the school. This includes making sure the

single central record is up to date and talking with pupils.

- However, information and records are not kept in a coordinated manner, so that it can be difficult to access them quickly. New school leaders are aware of this and are taking action to streamline record-keeping.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- For current pupils, the teaching of phonics has not followed a cohesive plan across key stage 1 and the early years. This means that teachers are not always challenging pupils appropriately. Some pupils in Year 1 this year have not covered the learning that will help them develop the required phonics knowledge.
- The teaching of spelling has not ensured that pupils spell consistently well in their writing. This is one of the reasons why pupils' progress in writing is too slow.
- Pupils' poor spelling and insecure command of conventions of grammar, punctuation and language structure mean that few pupils can securely write at greater depth by the end of Year 6.
- The quality of current pupils' writing is now improving. Standards of handwriting and presentation are now strong. Current pupils have plenty of opportunities to write regularly. Their work contains a range of different types of writing and writing for different purposes.
- Teachers assess pupils' progress in key stage 2 accurately. However, teachers have sometimes been overgenerous in their assessment of key stage 1 pupils' writing. Pupils have been assessed as writing at a deeper level when their work does not reflect this.
- Teachers have made good use of the support and professional development offered by leading teachers of the local mathematics hub. As a result of more effective teaching, pupils' calculation skills have improved. Their books, including those in key stage 1 and the early years, show that pupils can use and record a range of strategies when engaged in calculations.
- Pupils make good use of the wide range of practical mathematics resources to help them in their work. Older pupils have a good command of mental mathematics, which they use effectively in order to solve practical problems, such as coordinates and time problems.
- However, pupils, including the most able, often struggle to explain their mathematical reasoning. This is because teachers' modelling of how to answer reasoning questions is not clear and effective. Pupils are not taught the necessary mathematical vocabulary to help them express their ideas clearly and fluently.
- Pupils' mathematics work shows that teachers have been successful in adopting a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics. There is evidence of challenge and extension for the most able mathematicians.
- Pupils who have English as an additional language are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants. This enables them to pick up quickly the skills they need to communicate effectively in English. They play a full and active part in school life.
- Teachers are keen to improve their teaching. They have been very receptive to the support provided by expert teachers in writing and mathematics. They have put new

ideas into practice consistently. This is helping improve current pupils' progress in writing and mathematics.

- An action plan to improve how phonics is taught has already been put in place by new leaders. It is leading to improvements in phonics teaching. For example, in the early years, more effective modelling by adults is enabling Reception and pre-school children to engage actively in their learning. As a result, they were able to identify and use simple digraphs well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- In this small school, staff know pupils and their families well. Pupils know they have a range of adults to whom they can turn if they have a concern. They feel that adults will listen to them. Pupils say they feel safe and happy at school and the majority of their parents agree.
- Pupils want to do well, and they take a pride in their work. Standards of presentation and of handwriting in books are strong from an early age. Mathematics and wider curriculum work are also well presented.
- The school's strong Christian ethos and Catholic values contribute well to pupils' personal development. For example, pupils prepare and lead worship and take an active part in the life of the parish.
- The support that adults give to pupils with English as an additional language helps them to settle quickly into school life.
- The curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to learn about how to keep themselves and others safe. For example, pupils know what steps to take to keep themselves safe online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons and show enthusiasm for their learning. However, a few pupils in key stage 1 and in the early years can sometimes become distracted. This happens when the work is either too easy or too hard for them.
- The behaviour management strategies that teachers use in the lower part of the school are sometimes limited in their impact. As a result, a few pupils have become used to not following the instructions of adults in the classroom quickly. This can sometimes slow the learning of others.
- Pupils attend school regularly. Their attendance is in line with national figures.
- Pupils move around the school in an orderly manner, including at breaktimes, between lessons and when carrying out the 'Daily Mile' outside at the start of the school day.
- Teachers' consistency in their application of the behaviour policy has recently

improved. The revised policy is more clearly understood by teachers and pupils. As a result, the behaviour of current pupils has improved.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over time, the progress pupils make in writing has been too slow by the end of Year 6. Few pupils write securely at a deeper level. This is often because of inconsistent spelling, punctuation and use of grammar.
- Current pupils' progress in writing shows improvement. Most Year 6 pupils write at the expected standard for their age. However, too few demonstrate consistent use of the skills they need to write securely at a deeper level.
- The standards pupils reach in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 have improved, so that in 2018 standards were above those of pupils nationally. Pupils' progress in mathematics has also improved, so that it is now in line with that of pupils nationally by the end of key stage 2.
- The work of current pupils suggests that pupils' calculation knowledge is strong and that many operate as expected for their age. However, pupils, including the most able, do not always have the skills they need to explain their reasoning well.
- Since the last inspection, standards have dropped at the end of key stage 1. In 2018, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics were broadly in line with national figures.
- At the end of Year 2, the proportions of pupils working at a greater depth for their age have remained high. However, evidence from current Year 2 pupils' books gathered during the inspection showed that their teacher's assessment of writing was overgenerous. Pupils assessed as writing at a stronger standard were not doing so securely and consistently. Leaders were already aware of this situation and are planning moderation and professional development.
- Over time, the proportion of pupils reaching the threshold of the phonics screening check has been high. However, this year, pupils in Year 1 and the early years have not experienced a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. As a result, the match of learning to their needs has not been accurate and some pupils have not been challenged appropriately. The spelling of current pupils in Year 2 is over-reliant on very simple phonics strategies. This means pupils' spelling is inconsistent.
- The new phonics action plan is already having an impact on phonics teaching. As a result, pupils' skills in phonics are improving, especially those of the youngest children.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND has been growing. Over time, the progress from their starting points of pupils with SEND has been low in all three subjects, but especially in writing, at each key stage. This is because leaders of SEND have not identified pupils' needs accurately enough and so they have not set appropriate work.
- Pupils read well and with enjoyment. They take pleasure in the new library area and in activities such as visits by authors, which enthuse their learning.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils in the school is small. Over time, the majority of them make the progress they should. Most-able disadvantaged pupils perform strongly in reading and mathematics, but their progress in writing is well below that of other

pupils nationally.

- The number of pupils who have English as an additional language has been growing. The support given to them by teachers and teaching assistants means that they quickly settle into school and begin to learn the skills they will need to communicate.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children in the early years want to learn. Where tasks are well matched to their needs, children's concentration is high and, for example, they are eager to practise their early writing skills. However, when tasks are less well matched to their needs, children became aimless and distracted. Overall, the quality of teaching in the early years is not consistently and securely good.
- Leaders have ensured that the early years environment is spacious and provides opportunities for children to learn inside and outside. A range of activities from across the early years curriculum is provided, from which children can choose their direction of learning. However, this level of independence is something that has been developed recently and adults are still securing this practice.
- Children take pride in their early writing and the quality of their early handwriting is developing. However, children have limited opportunities to practise their growing skills independently. Children's work showed that there had been relatively few opportunities for parents to contribute to their children's learning.
- The small number of children in the early years makes it difficult to make general statements about attainment and progress. However, the work of children currently in Reception shows that they will be able to access the curriculum they will meet in Year 1.
- Teaching assistants provide calm and nurturing support for children, especially for those of pre-school age. Effective questioning and modelling of learning encourages these youngest children to explore their learning and become more independent learners. Pre-school children therefore make a smooth transition into school when they start their Reception year.
- Children with English as an additional language benefit from adults' accurate modelling of phonics and spoken English. As a result, they can use their basic knowledge of phonics in their early writing.
- Parents spoke warmly of how well their children have settled in to the pre-school and Reception class. They felt that their children were safe and happy. Children attend well in the early years.

School details

Unique reference number	137373
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10088314

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	54
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Ufuoma Bakpa
Headteacher	Jacqui Sollars
Telephone number	01453 832 682
Website	www.st-dominics.gloucs.sch.uk
Email address	head@st-dominics.gloucs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 to 8 February 2017

Information about this school

- St Dominic's is much smaller than the average primary school. Since the last inspection, the number of pupils attending the school has reduced significantly.
- Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes. Since the last inspection, the school has accepted three-year-old children into the early years. They commonly attend the setting two or three mornings a week. Numbers in the early years are small.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language is below the national average but is increasing.
- The number of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding has grown and is now in line with the national average.
- The number of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes to the staffing of the

school. In addition, an interim headteacher led the school for a time in 2018. The school is now led by an interim executive headteacher and an interim head of school. The headteacher is currently absent from school and was not present during the inspection.

- The chair of the governing board changed in the spring and additional governors have joined the board.

Information about this inspection

- Together with the interim executive headteacher and the interim head of school, the inspector visited all classes to observe pupils' learning. The inspector spoke with pupils about their learning. Together with interim leaders, the work of pupils in every class was examined. The inspector listened to pupils from Year 2, Year 3 and Year 6 read.
- The inspector observed pupils at breaktime, lunchtime and around the school and met with a group of pupils to hear their views about school life. The inspector considered the responses received to the pupils' questionnaire. The inspector took account of the 27 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 21 comments received. The inspector spoke with parents at the start of the school day.
- Meetings were held with the school's interim leaders, with governors and with the director of education for the Diocese of Clifton. Phone calls took place with the school's external support adviser, a representative of the local authority and the chair of governors. The views of staff were gathered from the school's staff survey and a meeting was held with a group of staff.
- A range of documentation was considered, including information on pupils' attainment and progress, the school's self-evaluation and action plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The inspector met with leaders responsible for the safeguarding of pupils and examined information relating to safeguarding, the safe recruitment of staff, attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Sarah O'Donnell, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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