

Inspection of St Dominic's Catholic Primary School

Margaret Street, Stone, Staffordshire ST15 8YG

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Everyone at St Dominic's does their very best to live up to the school's mission: 'as children of God we love one another'. Consequently, this is a very friendly and caring school. Leaders have very high expectations for every pupil's academic success. They place equally high importance on developing pupils' consideration for others.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve exceptionally well. This is because leaders provide an extremely wide range of exciting and innovative activities to meet pupils' interests and develop their talents. Leaders have designed the curriculum so that pupils link what they learn to the world beyond school. For example, pupils loved the challenge of designing products such as ice cream sundaes and pizza toppings. They enjoyed presenting their products to local business owners. Experiences such as these prepare pupils exceptionally well for their futures.

Pupils behave very well, work exceptionally hard and look after each other. They speak politely to each other and to adults. Pupils say bullying is very rare and inspection evidence supports this. They are confident that, should it happen, adults would deal with it promptly and effectively.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are highly ambitious for all pupils. Leaders carefully consider the knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn from Nursery to Year 6. They have designed an exciting curriculum that broadens pupils' experiences and deepens their insight. For example, Year 6 pupils understand how the power of the monarch was different in Tudor times compared to today.

The curriculum gives pupils an exceptionally wide range of experiences that develops their creativity. All pupils learn to play a musical instrument and leaders ensure that they can continue to do so as they move through school. They take part in workshops with professional musicians and actors. They write their own productions and perform these for their parents and carers, and the public.

The curriculum includes a well-chosen amount of practice and revision. For example, mathematics lessons begin with short sessions to help pupils recall what they know before moving to more complex work. This ensures that pupils' knowledge and understanding deepens exceptionally well over time.

Reading has the highest priority. Staff choose books that inspire and excite pupils' interest. Adults read to all pupils every day. This helps pupils develop a rich vocabulary.

Children begin to learn phonics as soon as they enter the Reception class. Very well-trained staff teach these sessions every day and give children lots of opportunities to

practise what they learn. Younger children read books that closely match the sounds that they know. This helps children to become fluent, confident readers. Older pupils read widely and often. They talk enthusiastically about books they enjoy.

Staff quickly identify pupils who find reading more difficult, including the few pupils whose progress slowed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff provide extra, well-planned phonics sessions that help these pupils to gain confidence and catch up swiftly.

Behaviour in lessons and around school is exemplary. Pupils know why rules are important and say adults apply rules fairly and consistently. On the very rare occasions when pupils lose concentration in lessons, staff deal with this by a look or a word so that pupils' learning is not interrupted.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of visits that make their learning memorable and help to broaden their horizons. For example, children in the Reception class visited a wildlife centre where they learned about animals that laid eggs. Pupils develop their leadership skills as school councillors. Pupils vote to elect their councillor, which improves their understanding of democracy. Staff give even the youngest children responsibility. For example, children in the Reception class enjoy caring for their hens.

Pupils have many opportunities to influence their school. They selected healthy options for lunch and reduced the amount of single-use plastic in school. They raise money for charities they choose. They gave calendars to 'local heroes' such as emergency service workers and staff of the local care home.

Staff check pupils' understanding of their learning exceptionally well. Consequently, staff identify pupils with SEND quickly. Well-trained staff provide the extra support these pupils need so they achieve well.

Directors and governors check the impact of leaders' actions and hold them to account well. Directors identify trust schools with particular expertise to provide expert training for other schools. Consequently, staff have excellent subject knowledge. St Dominic's provides support for other schools in music and the early years.

Staff are very proud to belong to St Dominic's. They appreciate the ways in which leaders make their workload manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff know pupils, families and the community very well. All staff have regular training about protecting pupils from harm or neglect. They are vigilant and know how to report concerns. They know that leaders will act swiftly to deal with any issues. Leaders work effectively with specialist agencies where necessary. This

ensures that vulnerable pupils are safe, and their families have the support they need in a timely manner. Leaders make thorough checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. They know what makes a good friend and learn about healthy relationships. They are confident that adults in school will help them if they have any worries.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	142210
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10211993
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	214
Appropriate authority	Board of directors
Chair of directors	Ken Wilson
Headteacher	Dianne Stokes
Website	https://www.st-dominics-catholic.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This Catholic school is part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in May 2017. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.
- The school is part of a multi-academy trust called the Painsley Catholic Academy.
- The school opened a nursery class in September 2021.
- The board of directors manages the before- and after-school provision.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

- The lead inspector met with the chair and chief executive officer of the trust. She also met with the chair of the local governing board and held a telephone discussion with a representative of the archdiocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, music and art and design. For each deep dive inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors also held discussions about the curriculum with the leader for early years, the special needs coordinator and the subject leaders for science, computing and design and technology.
- Inspectors checked the work that the school does to keep pupils safe. They examined safeguarding records, including the single central record of recruitment checks on staff. They spoke about safeguarding with leaders and checked staff's knowledge and understanding of safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their views of the school. They observed pupils' behaviour at playtimes, lunchtimes and during lessons.
- Inspectors considered a range of information about the school, including documentation shared by school leaders or made available on the school website.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day and considered the responses, including free-text comments, to Ofsted Parent View. The lead inspector spoke to two parents on the telephone.
- Inspectors took into account the responses to the pupil and staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Helen Morrison, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ellen Taylor

Ofsted Inspector

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