

INSPECTION REPORT

ST DOMINIC'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Stroud, Gloucestershire

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115706

Headteacher: Mrs M Smith

Reporting inspector: Julie Moore
8710

Dates of inspection: 17th – 18th March 2003

Inspection number: 247584

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior school

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: St Mary's Hill
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Stroud
Gloucestershire

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Paul Naybour

Date of previous inspection: 2nd March 1998

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	10
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	17
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	18
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	19

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Dominics is a small Catholic primary school, which is situated near Stroud in Gloucestershire. It has 40 boys and 44 girls on roll, and all of them travel to school by car as they live some distance away. The number of pupils on roll is increasing significantly, and every pupil has British heritage. All of them speak English fluently. The percentage of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is well below average. Sixteen pupils have special educational needs and two of them have statements of special educational need. This is broadly in line with the national average. Many of these pupils have severe, profound or moderate learning difficulties, or they have speech problems. When the children join the reception class at St Dominics their standards are below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Dominics is a very effective school. It has had a turbulent past, which is now behind it, and the school is moving forward speedily with renewed vigour and confidence. Much has already been done and the next stage is to continue improving the school's provision for its youngest children and to improve the buildings. There is a new headteacher, and some new governors and members of staff, and everyone is working together very well as valued members of the school team. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. She has the ability to inspire and motivate everyone, and there is a very positive team spirit. The teaching is very good overall, and this is why the pupils do so well. When they start at St Dominics the pupils' attainment is below average. When they leave, at the end of Year 6, their standards are well above average. Everyone is fully included in the day-to-day life of the school, and no-one is left out. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership and management of the head teacher is very good, she is quietly inspirational.
- Standards, teaching and learning are very good, especially, but not entirely, in the juniors. The school does very well for its pupils with special educational needs as well as its higher attainers.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are very positive about school and their relationships are excellent. Behaviour is very good.
- In Years 1 to 6 the curriculum is rich and varied, broad and balanced, with a strong focus on information and communication technology (ICT).

What could be improved

- The reception children are not getting the right balance to their day-to-day activities in the foundation stage¹.
- There are deficiencies in the school buildings.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1998. There were four issues for the school to tackle:-

- ☐ Curriculum plans were not in place
- ☐ Standards were unsatisfactory in history, design technology, art and music
- ☐ Work was untidy
- ☐ There was no long-term plan for the school's development, and no means of monitoring how well the school was doing.

¹ The foundation stage is the name given to the curriculum in nursery and reception classes

Excellent progress has been made, especially since the current headteacher took up her appointment. The curriculum is well planned, standards have improved, pupils' work is well presented, and there is a very good long-term plan for moving the school forward. In addition, the school is led and managed very well, standards, teaching and learning have improved significantly and there is a rich and varied curriculum in place.

STANDARDS

A table of test results for Year 6 pupils is not included in this report as there are fewer than 10 pupils in the year group.

Standards are improving year-on-year, with more boys and girls achieving higher levels. The most recent test results for the eleven-year-olds indicated well above average results in English and mathematics, and average results in science. This is a small school and care must be taken when interpreting results as one pupil can make a significant difference to overall percentages. When compared to similar schools² standards are above average in English and mathematics and below average in science.

Inspection findings judge that the eleven-year-olds well exceed the expected standards in English, mathematics and science because of very good teaching all round. The seven-year-olds achieve above the expected standards in these subjects. Very good progress is made in Years 1 to 6. This holds good for the higher attaining pupils, as well as the lower attainers and those pupils with special educational needs. There are no differences in the progress of boys and girls. Children in the reception year make satisfactory progress, and they are on course to achieve their targets³ by the end of the reception year.

In recent times, pupils' progress over time has been erratic. Things have now settled down, teaching and learning are much better than they were, and there is an upward trend in pupils' attainment over longer periods of time. St Dominic's is now doing better than other schools nationally. It has challenging targets in English and mathematics, and is on course to achieve them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Without exception, the pupils want to come to school and to work hard. This is because their lessons are interesting.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils try hard to behave very well. They are successful, not only in the classroom but at break and lunchtime too. No pupils have been excluded from St Dominics.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. The pupils are very kind to each other. They are sensitive to the needs of others, especially those pupils with special educational needs. Relationships are excellent, and this helps the pupils to do very well.
Attendance	Good. Pupils attend school regularly and they are always punctual.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

² Schools with a similar percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.

³ These are called the early learning goals.

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching is much stronger than it was at the last inspection, and is very good overall. In three out of five lessons the teaching was very good or better in Years 1 to 6. The strongest teaching was with the oldest pupils, but there were examples of very good teaching across these year groups. Teachers do their best to make sure that learning is exciting and challenging for all the boys and girls and this includes those pupils who are gifted and talented as well as those with special educational needs. They are successful, and pupils make very good progress. Pupils are keen to do well because their lessons are interesting. Weaknesses, in otherwise satisfactory lessons with the younger children, included an imbalance between activities chosen by the children themselves, and those planned by the teacher. There were missed opportunities for the children to explore and to find out for themselves.

The learning support assistants provide excellent support, especially for those pupils with special educational needs. They are fully involved with the class teachers in planning and assessing pupils' attainment and progress. They know their pupils and the subjects well, and relationships are excellent. All of which enhances pupils' learning very effectively, making sure that everyone does well.

English and mathematics are taught very well. Teachers have high expectations of what their pupils are capable of achieving and the pupils rise to the challenges set for them. In one English lesson, which had an ICT focus, pupils used their computers effectively as an advanced research tool, extending their own understanding very successfully. Teachers are good at assessing how much the pupils have learnt in a lesson, and this means that pupils' tasks are always pitched at the right levels, and learning moves forward successfully. Pupils are adept at using their literacy and numeracy skills across the board in other subjects. They speak clearly and articulately when making suggestions, as in a design technology (DT) lesson when they were making a buggy. Reading is fluent and accurate, and pupils use their writing skills very well to record their science investigations, to make charts and diagrams, or to create imaginative writing in different genres. Number skills are also used very effectively to chart results in science investigations, to record findings in geography and to measure in DT.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The main curriculum is rich and varied, broad and balanced. The foundation stage curriculum lacks balance because the children do not have enough opportunities to find things out for themselves.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils are supported very well. They are achieving their targets and they make very good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. Pupils are tolerant and understanding of each other's needs. They have an empathy towards the needs of others and they are secure about what is right and wrong. Their understanding of spirituality in all its forms is developed very well, as is their understanding of their own culture and other cultures in the wider world.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils are cared for well in a secure and safe environment. Their progress and attainment is tracked very effectively, as is their personal development. The school works closely with parents to make sure that they are fully involved in their children's education.

Partnership with parents is very good. The school has worked hard to promote these links with a great deal of success.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher has the ability to motivate and challenge her staff, pupils and governors so that they all do their best for the school. The school is led and managed very well, with the headteacher having a leading management role.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors, a number of whom are new to the job, have an effective input into planning and decision making.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The new headteacher has led the developments in this area very successfully indeed. Very detailed analysis of all the information about the school's progress informs all its future plans and guides the process for setting targets.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. All resources are used very effectively so that the school gets the very best value for the money it spends. It gives very good value for money because the principles of best value are applied consistently.

The headteacher has led the school very well during the four terms since she took up her appointment. Standards, teaching and learning have all improved significantly, and the school's turbulent times are now behind it. Issues have been tackled rigorously, many parents are choosing the school for their children, and the school is successful. There are deficiencies in the school's building which governors will need to tackle as soon as funds allow.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents feel that the school is well led and managed. Teaching is good. Children make good progress and their behaviour is good. Parents are happy to approach the school and they like the fact that the school works closely with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A very small minority of parents feel that their children do not get the right amount of work.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. They do not agree with their negative views as they judge that all pupils have the right amount of work for their age and capability.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The leadership of the headteacher is very good. She is quietly inspirational.

1. The headteacher has been in post for four terms and the school has moved forward significantly under her leadership and guidance. There is a clear vision of the way forward for St Dominics, and everyone connected with the school shares this. The headteacher's quiet manner enables her to successfully motivate and challenge teachers, non-teaching staff, governors pupils and parents. Everyone is determined that the school will do well.
2. The main strengths in the leadership and management of the school are:
 - ❑ By undertaking an early review of the school's situation, the headteacher and governors were in a strong position to decide on their priorities and plan what needed to be done to move the school forward. No time was wasted.
 - ❑ Systems for monitoring standards, teaching and learning were put in place smartly. This enabled the senior managers to have accurate and up-to-date information about progress.
 - ❑ Roles and responsibilities were decided, new appointments made, and the school was brought together as a cohesive unit.
 - ❑ Staff training was judged to be an important element in improving the school's performance, and appropriate training was put in place. This helped to hone the skills of teachers and learning support assistants, increase their subject knowledge, and improve standards all round.
 - ❑ Building a strong team spirit, with a common understanding of the school's philosophy, was a crucial part of the school's development. This was linked to the school's role in the church community, which befits its place as a Catholic primary school.
3. The issues in the last inspection report have been tackled exceptionally well, with rapid progress over the last four terms. Everyone at St Dominics is determined that every pupil will achieve the highest standards they are capable of reaching in all aspects of school life. The school is well on course to achieve this aim. Pupils and their families are valued and respected within the positive and caring ethos of the school. No-one is left out and the school is fully inclusive. Links with parents are very good. They actively support their children's learning, and this helps them to move forward successfully.
4. Now that the school has secure systems for monitoring its work and progress any gaps can be speedily identified and tackled. Progress does not falter. Pupils have individual and class targets, and progress towards achieving the targets is carefully checked, as it is for the school's targets. Everyone has a clear understanding of what needs to be done next to maintain the school's success.
5. The school is managed very well and things run smoothly. The system for setting targets for the staff is securely in place, and this ensures that everyone continues to improve. The school is a very orderly environment and it is a pleasant place to be. The building and the grounds are well cared for, but there are a number of deficiencies in the building which are outlined in paragraphs 38 to 43 in this report. Administrative staff support the

headteacher very well, essential in this small school where the headteacher has a teaching responsibility.

6. Governors are very supportive, and they are part of the school's team. Many of them are new to their job and they are keen to be involved. Governors are analytical in their approach and they ask questions and put forward their own ideas, bringing a wide range of expertise to their role as governors. Funds are managed well, and there are planned savings for ground and building refurbishments. Governors have very good systems for monitoring the school's planned expenditure, and they make good use of the information that is available about the school's performance. This guides their future plans successfully. The school gives very good value for money.
7. There are adequate resources to support the pupils' learning, and there are sufficient teachers and learning support assistants to meet the demands of the curriculum and the diverse needs of all the pupils in this small school. The buildings need some upgrading to bring them up to the required standard and these are highlighted later in this report.

Standards, teaching and learning are very good, especially, but not entirely, in the juniors. The school does very well for its pupils with special educational needs as well as its higher attainers.

8. The school has made excellent progress since it was last inspected five years ago. At that time standards and progress were satisfactory and much of the teaching was good. A small percentage of teaching was unsatisfactory. There have been turbulent times since the last inspection, with two acting headteachers, changes in the governing body and a significant drop in pupil numbers. The situation is now stable, and a permanent headteacher is in post with some new staff and governors. Numbers on roll are increasing rapidly. Many of the improvements have taken place since the current headteacher took up her post.
9. The main strengths in standards, teaching and learning are:
 - ❑ The very good leadership of the headteacher has steered the school back on course.
 - ❑ Teaching is very good in Years 1 to 6, and the pupils make very good progress overall. Lessons are interesting and exciting so that the pupils want to learn.
 - ❑ High standards are achieved because lessons are well planned at the right levels and there are very good systems for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress.
 - ❑ Teachers have high expectations about what their pupils are capable of achieving, and they rise to these expectations.
 - ❑ Lessons move forward at a good pace so that no time is wasted.
 - ❑ Pupils of all capabilities, including those that are gifted and talented and those with special educational needs, make very good progress like their classmates.
 - ❑ Learning support assistants play a valuable role in speeding up progress, especially for those pupils with special educational needs.

10. When children start school in the reception year at St Dominics their skills are below average, especially in reading and mathematics. Satisfactory progress is made and most pupils are on course to achieve their targets by the end of the year. St Dominics is a small school, with few pupils in some year groups, and for this reason it is important to bear in mind that one pupil more or less can make a significant difference to overall percentages. The youngest children, who are in the reception class, are in the same class as Year 1 pupils who have had one year in school. This is quite normal for a school of this size.
11. Reception children's work is soundly planned, and is based on the areas of learning for the age group. This is appropriate. However, the foundation stage curriculum and the Year 1 curriculum can sit uneasily together and this is explored later in the report. Children's personal, social and emotional development is well catered for, and children are content to wait their turn with the large toys and share their books and games together. Early literacy and numeracy skills are taught soundly, and children link sounds to letters successfully. Higher attaining children write their own short sentence, successfully using their own sounds and words. Most children can count the fruit in a pictogram they have made, successfully counting to five or more.
12. In the rest of the school standards are much higher than they were, especially for the eleven-year-olds but for the seven-year-olds as well. In the most recent national tests (2002), the seven-year-olds attained well above average standards in reading and below average standards in writing and mathematics. They did less well when compared to similar schools achieving above average in reading and well below average in writing and mathematics. The progress of this group has speeded up in Year 3, and they are making very good progress overall. In an English lesson the group were focussing on writing instructional texts. The lesson planning was very good, so the tasks were pitched at the right levels. By making the best use of questions, the teacher was able to tease out how much the pupils understood so that she knew where to give additional support so that learning did not slow. Pupils used their design technology project as a basis for their work, and were adept at making sure their instructions were clear and easy to follow. They did this successfully by identifying the merits and limitations of particular instructions, judging how well they explained the organisation of the tasks. Standards were above average all round.
13. The current Year 2 pupils are achieving above average standards in the three main subjects of English, mathematics and science. Pupils speak clearly and articulately, they read fluently and accurately, and their writing is well formed with a good use of vocabulary. In number, the higher attaining pupils are familiar with the four rules of number, they know that fractions have several parts of a whole and they can name and work out half and quarter of a range of numbers. Average attainers are not quite at this level but they are not far behind. Lower attainers are starting to understand place value, they work out money problems correctly and they count to 100 without help. Pupils have made very good progress from below average starting points at the end of the reception class.
14. The reason for this very good progress is very good teaching, which in turn makes for very effective learning. In one lesson, the very brisk start got pupils' attention straight away so that no time was wasted. Pupils were straight into mentally calculating halves and quarters of numbers so that they were mentally keyed into fractions when the lesson proper began. By using the white board, the whole class was effectively involved in working out halves and quarters in different ways, successfully allowing the teacher to check out their understanding speedily. Very good questions, such as '*..... are these equal?*', '*..... why is that half of 14?*', extended the pupils' knowledge very well indeed.

15. Trends in attainment are upwards, and the school is progressing faster than other schools in the country. The very good systems that are now in place for analysing the data that is available about the school's performance, mean that the school is much better than it was at finding out how well it is doing. Trends in learning and attainment are carefully analysed, so that any gaps are quickly identified and tackled. Learning does not slow down. Emerging from this are very good systems for setting targets for individuals, groups and classes, and all of this helps the school to continue boosting standards.
16. Year 6 pupils talk and listen in a range of situations and differing contexts. Most of them are fluent speakers and they use Standard English well. Higher attaining pupils read fluently and accurately, and they read a wide range of texts including novels, plays and poetry, as do the average and lower attaining pupils. This means that all the Year 6 pupils are adept at picking out the main themes in the different genres, and they are good at identifying how well the authors develop their characters' roles. Written work is presented very well, spelt accurately, and is grammatically correct. As pupils move through the school they have many opportunities to practise their writing, for example, factual writing as in a science investigation, or when writing up their design technology work, or imaginatively and creatively when writing a play, a story or a poem.
17. There is a consistency to the way in which English is taught and developed for the different age groups. This is a valuable learning tool, as it helps the pupils to know what is expected from them. They know the correct ways to tackle issues such as the structure, presentation and content of their work, they also know that staff have high expectations, and that nothing but their best will be acceptable. All of this means that the pupils progress exceptionally well, and their standards are pushed up speedily. Many of these successful teaching strategies are carried over into other subjects, especially mathematics and science, making sure that learning is meaningful and effective for all pupils.
18. Higher attaining pupils are suitably challenged in mathematics. They understand negative numbers, and they successfully include decimals when working out problems using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. A range of methods is used to work out problems, all of which are explained clearly. Average attaining pupils work at similar levels to the higher attaining pupils and both groups make very good progress. Lower attaining pupils are not at this level and some of them find it hard to work with negative numbers. They try hard, and are gaining in their understanding due to the teacher's skills in assessing their learning and planning the right activities for them.
19. No science lessons were seen, but discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their work shows that standards are well above average for both the seven and the eleven-year-olds. This is an improvement since the tests in 2002. All parts of the science curriculum are covered in depth, and the strong focus on investigative activities means that pupils are well placed in their understanding of what science is all about. Pupils' work is marked very effectively. Clear pointers for development are brought out well, for instance, one teacher commented '*When you say the same time, what do you mean?*'. This comment guided the pupil towards a better understanding of the importance of accuracy in fair testing, helping her to clarify her own ideas about the significance of keeping one factor constant whilst other factors varied.
20. Pupils with special educational needs do very well at St Dominics, making very good progress like their classmates. Governors, and the headteacher and her team of teachers and learning support assistants, are fully committed to making sure that these pupils achieve as well as they possibly can. They are successful. Pupils get high quality

support, especially from the learning support assistants, who work closely with them. Individual targets are in place, and pupils work towards them successfully. Tasks are pitched at the right level because assessments are accurate. This means that any gaps are speedily identified and dealt with. Parents are fully involved, and they are fulsome in their praise for the school and how it helps their children. They are right.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is first rate. Pupils are very positive about school and their relationships are excellent. Behaviour is very good.

21. These aspects are a real strength of day-to day life at St Dominics, and excellent progress has been made since the last inspection. Attendance is good, and pupils want to come to school because they enjoy learning. The ethos is positive and caring, creating an atmosphere of calmness and peace. The main strengths are:

- ❑ The strong Christian ethos underpins every aspect of the school's day-to-day life.
- ❑ Relationships are excellent, and this really does help pupils to learn very well and to help and support each other at work and play.
- ❑ Pupils are very secure in their understanding of right and wrong. They play and work together very well, and they have a mature empathy for the needs of others.
- ❑ Pupils' own cultural traditions and heritage are studied alongside those of other cultures such as Islamic and African cultures.

22. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent, and this includes those pupils in the reception class. The headteacher has made it one of her main aims that the school plays an active part in church life, and is a full member of the church family. She is well on the way to achieving this aim.

23. As befits a church school, there is a strong Christian ethos. This is apparent in all aspects of the school's work. The school's entrance creates an impression of a strong Christian faith, so that everyone visiting the school is aware of its beliefs and values. Spirituality is developed in many ways, not only through the act of worship, but in the manner in which the pupils and staff relate to one another. Relationships are excellent, and the staff provide strong role models for their pupils. They have an empathy for the needs of others less fortunate than themselves, and this is ably demonstrated by the high quality support that all the children give to pupils with significant special needs. Pupils are aware of the special spirituality that is evident in great works of art and music, and they also have time for quiet reflection and prayer in their busy days. The outdoor area of the school has a quiet garden for pupils who want to withdraw for a few moments from the hurly-burly of school life, allowing them the opportunity for quiet moments of peace. The whole ethos of the school guides pupils towards an awareness of a greater spirituality that is inherent in the world around them.

24. School and class rules are known and understood. Pupils are ready to accept these, demonstrating a mature self-discipline of the need to have rules so that everyone can live together peacefully. Their moral understanding is developed in many ways, sometimes through day-to-day happenings, at other times through planned opportunities during discussions about telling the truth, friendship, global warming and conservation issues. These are tackled in a sensitive way so that the main points can be highlighted and developed in an atmosphere of trust. This helps the pupils to explore their own feelings and ideas effectively.

25. Pupils' personal and social development is developed exceptionally well through the curriculum. They work and play together, and they actively raise funds for those children less fortunate than themselves. Pupils of all ages have a range of responsibilities in their classrooms and in the wider school that successfully raise and develop their social awareness. These include tidying up, looking after the school grounds, helping with audio-visual equipment, and helping younger pupils at break and lunchtime. The strength of relationships has a positive impact on the pupils' personal development, as well as their social development.
26. Cultural development is fully integrated into school life. This is a school where the vast majority of pupils are white, and this is why the staff make such concerted efforts to make sure that pupils learn effectively about other cultures and faiths. They do this through their work in geography, history, art and design, literature and music, using other cultures as a starting point, as well as their own. Local cultural traditions are not forgotten as the pupils learn about life in rural Gloucestershire during Victorian times. European culture is also successfully studied in the French club. All these activities broaden and extend the pupils' own cultural experiences, enabling them to grow into mature young people who have an increasing understanding of the wider world in which they live.

In Years 1 to 6 the curriculum is rich and varied, broad and balanced, with a strong focus on ICT.

27. Much work needed doing to bring the curriculum up to an acceptable standard as there were gaps in the curriculum. This has been achieved successfully, especially in Years 1 to 6. The main strengths are:
- ❑ There is a richness to the curriculum, which enhances the pupils' educational experiences successfully.
 - ❑ A wide range of visitors to school, as well as educational visits and out of school activities, successfully boosts the basic curriculum that is offered to all the pupils.
 - ❑ The school has moved rapidly to improve its provision for ICT across the entire curriculum.
28. The school aims to provide a quality curriculum for its pupils and one in which the development of literacy and numeracy skills have a high priority. It is successful. These skills are developed very well, as seen by the significant improvements in national test results especially for the eleven-year-olds. This is because teaching is much stronger than it was, and there is a cohesive all-school approach to tackling the literacy and numeracy strategies. Pupils of all capabilities are very well catered for, and this includes those pupils with special educational needs. The curriculum is fully inclusive and no-one is left out.
29. The very high provision for pupils' personal development, alongside their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have been outlined in the previous paragraph. Adults have high expectations about pupils' independence, respect for others and their attitudes to work. Duties and responsibilities as future citizens are actively promoted through the School Council. Links with other local primary schools as part of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Review project (MER project) has successfully facilitated the sharing of good practice, which in turn has improved the teaching at St Dominics.
30. Art and design and music have a high profile in the school. The standard of pupils' artwork is good, with some textile work of a very high quality and a good range of two and

three-dimensional work around the school and in classrooms. Pupils are adept at using colour and tone to achieve the desired effect in their work, such as the younger pupils' fairy tale characters and the older pupils' work based on the style of the artist Joan Miro. In the latter examples some very good work with pastels exemplified the style very well indeed. No music lessons were seen but the pupils' enthusiasm for singing, playing and listening to music was apparent in their discussions, and in the high quality of singing during whole school worship. The school takes part in local music and dance festivals. These are successful in giving the school a higher profile in the area, as well as providing an opportunity for the school and its pupils to 'shine' and to do well.

31. One of the school's real successes is the significant improvement to its ICT provision. This was an area of weakness a short time ago, but hard work and sustained effort on everyone's part means that the subject is now an integral part of school life at St Dominics. All strands of the subject are in place, and there are many examples of ICT being used successfully to support learning. In one Year 2 literacy lesson ICT was used effectively by pupils with special educational needs to develop their literacy skills. By using the compact keyboard the pupils achieved success in recording their work, helping them to achieve their targets. Attainment is broadly average for pupils' ages at seven and eleven, but standards are being pushed upwards by some very good teaching, and pupils are making very good progress especially in the upper juniors. Many of them are on course to achieve higher standards by the end of the school year.
32. In most of the strongest lessons both the pupils and their teachers used ICT very well to support learning. In a high quality literacy lesson with pupils in Year 5 and 6 the teacher used ICT very effectively to demonstrate how 'weasel' words and phrases such as 'tend to be', 'maybe', 'usually' are used by authors to portray a specific mood, feeling or emotion. The pupils were able to interact effectively, using the screen and highlighting the specific text with the cursor, so that all the class could see their results. This took everyone's learning and understanding on just that little bit further during the lesson. Work on display shows how the pupils use ICT competently across the wider curriculum, for example in art and design, science, geography and history.
33. In one lesson, Year 5 and 6 pupils were using the Internet to search large databases and to interpret information. The teacher's very good planning, alongside appropriately planned tasks, meant that work was pitched at the right levels for all the pupils. Working in groups, the pupils were given an animal with its name. Each group had to find out a number of specific points about their animal – which were different for each group – Internet sites they visited had to be kept in a 'Favourites' file and produced as a bibliography for their report. Some more capable pupils chose to put their project together as a PowerPoint presentation, others chose to create a poster with information, pictures and a bibliography. Pupils successfully used and applied their previously learned skills, for example copying and pasting from the Internet and saving pictures to a file. Without exception, all the pupils were keen to work hard and to do their best, concentrating for long periods of time and persevering until their task was complete.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The reception children are not getting the right balance to their day-to-day activities in the foundation stage curriculum

34. The school has worked very hard to up-date its provision for the reception children. It has had a number of successes but there is still work to do, as the school has identified for itself. The children's tasks are planned as expected, and are based on the stepping

stones⁴ for learning which lead towards the early learning goals. This is as it should be. Further work needs doing because:

- ❑ The organisation of the foundation stage curriculum does not sit comfortably against the curriculum for Year 1 pupils who are in the same class. The organisation of pupils' learning needs streamlining to be more effective for everyone, and assessment systems are still at an early stage of development.
35. Children start school in the reception class at the beginning of the year they are five. They begin their school life gradually, building up from part-time attendance to all day by the mid-point of the term. This is appropriate. Whilst this is happening the Year 1 pupils are starting to follow the National Curriculum, which they have to do from the start of Year 1. The curriculum, as well as the learning opportunities that are in place for the Year 1 pupils, is good. Learning moves forward at a good pace and the Year 1 pupils achieve well.
36. Reception children do not do as well. Although their learning is satisfactory overall it could be better. Planning, which is based on the stepping stones and the early learning goals, is only recently in place and staff are getting to grips with this. The teacher and the learning support assistant do their best to make sure that the reception children get enough support so that their learning is moved on. However, there were instances when the reception pupils' progress slowed because the teacher's attention was directed towards the Year 1 pupils and the reception pupils just sat. When this happened their learning lost its momentum. In other lessons, pupils' learning was either over directed or under directed, resulting in the pace of learning slowing down for everyone.
37. Another issue in relation to the provision for the foundation stage is covered in the next section. Governors and the headteacher are fully aware of this.

There are deficiencies in the school buildings.

38. Governors are well aware of their duties and responsibilities in relation to St Dominics. They too have worked hard to ensure that the school building and grounds are pleasant places to work and play. There have been some successes, for example the millenium garden, the internal decorations to classrooms and to the school hall, and the new library area.
39. However, the buildings need some upgrading to bring them up to the required standard:
- ❑ the reception children do not have a suitable outdoor play area that they can access from their classroom.
 - ❑ there are not enough cloakrooms for the pupils.
 - ❑ the outdoor access through the library is not ideal.
 - ❑ the staff toilet facilities are old and worn and need replacing as soon as possible.
40. The reception children have planned opportunities to play outside every day. The session is usually led by the learning support assistant, and the pupils play with their wheeled toys, games, balls, and a range of other suitable equipment. As the area does not have

⁴ Stepping stones are key learning points for young children.

direct access from the children's classroom, their experiences are curtailed and time is limited. This holds back their progress in developing physical skills.

41. Cloakroom areas are limited, and not all are adjacent to classroom areas. The school does its best to keep tidy, and it is largely successful in creating a pleasant environment. However, this could be improved so that less time is taken when moving from the cloakrooms to the classrooms.
42. The newly designed library has outdoor access, and is used by many pupils on their way to the playground and out of school. This is disruptive for pupils who are studying in an in-depth way at the beginning or end of the school day, as well as at break and lunchtime.
43. Staff toilet and cloakroom facilities are very old and worn and they need replacing speedily.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

44. To improve standards and the quality of education even further the headteacher, staff and governors should:-

- (1) Enhance the developments that have already started in the foundation stage curriculum by:
 - making sure that the foundation stage and Year 1 curricula are managed with improved effectiveness

See paragraphs 34 – 37

- (2) Prepare a prioritised and fully costed programme for the building refurbishments. Put these in place when funds allow.

See paragraphs 38 – 43

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE IS NO INFORMATION ABOUT PUPILS' TEST RESULTS IN THIS REPORT BECAUSE THERE ARE FEWER THAN 10 PUPILS IN YEAR 2 AND YEAR 6.

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	20
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	8	8	2	0	0	0
Percentage	10	40	40	10	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents five percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/a	84
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/a	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/a	16

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils***Exclusions in the last school year***

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	54	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	13	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19
Average class size	21

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	69

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2
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	£
Total income	223214
Total expenditure	203069 est
Expenditure per pupil	2782
Balance brought forward from previous year	20000
Balance carried forward to next year	9000est

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	84
Number of questionnaires returned	41

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	42	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	24	0	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	66	34	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	40	7	2	7
The teaching is good.	83	17	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	66	22	5	0	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	93	7	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	80	18	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	76	22	0	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	83	17	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	63	33	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	59	34	7	0	0

