



St Dominic Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 100039
Local Authority Camden
Inspection number 285709
Inspection dates 12–13 March 2007
Reporting inspector Pritiben Patel

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Southampton Road
School category	Voluntary aided		London
Age range of pupils	3–11		NW5 4JS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 7485 5918
Number on roll (school)	306	Fax number	020 7284 0961
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr J Atlee
		Headteacher	Mrs A Streeter
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Dominic Catholic Primary School is a large primary school that serves a very disadvantaged community. Both the percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those whose first language is believed to be other than English is higher than in most schools. Pupils speak forty-two different languages. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is significantly above the national average. An above average proportion of pupils either join or leave the school at other than the expected times. The school has experienced difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff in the last couple of years.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Dominic Catholic Primary School is a satisfactory and improving school. It is overcoming the many challenges that it faces. The majority of parents are supportive of the school. However, some raised concerns about the high turnover of teachers in some year groups. The school are fully aware of this and are doing all that they can to ensure staff stability.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher sets clear direction for the school and staff at all levels work well together to bring about improvement. The leadership team, supported by staff, place a strong emphasis on promoting pupils' personal development. They are successful and consequently personal development and well-being are good despite the staffing difficulties; this is a credit to the school. Good links with outside agencies have been established to meet the individual needs of pupils. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy and make a positive contribution to the school and wider community. Attendance has improved and is now satisfactory as a result of the school's rigorous approach.

Children start with low basic skills. They make satisfactory progress through the Foundation Stage because of satisfactory teaching. By the end of Year 6 standards are below average overall. The 'Intensive Support Programme' is beginning to have a positive impact and as a result pupils make satisfactory progress overall. However, this masks some areas where pupils are not doing as well as they should. Boys' attainment at Key Stage 1 in reading and mathematics, writing for all pupils and standards in mathematics at Key Stage 2 are all significantly below average. The school is taking appropriate actions. This has already led to improvements in English but it is too soon to judge the impact of the measures taken for mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are examples of good and outstanding teaching. Features of good lessons included pupils explaining to each other what they were learning, a variety of individual and paired activities as well as work that was well matched to meet the needs of pupils with different abilities. However, frequent changes of staff in some classes slows the progress of pupils in those classes. Care and support are strong. Staff have the best interests of the pupils at heart. Consequently, pupils enjoy school, feel safe and behave well. The curriculum is satisfactory and the school is usefully developing more links between subjects in order to make teaching and learning even more meaningful for pupils. Academic guidance is only satisfactory because tracking of pupils' progress is at an early stage. Hence, the school cannot be sure that it is identifying underachievement as soon as is possible.

Given the improving picture of pupils' achievement, particularly in English, and the increasing impact of senior managers, the school has satisfactory capacity to secure further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of boys' at Key Stage 1 in reading and mathematics and writing for all pupils.
- Raise standards in mathematics at Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that data from the tracking of pupils' progress is used to provide timely support to pupils when there is a dip in performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are rising but not quickly enough in some areas. Raising the quality of pupils' writing has been a priority in the school for the last year. The school has sharpened its focus on writing by using well-chosen exemplars, introducing writing targets for each pupil and by more rigorous monitoring. As a result, there was an improvement in the English tests at the end of Year 6 in 2006. The school has identified that pupils do not have satisfactory skills in mathematics in solving problems involving words or interpreting data using graphs. Consequently, these skills are receiving more attention in classes but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the measures taken. More able pupils are making the expected progress in mathematics. There are no underachieving groups overall but younger boys do less well in reading and mathematics than girls. The school's ability to implement whole-school strategies consistently in every class has been hindered by the high turnover in staff. This has contributed to the inconsistencies in the progress made by pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and understand the importance of attending school regularly. The good relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils of all ages provide a framework for pupils to flourish and gain in confidence. Pupils are proud of their achievements, for example, when they gain an award for good attendance. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good and is well supported by the Catholic ethos of the school and links with the community. Pupils behave well and take their responsibilities seriously. For example, older pupils take turns to act as playground friends. The school council gives pupils the opportunity to help the school through projects to improve the environment. Pupils know how to keep safe and live a healthy life. They make a good contribution to the community. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their schooling.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Where teachers are well established and experienced, lessons are often good, pupils make good progress, demonstrate good enjoyment and behave well. However, the situation is not consistent across the school. Staffing difficulties, combined with a lack of detailed assessment, mean that teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. New teachers including supply staff work hard to get to know the pupils and are well supported as they settle into the school. Behaviour is well managed and pupils respond positively to the clear expectations set for them. Teachers plan for a range of abilities in their classes, but not all do so effectively. This is because they do not all have accurate information on individual pupils' progress and standards. Teaching assistants make a good contribution where the support is well targeted. They are often effective in helping pupils understand their work and what is expected of them. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are identified quickly and effective support is provided. Other pupils who have dips in their performance are not identified so readily.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum contributes appropriately to pupils' learning and personal development. There is currently an appropriate focus on mathematics, particularly the interpretation of graphs, and writing across the school in order to improve standards. A rolling programme ensures that all pupils cover a full range of topics to address some classes who have mixed-age groups within them. Links between subject areas are being developed and are helping pupils to make connections between their subjects. The curriculum is adapted to meet the cultural needs of pupils, for example, by celebrating Black History Month and International Week. The school also have a specific French Lingala club to offer help and support to both Congolese pupils and parents. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular clubs and pupils take good advantage of this provision. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is taught alongside other subjects and pupils benefit from these interesting opportunities such as studying, 'Camden during the Second World War'. Additional programmes ensure that the needs of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English are met satisfactorily.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support pupils receive is satisfactory, with some good features. Care and support are good and the school provides a happy and safe learning environment in which pupils achieve well in their personal development. There are

suitable arrangements for safeguarding children, including child protection procedures and thorough risk assessments for school outings. Frequent newsletters inform parents of school events and help to cement the links between the school and home. The school uses its links with a range of outside agencies well. Staff are at an early stage in tracking the academic progress of pupils. It means that the school cannot be sure that it identifies underachievement early enough to provide the support needed. This is improving but it is too soon to judge the impact on standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Following a turbulent period, the senior management team is more stable and provides clear direction for the school. Leadership and management along with governors are exploring financial incentives in order to improve recruitment and retention of staff. Assessment and tracking systems to raise standards are becoming more effective and are having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Subject leaders have identified areas that require further development and are beginning to have an overview of pupil progress and standards within their subjects. Targets are sufficiently challenging. Through the 'Intensive Support Programme' teaching is being monitored more robustly and consequently the quality of teaching and learning is improving.

Governors provide a satisfactory contribution to the development of the school. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses, visit lessons and provide feedback however, they do not play an active role in the schools self evaluation.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

On behalf of the inspectors I would like to thank you very much for being helpful when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and looking at all your work.

We think that you go to a satisfactory but improving school and this is because:

- even when some of you have different teachers, your headteacher makes sure that you all make progress, are safe, happy and well looked after
- you get on well with each other
- when you are taught well, you enjoy your lessons and behave well
- there are extra things for you to do that help to make your learning more interesting
- your headteacher and class teachers work hard on your behalf
- governors know your school and are helping to make it an even better school for you.

We think that some things should be improved in your school. Boys should get better results by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. We also think that you could all get better results in your writing by the end of Year 2 and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Finally the information that your teachers have about your progress should be used, so that they can provide extra help to those of you that need it more quickly. I'm sure that you are ready for this challenge!

With best wishes for your future success,

Pritiben Patel Lead inspector