

# Blessed Dominic RC School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101339
<b>Local Authority</b>	Barnet
<b>Inspection number</b>	286036
<b>Inspection date</b>	3 July 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nick Butt

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	192
School	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter MacNamara
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Ann Marie Hendry
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 June 2001
<b>School address</b>	Lanacre Avenue Grahame Park London NW9 5FN
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8205 3790
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8205 9341

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This one-form entry school has a nursery and serves an area where there is temporary accommodation and considerable socio-economic disadvantage. More than a third of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well above average. Three quarters of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being Black African. Almost half the pupils speak English as an additional language, Polish and Portuguese being the two most frequently spoken. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is high. In the Foundation Stage, part-time Nursery and full-time Reception children are taught together in two parallel classes. The school is part of projects that link it with schools in Europe and Africa. It has awards for promoting healthy lifestyles and developing its staff.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. The headteacher gives outstanding leadership very ably supported by the deputy and together they make an especially strong team. Their vision for pupils to achieve their best both personally and academically is shared by all staff and there is a real team spirit in the school. This creates a climate of high expectations and respect based on Christian values, which enables pupils to achieve well and contributes to their good personal development and well being. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. Children get off to a roaring start in the Foundation Stage because of the excellent provision they receive with exciting activities that fire their imaginations. Progress is good throughout the school, with a particular boost in Year 6.

The teaching is good, which involves pupils well in their learning and motivates them to succeed. Tasks are usually matched well to pupils' differing abilities, although occasionally the most able pupils are not challenged enough. A good curriculum ensures that pupils find lessons interesting and enjoyable. Pupils with learning difficulties are included very well in all the activities. Those whose first language is not English achieve as well as other pupils. However, the school recognises in its school improvement plan that the scope of the curriculum can be widened to make it even more relevant for them. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, which keeps pupils alert and busy. Every so often too much time is devoted to the introduction and some pupils become fidgety.

The care, guidance and support pupils receive are outstanding. Particularly effective systems are in place to identify and support pupils with learning difficulties and the school works well with outside agencies to draw in additional help. Pupils feel safe in school and free from bullying. They feel comfortable turning to an adult for assistance with a concern, or use the school's 'worry box'. Consequently, pupils behave well. They have an excellent understanding of different cultures, not only through finding out about one another's, but also through the many links the school enjoys with other schools in Europe and Africa. Pupils help out as reading buddies and raise money to support local charities and those abroad. They have a good understanding of living healthily and take part in plenty of sport. They become eager young citizens and develop a desire to learn that equips them for their future school careers.

School leaders have a good appreciation of the school's strengths and areas to develop through regular and robust monitoring of its work. Pupils' progress is reviewed six times a year and support put in place where it is needed. An online strategic plan is accessible to all staff and governors and forms a useful working document. A focus on speaking and listening is helping pupils to improve their writing and explain their working out in mathematics. Improvements to planning have enabled teachers to be more creative in setting tasks and have increased pupils' enjoyment of school. The school has improved well since its last inspection and is well placed to continue to make gains in its performance.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teaching is consistently good or better by injecting sufficient pace into lessons and setting work that challenges all pupils.
- Review the curriculum to make it even more creative and better adapted to the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good and standards are broadly average. Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are generally well below those normally expected, especially in their personal, social and emotional development and in language. They make very rapid progress because of the great encouragement they are given through excellent teaching and a vibrant and stimulating curriculum. Even so, many enter Year 1 not yet reaching the early learning goals. Because teaching is good and teachers have high expectations, pupils make good progress from Year 1 onwards. Standards in the current Year 6 are broadly average. This group of pupils experienced some underachievement when they were younger owing to historical problems which the school has now remedied. The pupils have made rapid progress in Year 6 to catch up lost ground successfully. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress towards their targets. Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well because of the targeted support they receive.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They work and play together harmoniously and have a strong sense of right and wrong. Pupils understand the dangers of drug misuse and smoking. They know to report any incidents of bullying straight away and are confident it is dealt with effectively. They enjoy school. One pupil said, 'I like making new friends and learning new topics.' Most pupils attend well. The figures are below average because of a very few pupils with long-term absence who have left the area. Pupils enjoy the 'garden which is quite unique', a reference to the school's imaginatively planted grounds, with interesting and innovative features such as a 'Yellow Brick Road' that winds in and out of the play areas. The school council is pleased that its ideas are adopted quickly, such as renewing the cups in the dining hall and promoting Walk on Wednesday (WOW). Pupils also act as junior road safety officers. The choir sings carols to the elderly and pupils are closely involved in parish activities. They leave the school with average basic skills and are ready for their move to secondary school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good because lessons are planned in detail and the positive relationships in classrooms ensure that pupils are keen to work hard. There is a purposeful, calm atmosphere throughout the school. The work set is usually appropriate for the pupils' abilities, but at times the level of challenge is not great enough for those who are most able. Activities are often imaginative and exciting, as when Year 6 pupils were describing their own mythical beasts. One boy called his creature, 'barbaric, bloodthirsty and sly!' The teaching in the Foundation Stage is excellent, with exemplary assessment procedures so that all staff know exactly how well children are doing. The children love being there. Some entertained their friends with an impromptu puppet show that brought great hilarity to their appreciative audience. In the school as a whole, teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of groups and individuals in need of additional support. Whilst most lessons are well

paced, occasionally this slackens if the teacher talks for too long and pupils have less time for their activities.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The good curriculum engages pupils well because it is varied and interesting. Teachers make effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) to inspire pupils and to link different subjects together. In a science lesson, Year 6 pupils generated detailed graphs showing how well different types of sugar dissolved. The curriculum is enriched by a wealth of visits and visitors, particularly from overseas, such as the Lithuanian Ambassador and teachers from schools in Kenya and South Africa. Year 4 pupils visited the Bank of England to see how money is made (literally). Pupils also benefit from residential visits, which develop their independence and social skills. These activities make an effective contribution to their good personal development and to their enjoyment of school. Pupils with learning difficulties are included well in all activities. The many pupils learning English as an additional language enjoy visual and practical tasks and make good progress. Nonetheless, the school has identified a need to adapt the curriculum even more widely to suit their specific learning requirements.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The outstanding provision for pupils in terms of their care, guidance and support, means that everyone feels valued as an individual and secure in school. This gives pupils the confidence to have a go at their studies and supports their good achievement. In particular, the excellent provision for pupils with learning difficulties ensures that their needs are identified quickly and their progress is monitored closely. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning English receive good support, and are interviewed at weekly intervals to check how well they are doing. Academic guidance is good, with consistently helpful marking, and clear targets to help pupils to improve based on what they must, should and could achieve. Safeguarding procedures are robust and all health and safety requirements are met.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has high expectations of the whole school community and gives an excellent lead in her own dedication and determination to see the school succeed. The improvements in teaching and achievement have come about as a result of more rigorous monitoring and sharper systems for measuring pupils' progress. The new deputy has had a very positive impact on provision, introducing a new approach to planning that allows teachers to be more creative and more aware of the needs of their pupils. An annual review of the school improvement plan with staff and governors ensures everybody has a say and knows what the priorities are for the following year. Subject leaders have a good understanding of their areas, and are involved in monitoring them, but not all have opportunities to observe lessons. The governing body uses its experience and expertise to benefit the school, for example in improving the building. They are fully involved in setting up priorities and evaluating them a year later, but currently do not make enough interim visits to see how the school is progressing in meeting its objectives.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> 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.



## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

12 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blessed Dominic RC School, London, NW9 5FN

Thank you very much for making me so welcome at your school. You are right to be proud of it. Your school is a good school and some things about it are very special. These are some of its particular strengths.

- The children in the youngest classes get off to a really good start because there is so much for them to do and to enjoy.
- You make good progress in your work because the teaching is good and because you are enthusiastic about your learning.
- There are lots of interesting activities for you to explore in your lessons.
- The school cares for you all extremely well and helps you to improve by giving you good guidance through marking and setting you targets.
- You know an awful lot about other countries and their cultures because your families come from so many different places and because of all the visitors you have from abroad.
- The school grounds are very attractive, a real oasis of calm.
- You enjoy the different clubs and going on visits.
- The school is led extremely well by the headteacher and the deputy.

Most of the time your work suits you well so that it is just right for you. Occasionally the work is too easy and I have asked the school to check that those of you who finish quickly have more challenging work to do from the start. I know that many of you speak more than one language and are learning English. The school is looking at the kinds of activities it plans for you to do so that you can make the most of your lessons and do even better. I know the teachers have already asked you for your views on what helps you to learn, but if you have any new ideas I am sure they would be very pleased to hear them.

Thank you once again for being so friendly and helpful. I did enjoy my visit and I send you my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Butt, Lead inspector.