

# St Dominic's School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125455
<b>Local Authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	315238
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Kiran Campbell-Platt

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>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	83
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sister Rosemary Clerkin
<b>Principal</b>	Mrs Sue Russam
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 January 2002
<b>School address</b>	Mount Olivet Hambleton Godalming GU8 4DX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01428 684693
<b>Fax number</b>	01428 685018

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<b>Age group</b>	8-16
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

St. Dominic's is a non-maintained, Roman Catholic school, which makes provision for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), some of whom also have other difficulties or disabilities such as Attention Deficit and Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and speech and language impairment. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and a few are from minority ethnic groups. Pupils from 32 different local authorities are attending the school. The school has residential provision. Following several years of disruption in the school's leadership, a consultant Principal was appointed in January 2006. The school has achieved a silver Artsmark award.

## 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's provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. It is emerging from a period of uncertainty and disruption and has arrested a decline in its performance. The majority of parents say that their children enjoy coming to school. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils feel safe and have good relationships with staff and their peers and behave well in lessons and around school. They have positive attitudes to learning and show good awareness of healthy lifestyles. Pupils make good progress in their personal development which is supported by the wide range of therapies that the school provides. Care and pastoral staff contribute well to promoting pupils' confidence and self-esteem. However, the school has been slow to establish a fully effective system for monitoring pupils' academic progress and to use this information to set challenging targets in individual education plans (IEPs). The residential provision is good and contributes effectively to pupils' well-being. The curriculum is good and meets pupils' needs well. The recent review of the curriculum has resulted in improvements in the provision for information and communications technology (ICT) in all subjects, work-related learning and for accredited learning in life skills.

Between 2002 and 2006, the school regressed in significant aspects of its work. Several changes of headteacher and in the leadership team had a negative impact on the pace of school improvement, resulting in limited progress on most of the issues identified in the previous inspection. The headteacher and recently restructured leadership team have re-energised staff and brought a renewed sense of purpose to the school community. Recent improvements, for example in collaborative working between care, teaching and therapy teams, are beginning to have a positive impact on achievement and standards. New improvements in systems for collecting and using assessment information to improve teaching and monitor pupils' performance have recently been introduced although it is too early for them to have had a significant impact on raising achievement.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Performance management of teachers has only recently been implemented and the monitoring of teaching has not been sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistency throughout the school. Consequently, the quality of teaching is variable and less consistent than that observed in the previous inspection. Although some very effective teaching was seen, the impact of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers and support staff establish a good ethos for learning. Teachers use a range of teaching methods, including ICT, to engage pupils in learning. However, they make inconsistent use of assessment information to plan challenging tasks for pupils of different abilities. Whilst standards are below average, achievement is satisfactory in relation to pupils' starting points and their learning difficulties. Some more able pupils achieve results in external exams which are in line with national standards.

A significant minority of parents express some concerns about an aspect of their child's schooling. Some feel that the school has low expectations of their children who they feel are not making good progress. Some are not confident that the school seeks the views of parents and carers and takes account of their suggestions and concerns.

Although the school has an accurate view of what needs to be improved, its self evaluation is overgenerous. Considerable improvements have been made to pupils' attendance, the breadth of the curriculum and systems for monitoring pupils' progress. Much of this is at an early stage of development and has not yet had sufficient impact on improving teaching and learning and raising achievement. Issues from the last inspection have not yet been fully addressed but

significant progress has been made recently. Consequently, the school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy being in the residential provision. They feel safe, have healthy options in meals and develop a good awareness of healthy life styles. Pupils benefit from the good range of activities planned by staff including birthday parties, trips and sporting activities. Older pupils develop skills for independence. There is good provision for pupils to communicate and express their views, for example, through circle time and forums. Staff are supportive and caring and pupils have good relationships with their key workers. The school has made progress on most of the issues from the previous inspection of the boarding provision.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that teachers use assessment information consistently to set challenging tasks for every pupil in order to raise their achievement.
- Ensure that parents and carers feel confident that their suggestions and concerns in helping pupils to succeed are taken into account.
- Ensure that the new performance management system has a greater impact on improving teaching and learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils enter school with complex needs and learning difficulties. They make satisfactory progress, often from low starting points. Some achieve very well in creative subjects such as music, art and physical education. Most pupils develop sound communication and ICT skills. Their development of basic skills in mathematics and English is satisfactory throughout the school. Although standards are below average, some pupils reach national expectations at the end of Year 9 and 11. The school has set performance targets for 2008 and 2009 but these are very general and do not take sufficient account of the wide range of ability of the different groups of pupils in the school.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils say that they enjoy school and its activities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils learn about their own and others' moral and spiritual values through attending assemblies and chapel services. Trips to mosques and other places of worship develop their awareness of different faiths and values. They help each other around school and show a growing understanding of their rights and responsibilities and those of others. In school council meetings, they listen to each other's views and voice their opinions and concerns. Most participate well in pair and group activities in lessons. They coordinate and plan assemblies and contribute to making choices about theme days. Pupils contribute well to improving the school environment, for example, through the re-cycling project.

Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles through participation in sports and therapy programmes and most choose healthy options in school meals. They act safely and learn how to be safe through science, personal, health and social education and support from school counsellors, therapists, and tutors.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teachers and support staff have good relationships with pupils. They use multi-sensory methods such as visual resources and interactive white boards well to engage and motivate pupils. Support assistants play a strong role in helping pupils to understand tasks and to participate in class activities. Teachers encourage pupils to express their views and to participate in class discussions. Behaviour is managed well.

As a result of the good care and support, pupils make satisfactory progress in most lessons. However, the pace of activities and the challenge to learners is variable. Work is not always matched well enough to the needs of the full range of abilities. Although activities are planned in small steps for less able pupils, assessment information is not used well for planning appropriately challenging activities in all subjects. Although staff have received some training to improve planning to meet the full range of needs in their classes, this remains an area for development.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good curriculum and the range of opportunities it provides is the main reason for the pupils' good personal development. Music, art and opportunities to perform at assemblies make a strong contribution to the pupils' creative and emotional development. They participate in trips to museums and galleries and abroad, for example to Italy. Health and safety education and healthy lifestyles are taught effectively in personal, social, health and citizenship education, science and food technology. A range of therapies, which promote pupils' development, confidence and self-esteem, enrich the curriculum. The school is continuing to develop collaboration between teachers and therapists to improve pupils' emotional, social and communication skills throughout the curriculum subjects.

The curriculum for older pupils offers a range of accreditation opportunities, college placements, and work related learning in addition to work experience. The established life skills programme has recently been developed further to enable older pupils to gain external accreditation. The school's recent investment in ICT equipment and training for staff has improved pupils' skills in all subject areas.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

The strong ethos of care and the commitment of staff form a good basis for pupils' care, guidance and support. Pupils have access to a good range of professionals including therapists, counsellors, psychotherapist and qualified nursing provision and a visiting doctor to promote their welfare. Pupils' personal development is monitored carefully. A member of staff has

responsibility for looked after children. The school has recently appointed a careers and work experience coordinator to improve work related learning and support the transition of pupils to the next stages of education. A new system of developing IEPs has recently been introduced but currently assessment information is not used well enough to set the pupils appropriate targets or to evaluate their progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's performance had declined since it was last inspected due to significant changes in leadership and staffing problems. The headteacher and recently re-structured leadership team have brought a renewed sense of purpose to the school community. Improvements have been made to curriculum provision, attendance, training in leadership for middle managers and by the introduction of new assessment systems. The leadership has taken positive steps in appointing an assessment co-ordinator and careers and work experience coordinator. However, monitoring has not yet had sufficient impact on the consistency of teaching and learning and does not involve all middle managers. Although there have been recent changes to improve the match of the curriculum to pupils' needs, subject departments have not done enough to establish consistent assessment procedures that ensure activities in lessons are appropriately challenging. Governors took firm action to instigate a review of the school's provision and are very supportive of the school. However, their strategies for holding school leaders to account for the performance of the school are underdeveloped.

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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	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

<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>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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**

13 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Dominic's School, Godalming, GU8 4DX

Thank you very much for talking to me when I visited your school. I was very impressed with how well you got on with one another and how well you behave. Many of you told me that you like coming to school and this was clear from the way you all worked hard in lessons. Thank you for contributing to the inspection and a special thanks to the School Council for allowing me to attend their meeting.

These are the things that your school is doing well. All the staff are very committed to making sure that your personal development is good and that you feel safe in school. They are also good at making sure that you learn about healthy life-styles. The school makes sure that there are therapists to help you to improve your communication and confidence. The school provides you with a good range of activities and subjects. Older pupils are prepared well for the next stage of education.

There are some things that the school can improve further. I have asked the school to make sure that teachers get all the training and help they need to make lessons more challenging so that you all learn more. I have also asked the school to take account of the views of your parents and carers in helping you to succeed.

Thank you once again and I wish you the very best for the future.

Kiran Campbell-Platt

Lead inspector