

# St Dominics RC Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133669
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hackney
<b>Inspection number</b>	316185
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Barry Jones

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>	
School	428
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Wayne Brennan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Deirdre Finan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 May 2004
<b>School address</b>	Ballance Road London E9 5SR
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8985 0995
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8985 2915

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Dominics is a larger-than-average, popular inner-city school. It has a 45-place Nursery. It has much higher proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language than in most schools. Four pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The most common other languages spoken are Yoruba, Twi and African French but 27 languages are spoken altogether. The largest ethnic group is British Black African. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well above average. There are average numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; half of these have speech and language difficulties. More pupils join and leave the school at unusual times than in most schools. The school has Healthy Schools Status. The current headteacher took up post in September 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

St Dominics is a satisfactory, improving school. There have been improvements in the quality of teaching, partly because there is more stability in staffing and partly because there are improved monitoring procedures. Consequently, pupils achieve satisfactorily and standards are rising. The Catholic ethos underpins a caring approach by staff. Relationships in the school between pupils are good. Most parents are supportive of the school. The view of these parents is typified by the comment, 'I am so happy and grateful that our child is attending this school.' Given the school's track record, capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

Children get off to a flying start in the Nursery. They make good progress as a result of the good provision. Consequently, pupils start in the main school with standards that are broadly average. Standards at the end of Year 6 vary from year to year and have been just below average for the last two years. Overall, achievement is satisfactory but this masks differences between subjects and key stages. In recent years, Ofsted data indicates that pupils have continued to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 but progress has slowed considerably in Years 3 to 6. The school is currently seeking to identify the reasons for this but higher staff turnover in Key Stage 2 has been a significant factor. The school's monitoring and observations by inspectors show that currently pupils' progress is satisfactory across Key Stages 1 and 2.

Pupils make good progress through the school in English. This is because, from the time the pupils join, a high priority is rightly given to developing their literacy skills. Standards in mathematics are below those in English and science. In the 2007 national tests for Year 6, a significant minority of pupils, particularly more able ones, did not do as well as they should have in mathematics. The school has consequently made it a priority to improve performance in mathematics. Actions include better use of data to identify underperformance followed by support and challenge. The school's monitoring shows that pupils' progress is accelerating. However, there is still work to be done. Too much reliance is placed on the use of worksheets in mathematics, there are gaps in teachers' subject knowledge and there are too few opportunities for pupils to work practically or to apply their skills in meaningful contexts.

Teachers' planning is satisfactory and meets the needs of most pupils. In some lessons the work is too easy for the more able pupils. Teachers do not consistently provide constructive feedback to pupils on how they can improve further. Teachers manage their classes well and the pupils behave well and listen attentively. Pupils' behaviour sometimes deteriorates when they are not taught by their usual teacher and this is commented on rightly by a significant minority of parents. The school has introduced new procedures, entitled 'staying on green' which means keeping out of trouble. These are working well generally. However, a small minority of pupils, mainly boys, have been excluded too often from school over the last year. This apart, care and support is good. There are good links with external agencies that means that vulnerable children are supported well. Pupils feel safe in school and attend well. There are a rich range of extra-curricular activities which the pupils thoroughly enjoy. Their experiences in the classroom are not consistently of the same high quality and this is reflected in their attitudes. They enjoy some lessons but find others are not interesting. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher is providing a good lead and a number of new initiatives are beginning to bring improvement. For instance, the new system for tracking pupils' progress means that the school is able to identify underperformance better. It is not yet firmly established and academic guidance is satisfactory. The school has recently started to analyse the data it collects to track the progress in subjects and by particular classes. It has not extended the analyses to

spot trends and patterns of performance for other groups, for instance, Black African pupils and those who join the school late. The governing body is very supportive of the school. However, procedures for monitoring financial expenditure are not sufficiently robust. Consequently, some costs are higher than planned and this was not identified as early as it should have been. The governors are now taking decisive action to ensure that the school does not go into deficit.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Many children enter the Nursery with low social and language skills. Provision in the Nursery is very good and children make rapid progress in developing personal and academic skills. This is underpinned by thorough assessments and expert use of this information to take the children to the next step. This good start is consolidated in the Reception, where other children join the school. With the help of an external consultant, there is a lively and enriching curriculum in the Foundation Stage that contributes much to the children's enjoyment. There is a good balance between teacher-led activities and opportunities for children to learn through independent play. However, there is no outdoor play area for the Reception class which limits aspects of their physical development. There is an effective emphasis on language development. As a result, children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. They attain the expected standards for children of their age.

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

- Ensure that pupils make good progress in mathematics.
- Reduce the high number of exclusions.
- Ensure that the teaching caters for the full range of ability, particularly more able pupils, and makes it clear how pupils can improve further.
- Ensure that the governors monitor expenditure against the school's budget frequently and effectively.

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**

In 2007, standards in the end-of-year tests in Year 6 rose in English and science. A higher proportion than nationally, reached the expected level in these subjects but fewer attained the higher level. Standards were lower in mathematics, particularly at the higher level. Consequently, the school missed its targets for mathematics by a considerable margin. Pupils who arrive with little English receive good support to gain fluency in language. In 2007, Ofsted data shows that Black African pupils made slower progress than other pupils. The school has not analysed its own data for pupils currently in the school to check whether this is a one-off situation or part of a pattern.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is promoted through assemblies, the curriculum and through the pervading caring culture in the school. In an excellent assembly, pupils performed poems and rap that they had composed relating to what would make a better world. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy-living issues. They make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The school council feels that its views are valued. Pupils from Key Stage 1 argued persuasively to inspectors that they should be represented on the council too. Pupils enjoy mini-enterprise activities which broaden their economic understanding. Their average basic and computer skills mean that they are satisfactorily prepared for secondary school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teachers share learning objectives so that pupils are clear what they should learn in lessons. Their marking is less useful. It too rarely diagnoses why a pupil has not answered correctly nor offers guidance on how the work can be improved. Teachers make satisfactory use of interactive whiteboards and this adds interest to lessons. However, some teachers do not plan to provide a variety of experiences to fully engage pupils, particularly the more able. Where the work is monotonous or routine, pupils' interest wanes and progress slows.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The school is aware that some aspects of the curriculum need strengthening and it has plans to do this. This includes providing more practical and investigational work in mathematics and science. The school is at an early stage in making links between subjects that will add meaning and interest to the work for pupils. There is an extensive programme for gifted and talented pupils outside the classroom but the needs of the more able are not always met in lessons. Some aspects of the extra-curricular provision are excellent. Pupils engage enthusiastically in events such as the Chinese opera project. There was an outstanding session for Year 6 pupils, led by the BBC Newsround team, which fired their imagination.

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

#### **Grade: 3**

There are good links with other agencies to support pupils with particular needs. The school is very successful in promoting good attendance. Support for pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory. The school has identified that more needs to be done to ensure that pupils receive timely support when they are underperforming or have a particular need. Multi-agency support and advice from the school's behaviour consultant has guided the pupils with behavioural difficulties and helped to improve staff expertise in managing challenging behaviour. This has led to a reduction in exclusions but they remain too high. Excluded pupils are reintegrated well into the school. Teachers do not consistently use targets or feedback to help pupils to improve further.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The new headteacher has introduced several new initiatives and is reorganising the management structure. Consequently, the school is in a transitional phase. There are improved systems for tracking pupils' progress. The monitoring of teaching and learning is followed up by support and challenge and is linked usefully to the professional development of teachers. It offers constructive feedback on how the teaching can be improved but does not focus sufficiently on what pupils are learning. There is greater stability in staffing generally but Year 6 classes have suffered more disruption than other classes. The school has taken reasonable steps to minimise this and its monitoring shows that these pupils are making satisfactory progress. The school is investing appropriately in developing staff to take a fuller part in decision making. Several subject leaders are new but are enthusiastic and, with support, are extending their monitoring role.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	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	3
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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

<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

03 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Dominics RC Primary School, London, E9 5SR

Thank you very much for all your help and cooperation when we inspected your school. You told us that you feel safe in school and that the adults take good care of you. We were impressed by the pupils performing their poems and rap in class and in the assembly. Well done! Year 6 pupils also thoroughly enjoyed the session with the BBC Newsround team. The school council feels that its views are valued. For instance, they have prompted the redecoration of the toilets. Other girls felt strongly that more needs to be done to make them acceptable, however.

We think that St Dominics is a satisfactory and improving school. These are the things that we like most:

- children make a good start in the Nursery
- you do well in English
- you get on well with one another
- you develop into responsible young people
- you attend well
- the school provides many extra things for you to do outside of normal classes
- the adults in the school care for you well
- the school is led well by the headteacher.

The school is keen to be even better. There are four things that we have asked it to do:

- ensure that you do as well in mathematics as in English
- reduce the number of times pupils are excluded from school
- make sure that you get work to make you think and show you how you can get better
- ensure governors check carefully how much the school is spending.

You can play your part by continuing to attend well. You should also make sure that you always behave well when your own class teacher is not able to take your class.

We wish you success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Barry Jones

Lead Inspector