

St Dominic Savio Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 110041 |
| Local Authority | Wokingham Borough Council |
| Inspection number | 325087 |
| Inspection date | 20 November 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Norma Ball |

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 354 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 0 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Matthew Gray |
| Headteacher | Mrs Teresa Jones |
| Date of previous school inspection | 19 October 2005 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Western Avenue Woodley Reading RG5 3BH |
| Telephone number | 0118 969 3893 |
| Fax number | 0118 969 3765 |

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|--------------------------|------------------|
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| Inspection date | 20 November 2008 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the particular strengths of teaching and learning and any areas in which their quality could be improved; the impact of leadership and management in raising achievement for more able pupils and in writing in Key Stage 1; and the strengths of pupils' personal development, curriculum and care. The inspectors gathered evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and parents' questionnaires. Discussions with staff, a governor and pupils also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most of its type and draws pupils from a range of backgrounds. The proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals is smaller than average. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national average but, of these pupils, fewer than expected require help with learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special education need is below average. Pupils' needs include hearing impairment, specific and moderate learning difficulties and speech, language and communication needs. In recent years the school has experienced an increase in the number of children with learning needs and those requiring support with learning English. The number of pupils who join the school other than at the usual times of entry has also increased. The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the St Dominic Savio After School Club that is not managed by the governing body. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Dominic Savio is a good school where pupils achieve well because they greatly enjoy learning. A loving Catholic ethos fills the school promoting harmony and an extremely high level of pastoral care. A large majority of parents are pleased with the school and value the quality of education their children receive. One parent summed up the views of many saying, 'It is an exceptional community school with high standards and a wide diversity of activities'.

Children enter Reception with standards that are broadly average and make a sound start to their learning. When they enter Year 1 pupils' standards are still broadly average but slightly below average in literacy, especially writing. In 2008, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 was average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Building on the careful framework laid in Key Stage 1, progress through Years 3 to 6 is good and provisional national test results in 2008 show pupils left Year 6 with standards that were above average in English, mathematics and science. There has been a very careful focus on improving literacy skills, especially writing for all younger pupils. New initiatives such as the development of imaginative writing across all subjects are in place. The school is not complacent and is aware that more needs to be done to improve the standards pupils attain in writing, especially in Key Stage 1.

Teaching is good because staff use their good subject knowledge to plan well-paced lessons. Pupils work well both together and independently. They love to join in discussions and share their ideas. Good relationships underpin the happy and productive learning ethos that exists in all classrooms. Teaching assistants provide very effectively for those who find learning difficult. The outstanding curriculum provides a rich range of learning experiences.

Well-developed cross-curricular links, especially threading literacy and numeracy into other lessons, make learning more interesting and fun. For example, in Year 5, work on Victorian Britain linked literacy and history with art and information and communication technology (ICT) plus a museum visit. Extra-curricular activities are extensive and clubs, visits out of school and visitors who bring their knowledge and skills into school, greatly enrich learning and bring it alive for pupils. Pupils' work is marked regularly but there is some variation between classes in the quality of marking, particularly in the care with which points for improvement are identified for pupils.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They enjoy school and attendance is good. Pupils value their school, feel they have a significant part to play and have great enthusiasm for learning as shown in their very positive approach to lessons. The school council is a vibrant force that is active in promoting and developing areas of the school. The involvement of the school council in improving the playground areas is appreciated by all pupils. Older pupils carry out a range of important responsibilities, such as acting as peer mediators, with skill, dignity and efficiency. Behaviour seen during the inspection was good. A new behaviour policy has been introduced recently and most pupils meet the school's clear expectations of conduct very well. The policy is closely monitored in response to inconsistencies in its application identified by parents and pupils. All pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development aspects of their personal development are of a high order and flow from a dedication to their Catholic faith and the support of their parish links. Pupils show excellent awareness of the needs of others less fortunate than themselves through their support of local, national and international charities.

All staff assign a high priority to the pastoral care of pupils. Pupils recognise this and when interviewed one said, 'All the teachers help you when you are stuck or need someone to talk to'. Aspects of safeguarding and safety are secure. Links with agencies and a range of other learning centres in Woodley and Reading extend the good work of the school very effectively. Academic guidance is good because assessment information is used increasingly carefully to set targets in literacy and numeracy and to guide lesson-planning. Pupils who find learning difficult are identified quickly and good support is provided for them to ensure they make good progress. Guidance for the steadily growing number of pupils who have English as an additional language and those who join the school at different times is also good. However, assessment information is not used so effectively to plan work that is sufficiently challenging for more able pupils. Consequently, their progress slows. The good standards pupils attain and the very high quality of their personal development ensure that they are well placed to begin the next stage of their education.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership, which has united staff in sharing the highest ambitions for the school and its pupils. Together with the deputy headteacher and senior managers the headteacher has carefully assessed both the strengths and areas for development in the school and set in place a number of significant initiatives to raise standards further and promote even better personal development for all pupils. New initiatives in improving writing, targets set to help pupils make better progress and the new behaviour policy are showing signs of being effective but require close monitoring to ensure consistent application in all classes. Governors are supportive of the school and take an active part, together with staff and parents, in helping to steer new developments in the curriculum such as improvement in ICT. Governors are gaining in skills and recognise the importance of extending further the challenge they offer to the school. Resources are good and continuing to improve and the school provides good value for money. All the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection have been fully addressed. The school's self-evaluation is secure and it has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter Reception with skills ranging from broadly typical for children of a similar age to skills that are just below expectations, notably in language and communication, social and emotional development and fine motor skills. They make good progress as they develop confidence, learn to share and be independent. Staff work consistently to encourage speaking and listening skills, but the children's writing skills are not as strong as other areas of their development and this remains a focus in Reception. Children learn from a stimulating mix of well-planned activities in the classrooms and in the recently refurbished outside learning area. They settle happily and quickly to school because staff are caring and good routines are established. There is a lively atmosphere in Reception and children share activities well that are led by adults or by the children initiating their own play. Leadership and management are good and staff work as a close team. Assessment information on the progress children make is carefully recorded. However, more regular analysis would allow progress to be tracked systematically over time. Reception provides a happy learning and social experience and parents appreciate this and the close involvement they have in their children's development. When asked what he would most remember when he left school, a Year 6 pupil said, 'The fun and when you first make friends in Reception'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in writing especially in Key Stage 1.
- Improve the use of assessment information to ensure that work planned for more able pupils is always sufficiently challenging.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| 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 capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|---|---|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 3 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 2 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 2 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 2 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 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 |

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

02 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Dominic Savio Catholic Primary School, Reading, RG5 3BH

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to your school recently. Your friendly and helpful approach to us made our visit a real pleasure. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and your teachers, looking at your work and finding out about the things you enjoy most in school. You told us that you enjoy being there because you learn a lot. We agree with you that yours is a good school.

We saw that the majority of you behave well in lessons and around the school. You are enthusiastic about your work and want to do as well as you can. Your teachers work hard to make sure your lessons are enjoyable and interesting. You like the targets that are set for you and recognise that they help you to move forward in your learning. We think your school is well led and managed and this is why you enjoy learning and make good progress. You understand about keeping safe and what you need to do to be healthy. We saw that everyone works hard to make sure that you are extremely well cared for and safe in school.

We have suggested two things to make your school even better.

- We want your teachers to ensure that in Years 1 and 2 the standards you reach in writing are improved.
- For those of you who find learning easy we have asked that your teachers use what they know about you and the progress you are making to plan tasks for you in lessons to stretch you so that you make even better progress.

We know you will continue to work hard and help your teachers to make your school even better. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Norma Ball

Lead Inspector