

St Dominic Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100039
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	335480
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Nasim Butt

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	303
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Pellegrinetti
Headteacher	Ashley Streeter
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 20 lessons taught by 11 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, governors and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised the school's development plan, tracking data, pupils' work, governing body minutes and school policies. They also analysed questionnaires completed by 67 parents and carers, 20 staff and 20 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively leaders at all levels are raising attainment and accelerating the progress of White British pupils and the more able pupils
- how well teachers and leaders use tracking and assessment systems to set personal targets for pupils in English and mathematics and involve them in the process
- the effectiveness of self-evaluation processes and development planning in securing more rapid overall school improvement
- the work of the school in promoting community cohesion at national and global level.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average school, although it has been functioning below its capacity for several years. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and many speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above average. The school has gained Healthy School status (2008) and is partaking in Camden's Achievement for All (AfA) project.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Dominic provides a satisfactory standard of education. Several aspects of its work are good. Strong relationships between adults and pupils are evident in lessons and around the school. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in the caring atmosphere that envelops them. This view is also supported by the vast majority of parents. The behaviour of almost all pupils is consistently good and they get many opportunities to reflect by attributing meaning to everyday experience. However, their attendance is below average and progress in the key subject of English is no more than satisfactory because teaching is not consistently good in all key stage 1 and 2 classes.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes, where there is a good focus on developing their limited language and number skills, but progress slows to satisfactory when they start in Key Stage 1. As a result of accurate diagnosis and appropriate interventions, a declining trend in English and mathematics attainment in Key Stage 2 was reversed in 2009. Pupils now make good progress in mathematics and sound progress in English, and current Year 6 pupils are on track to reach national averages in both subjects.

Parents and pupils value the caring ethos of their school, and the sense of care and valuing all individuals begins right at the start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Support for vulnerable pupils and those with complex needs is particularly good. As one parent commented, 'My son was diagnosed with dyslexia two years ago, and with the help of the school and the learning support team he is now working at national expectations.' Although several aspects of teaching are good, too much is only satisfactory. This is mainly because teachers do not use assessment information consistently well to match tasks closely to the individual learning needs of pupils, especially the more able. Although a new marking policy is beginning to impact on progress, pupils are not always given the guidance they need to improve their work. Written feedback is not sufficiently well linked to individual learning targets and is therefore not precise enough to accelerate progress. As a consequence, though pupils' personal development is good, their academic progress is slower.

Parental engagement and effective partnerships are strong aspects of the school's work. For example, attendance is on a rising trend because the school has worked effectively with the education welfare service to target pupils who are persistent absentees. However, the school has not yet extended the good links with the local community to ensure that pupils benefit from wider national and international links.

The headteacher and her deputy have established a strong sense of common purpose amongst staff, with raising pupils' achievement at its core. They have accurately

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identified the strengths and weaknesses in the school and implemented several initiatives for improvement. Subject coordinators are well motivated and developing their skills of monitoring and evaluation. However, basic skills (literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology) are not sufficiently well embedded across all areas of the curriculum. As a consequence, pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to consolidate the wider skills they need for their future economic well-being. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is therefore satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that the vast majority is good or better by:
 - ensuring all teachers use assessment more effectively to plan lessons that provide appropriate challenge to different ability groups, in particular the more able pupils
 - providing pupils with consistently good quality written and oral feedback, linked to learning targets, to support them in making further improvements.
- Raise standards in Key Stages 1 and 2 by ensuring that regular opportunities are provided across the curriculum for all pupils to develop the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology.
- Build on the effective strategies currently in place to improve pupils' attendance so that it is at least average against national benchmarks for primary schools.
- Build on the good work in community cohesion at the school and local level by developing strong national and global links.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The first-hand observations of inspectors confirmed the school's own analysis of broadly average standards, but on a rising trend. In just over half the lessons seen, learning and progress were good. For example, pupils in Year 2, motivated by the engaging activities organised by their teacher, made good progress in working out which calculation strategy to use for a variety of word problems. A high level of enjoyment was evident as they actively searched with their partner to find the appropriate match. Year 6 pupils made good progress in analysing the structural and language features of a recent newspaper report about the current (football) World Cup. Sometimes, however, the pace of learning drops when pupils spend too long sitting listening to a long introduction. Girls perform as well as boys and no group of pupils is significantly underachieving. For example, White British pupils currently in Year 6 underachieved last year, but are now on track to reach national averages. Pupils who speak English as an additional language integrate very well with the rest and make satisfactory progress. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make sound progress because they are effectively supported by teaching assistants in lessons and when they work in small groups. Because teaching is not consistently challenging, more able pupils do not always make the progress they could.

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Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and to keep fit, reflecting their Healthy School status. They choose healthy food items during lunch, and are active at playtimes. The 'walk on Wednesday' programme further enhances pupils' health and fitness. Many spoke confidently to inspectors about internet safety and what they had learned from the police officers who had visited their school. Pupils are attentive and concentrate well in lessons, especially when the teaching is engaging. They make a good contribution to the school community, for example as playground buddies and as a variety of monitors. Carol singing for senior citizens is an embedded feature of the school's work. Pupils have raised significant sums of money for national charities such as the British Heart Foundation. Involvement in the active school council gives pupils a voice and enables them to gain the wider social and life skills they will need as they get older. Pupils show respect for different cultures and beliefs and enjoy learning about them. Year 1 pupils showed maturity in a religious education lesson when reflecting about what they could change to make the world a better place. However, pupils have less understanding of places of worship other than Christian churches. Most pupils get to school on time and are responsive at the start of lessons.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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How effective is the provision?

Some aspects of teaching are good. For example, teachers make clear what pupils are expected to learn during each lesson, reinforcing this with good links to previous learning. In the best lessons, pupils have well targeted work and are guided through the small steps that help to ensure effective learning. However, this is not consistent and sometimes pupils do not get enough feedback during the lesson on how they are doing and what to focus on to improve their work. Though teachers present learning in different ways to sustain pupils' attention, they sometimes miss opportunities to deepen pupils' learning experiences through the effective use of technology. Teaching assistants give sound support to pupils who need extra help with learning in lessons and when they work on individual tasks as part of the school's effective intervention programmes. Personal, social and health education is a strength of the curriculum and is having a good impact on pupils' personal development. During the regular collective worship sessions pupils benefit from good opportunities to reflect. The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. The development of basic skills (literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology) across all areas of the curriculum, though satisfactory, is an area the school has rightly identified for further development. High quality care and attention to pupils' welfare ensure that pupils feel good about themselves. Pupils are known as individuals and the care they receive is personalised and well targeted, particularly for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. They settle quickly into school due to the positive relationships between them and the staff. Good guidance for personal development ensures a confident move to their next class and school. Support staff have been effective in developing pupils' social and emotional skills so they are better prepared for learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and her deputy have created a shared team spirit within the school, using the school development plan as an effective vehicle to embed ambition and drive improvements. This is beginning to have the desired impact on the rigour and depth of self-evaluation at middle leader level. The school is a harmonious and happy place, where pupils really get on well with each other and show respect for the adults who care for them. This shows the good impact of the school's work to promote community

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cohesion. However, the school recognises that national and global links are less well developed. Because promoting pupils' individual interests is at the core of all its work, the school takes its responsibilities for child protection and safeguarding very seriously, and is vigilant in ensuring the safety and well-being of its pupils. For example, both headteacher and governors have taken a proactive approach to improving site security. The headteacher and staff are very ambitious for their pupils. They work hard to support the vulnerable, and they ensure that there is no discrimination and all pupils have equal opportunities to participate in school life. Gaps in attainment between minority White British pupils and the rest are closing. The 'Achievement for All' project is well led, and is having a positive impact on the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in Years 1 and 5, as these are the year groups that the project is initially targeting. However, the school's monitoring systems, though sound, do not ensure that the results of improvements are always systematically evaluated. This means that self-evaluation, though accurate, is not as sharp as it should be in supporting school improvement. Governors are fully committed to supporting the school and hold it to account, but do not always probe its results with rigour.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

As a result of good provision, children in Nursery and Reception make good progress in developing their skills across most areas of learning. Childrens' attainment improved significantly in 2009. Most children enter the Nursery with language and communication skills well below those expected for their age. By the end of Reception, they achieve

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standards that are slightly below average. Given that many children lack the basic social and emotional skills to access learning when they enter Nursery, this represents good achievement. Boys make significant progress in developing their skills in language and number as a result of the well targeted and focused support they receive. The stimulating internal environment, coupled with good teaching delivered in a consistently pleasant manner, motivates children to learn. There is a well resourced outside area and a good balance of child-initiated and teacher-directed learning. Relationships between adults and children are warm and friendly, resulting in a nurturing environment where children can take risks and grow in confidence. Impressive displays of children's work adorn the classroom walls. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has developed effective systems for tracking children's progress and intervening swiftly to remedy underachievement, although the assessment of children's skills when they first join the Nursery are currently not rigorous enough. Many parents are now better able to support their child's learning as a result of partaking in the Ocean maths and Crescent literacy programmes delivered by the Early Years Foundation Stage managers.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are of the opinion that their children enjoy school and the school is effective in promoting their health and safety. A very large majority also believe that the school is led effectively. A very small minority are of the view that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. However, inspectors found behaviour to be good and the school's systems to deal with misdemeanours sound. A few also say that their children are not making enough progress. Inspectors' first-hand observations showed that learning and progress are satisfactory overall, but they noted that some pupils are capable of making better progress. A very small proportion of parents and carers are also of the view that the school does not take sufficient account of their suggestions and concerns. The school has responded by strengthening contact through the learning mentor and home liaison officer.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Dominic Roman Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 303 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	72	17	25	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	63	24	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	33	49	31	46	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	40	33	49	4	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	36	54	28	42	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	43	32	48	2	3	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	46	33	4	2	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	24	36	34	51	2	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	42	35	52	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	48	27	40	5	7	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	34	36	54	4	6	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	27	40	34	51	2	3	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	54	27	40	2	3	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



17 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Dominic Roman Catholic Primary School, London NW5 4JS

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. I particularly want to thank the pupils who gave up their lunchtime to talk to us. You go to a satisfactory school, which means that some things are good but some need to be improved. Here are some of the things we liked best.

- The care and support the school gives you are impressive. You and your parents know that you are well looked after.
- You behave well and have good attitudes to learning; as a result your relationships with staff are very good and your progress is improving.
- You make good progress in mathematics.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep safe, for example you spoke eloquently about fire and internet safety.
- You lead healthy lives and make a good contribution to your school community, for example through the work of the school council and playground buddies.
- Your headteacher and senior staff work well with your parents to help you to do even better.

However, some things are preventing you from making better progress in school. In particular, the quality of teaching varies too much and does not always focus enough on developing your basic skills or multicultural awareness, and some of you are absent too often. Here are the main things we have asked the school to improve.

- Make sure teachers always give you work that is hard enough, especially for those of you who are quick to learn.
- Make sure all teachers tell you what you need to do to improve, both in class and in their written comments. You can help by asking if you are not sure.
- Improve the curriculum by making sure that teachers take every opportunity to improve your literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in all subjects, and plan links with other organisations in other parts of Britain and the wider world.
- Improve your attendance. You can help by ensuring you attend school every day and enjoy the learning organised by your teachers.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Nasim Butt

Lead inspector

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