

Blessed Dominic RC School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101339
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	335699
Inspection dates	26–27 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter McNamara
Headteacher	Geraldine Pears
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 18 lessons observing all teachers at least once and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and the chair of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised assessment information, pupils' books, records of pupils' progress and improvement plans. The team analysed 130 parental questionnaires, 100 responses to the pupil survey and 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.

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

- how effectively teachers plan to meet the needs of the more able and those at an early stage of learning English
- how successfully teachers involve pupils in a dialogue about the quality of their work and how to improve
- how effectively the school supports the achievement and personal development of its more vulnerable pupils.

Information about the school

This average-sized school serves a culturally diverse community. Most pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with pupils of Black African backgrounds making up the largest group. More than half of the pupils are from homes where English is not the first language. Free school meal eligibility is above average but has been falling. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average as is the number with a statement for special educational needs; the largest groups are pupils with moderate learning or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two mixed Nursery and Reception classes. The school has received the Basic Skills award and Investors in People status. The new headteacher was appointed to the substantive post in February 2010, having held the role in an acting capacity since the start of the academic year.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Blessed Dominic is a good school. It is on a path of improvement and has developed some outstanding features to its work. The most significant of these is the high quality of the care, support and guidance, particularly for its more vulnerable pupils. The united staff team is sharply focused on ensuring that all pupils can benefit from what the school has to offer by breaking down any barriers that might impede their learning. There is a very welcoming atmosphere throughout the school that helps the pupils to thrive academically and socially. One result is that pupils say they feel very safe, which is a view echoed by parents in their very positive responses to the questionnaire.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils show great respect for others and for cultural differences. They greatly value the diversity they see around them. Pupils of all backgrounds work and play happily together, taking care to ensure that no individual is left out and unhappy. They listen to the views of others when making decisions and think carefully about how they can live to Christian values. These qualities are promoted tirelessly by staff, particularly through religious education lessons. The pupils learn well in an atmosphere that breeds trust and confidence. Their behaviour is outstanding at all times. The pupils understand and accept the school's expectations for their behaviour, which is continually reinforced by the praise they are given when they do something well.

Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes from skills well below those expected for their age on entry. This good progress continues across the rest of the school. Year 6 test results have fluctuated in recent years, but the current group are on track to reverse the fall in 2009 and meet their challenging targets in both English and mathematics. Attainment is average in all key subjects and there has been an increase across the school in the proportion of pupils working above levels expected for their age. The main reasons for their good achievement are:

- teaching that is frequently good
- the very effective deployment of support staff, whether in supporting individuals in the classroom or leading sessions for small groups
- a sharp focus on supporting the learning of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those new to learning English
- an interesting curriculum that is continually under review and seeks to link learning between subjects ever more closely
- the use of assessment data to pinpoint where pupils might need extra support if they are falling behind their targets
- the role of all leaders in helping their colleagues to improve their teaching.

Learning is made interesting and challenging in most lessons, although teachers do not

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always use their questioning to check the pupils' understanding, develop their reasoning skills or establish discussions. Programmes are adapted well to meet the learning and language needs of the pupils, but provision for gifted and talented pupils is in its infancy and is an area the school is seeking to develop further.

The new headteacher has settled quickly into the role, supported by a strong and experienced senior team and effective governors. This is reflected in comments by parents such as, 'The new headteacher leads the school well ' she is an asset to the school'. Teachers now inject pace into lessons, set work that challenges all pupils and meet better the needs of pupils new to learning English, all of which were identified as areas for attention at the last inspection. There is a clear picture of the school's strengths on which to base future planning, which gives the school good capacity to meet its goals and to secure further improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Engage the pupils further in the learning process by:
 - using more effective questioning techniques to develop their thinking and reasoning skills
 - providing time for them to respond to their teachers' marking.
- Develop provision both within and beyond the classroom for pupils with particular gifts and talents so that they are challenged further.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The interest, enjoyment and perseverance shown by pupils in Year 3 as they developed 'kenning' poems about Vikings encapsulated many of the features of the way pupils learn across the school. Almost all work hard and are keen to do their best. They rise to new challenges and get involved in a wide range of activities. They apply their basic skills for a broad range of purposes, using their computer skills to present their work creatively and support their learning across a range of subjects. Teamwork and collaboration are particularly strong features, enabling the pupils to share ideas and learn through discussion.

Pupils entering with limited English develop language skills at a good rate by being immersed in an environment rich in language and talk from the moment they arrive. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress by the judicious balance between participation in lessons and withdrawal for specific focused activities. Pupils from various minority ethnic groups represented in the school, particularly those from Black African backgrounds, achieve well due to the way pupils integrate and are taught.

Pupils are almost unanimous in saying that they feel extremely safe in school and have the confidence to share concerns with adults because they know they will be quickly sorted out. They feel they have been taught to think carefully about how to deal with risky situations including any dangers posed by new technology. The pupils' excellent

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behaviour in lessons contributes greatly to their learning and that of others. Relationships are harmonious, helping to make for a warm and happy environment. Pupils' understanding of how to stay fit and healthy is aided by links with other schools to extend opportunities for participation in sporting activities. They make a considerable contribution to school through the school council and to the local community through their involvement in plans for the regeneration of the area. They show great appreciation for those less fortunate than themselves through their charity fundraising and support for churches in Ghana.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The pupils' learning takes place in a positive atmosphere, stimulated by engaging displays, and benefits considerably from opportunities to discuss ideas and thoughts in pairs or groups. Teachers use new technology creatively to stimulate the pupils' imaginations, such as the video clip shown in a Year 5 lesson as they prepared arguments for and against zoos. Including practical activities supports the pupils' different learning styles, seen particularly in a Year 6 lesson as the pupils gathered data

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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to analyse by timing shuttle runs. Assessment is used well to guide lesson planning and ensure that work challenges all. Marking indicates how pupils can improve, but time is not always provided for them to respond to comments so they can start to take greater responsibility for their learning.

The curriculum is used well to promote key skills while broadening the pupils' experiences and making their learning more enjoyable. Partnerships with other schools are productive in strengthening sporting activity, and both music and Spanish benefit from specialist teaching. However, the needs of gifted and talented pupils are only just starting to be identified and met. Creative planning links learning in subjects, adding greatly to the pupils' enjoyment such as through the theme of 'Pirates' being followed in Key Stage 1. The wide range of enrichment activities, including visits linked to areas of study and themed events such as the week of art and the international evening, broaden the pupils' learning considerably.

The school has an extremely clear understanding of the circumstances of pupils and their families. This, together with the use of assessment data, is particularly valuable in enabling leaders to identify the precise difficulties faced by pupils with special educational needs and to carefully tailor programmes for withdrawal and other intervention groups. The support of external agencies is sought where needed and is used to very good effect. Induction arrangements when pupils join and the careful preparation when they move on to secondary school help to give a seamless transfer from one stage to the next.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has refocused staff on the drive to raise achievement and taken concerted action that is already leading to improvements in teaching. Her ambitions for the school and high expectations are supported by a staff team keen to learn, share ideas and improve their performance. Targets are challenging and progress towards them carefully checked, although the wealth of data now available to senior leaders is not in a form that is easily interrogated so that they can identify securely the impact of any action they have been taking to improve achievement.

Governors are playing an increasingly pivotal role in the school's improvement by challenging any underperformance and being fully involved in strategic planning. They are also rigorous in ensuring that all arrangements for safeguarding the welfare of the

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pupils are fully met so that anyone working with children in the school is properly vetted.

Promoting equality of opportunity is at the heart of all that the school does. One result is that this is a very cohesive school, where everyone feels valued. Senior leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the context within which the school operates and have planned many activities to help promote community cohesion. This results in families pulling together to support the school and ensures that pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve well. For example, close links with home are used not just to help parents to support their children's learning but also to point them towards additional services in the area. The impact of this work is felt less strongly beyond the local community. Links with outside organisations give good value for money as the school would not be able to support pupils or enrich their experiences without their additional expertise.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

In spite of the children's good progress during their time in the Nursery and Reception classes, a minority do not reach nationally expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. Particular strengths are evident in the progress they make in their personal and social development. They work and play happily together, learning how to share and take turns. The children greatly enjoy activities such as the planting and gardening in the outside areas. Their independence increases and they begin to initiate activities for themselves. They behave in a safe and responsible manner because all adults reinforce what is expected in a positive and encouraging way. Relationships are warm and friendly

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throughout both classes, helping the children settle in quickly on arrival. Their good progress is achieved by:

- teachers providing a good range of activities that cover all areas of learning and using resources well to provide free-flow between the inside and outdoor classrooms
- the careful balance between activities led by adults and those developed by the children
- adults knowing the children very well and catering carefully for their individual needs
- the early identification of children with specific learning or language needs
- a close and productive partnership with home and other agencies
- the rigorous attention paid to ensuring that the children are kept safe at all times.

Set against these many qualities, there are occasions when the children can spend too long sitting on the carpet listening to their teacher and the purpose behind activities outside is not always made clear. The setting is in a transition period since the departure of the previous leader, but the arrangements put in place have ensured that both the quality of provision and the children's achievement are being sustained.

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

Responses to the questionnaire show that parents are very happy with all aspects of the school's work and particularly with the way it is led and managed. Parents are unanimous in saying that their children enjoy school, that they feel suitably informed about their children's progress and that it helps their children to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Teaching is judged by parents to be good and enabling their children to progress well. The inspection team concurs with their views. Furthermore, no evidence was found to support the view of a very small number of pupils that their suggestions and concerns are not taken into account.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blessed Dominic RC 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 130 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 220 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	89	68	41	32	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	87	67	41	32	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	82	63	48	37	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	72	55	55	42	2	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	75	58	54	42	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	79	61	47	36	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	74	57	55	42	0	0	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)	62	48	63	48	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	68	52	58	45	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	63	48	59	45	3	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	63	48	59	45	4	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	73	56	54	42	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	90	69	38	29	0	0	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.



28 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blessed Dominic RC School, London NW9 5FN

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help when we visited your school recently. We agree with you that Blessed Dominic is a good school. We were pleased to see how much you enjoy school and we agree with you that your teachers take very good care of you. Your behaviour is excellent, and those of you who have special jobs, like being members of the school council, carry out your duties responsibly. Thank you for sharing your views with us. You are making good progress during your time in school, learning the skills you need for the future and becoming mature and responsible people. This is because you are taught well and have very interesting things to learn. Those of you who find learning more difficult or are new to learning English also make good progress because of the support you receive, particularly from classroom assistants.

Everyone is trying hard to make the school even better. The two things we have asked the teachers and other adults to do are to:

- help you to learn better through more effective questioning and involve you more in your learning by giving you time to respond to your teachers' marking
- provide more opportunities to challenge those of you with particular talents.

I am sure that you and your teachers will work hard to make these improvements. You can play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to show pride in your school and working hard.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector

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