

St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School

Ballance Road, London E9 5SR

Inspection dates

3–11 October 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior and middle leaders are knowledgeable and motivated. They are a dedicated team, highly committed to ensuring that pupils are well cared for and achieve well.
- Teachers value their professional development. They are reflective practitioners, keen to improve and try out new ideas.
- Pupils at all stages achieve well, particularly in writing and mathematics. Improvements to the teaching of reading are beginning to have an impact on pupils' progress.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have a good understanding of fundamental British values and are understanding of those who are different from themselves.
- Expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct are consistently high. Pupils behave well and show positive attitudes to learning.
- Teaching assistants are effective in helping to ensure that pupils who require extra support are making good progress in a range of subjects.
- The leadership, evaluation and monitoring of subjects other than English and mathematics are not as well developed as they could be.
- Some pupils, including the most able, are not sufficiently challenged. This slows their progress.
- The youngest children get off to a flying start in the school's Nursery. They are confident and enjoy school. Good provision in the Reception classes ensures that children quickly develop basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics and are well prepared for Year 1.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment in reading by developing their skills so that they understand new words and phrases, and the deeper meaning of what they have read.
- Ensure that pupils are developing skills and acquiring knowledge across the full range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders provide strong and focused leadership for the school. They enjoy the full support of parents, pupils, governors and staff.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and team leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is accurate. Consistent application of the assessment system means that teachers have a clear and precise understanding of pupils' abilities in each class.
- Professional development and training with regular monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching ensure that all staff develop their teaching skills and manage their workload.
- Although leaders monitor the quality of teaching, there is not a sharp enough focus on how the most able pupils are doing. As a result, these pupils do not always do as well as they should, particularly in reading.
- The Hackney Learning Trust is working with senior leaders to improve standards in reading. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and are enthusiastic about the breadth of books available. Teachers have received specific training in developing reading skills. There is clear evidence in pupils' work, particularly in Year 6, that standards in reading are improving.
- The curriculum is taught through topic work. Pupils cover a range of subjects, enhanced by visits, for example to the Museum of London, the Olympic Park, Hackney City Farm and the Globe Theatre. This leads to a deepening of their knowledge.
- The focus on developing reading skills has led to a reduction in aspects of the curriculum for Year 6. This means that pupils, particularly the most able, are not stretched in their learning through a broad curriculum. As a result, these pupils do not consistently achieve at a higher standard.
- The curriculum successfully develops the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Participation in regular prayers promotes pupils' spirituality. The school's assemblies and visits encourage reflection on faith, culture and personal choices. Pupils show respect for people from all backgrounds and faiths. They have a good understanding of British values.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to provide extra teaching and welfare support for disadvantaged pupils. The use of more focused support has accelerated their progress and improved their attendance, and is helping them to achieve well.
- The funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively to ensure that they receive good support for their welfare needs and academic learning. Leaders with responsibility for managing their provision track the progress these pupils make. Individual support plans ensure that these pupils make good progress and their needs are well met.

- Use of the primary physical education and sport funding is effective. Specialist teachers deliver high-quality physical education lessons. There is a large uptake of extra-curricular activities. As a result, pupils of all ages participate in more sports and represent the school in competitions.
- The leadership, monitoring and evaluation of subjects other than English and mathematics are not as good as they could be. Leaders are therefore not as clear about pupils' attainment and progress in these subjects.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a good overview of the school and are ambitious for its future. They make frequent monitoring visits to specified areas of the school. They use the records of evidence from their visits to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's initiatives to improve pupils' outcomes.
- Governors undertake regular training, including that for safeguarding and understanding pupils' assessment information. Governors ensure that leaders effectively allocate and monitor the pupil premium funding of disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors are able to explain how they hold leaders to account. Nevertheless, records of governing body meetings do not adequately record questions asked by governors or show how they challenge leaders.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong safeguarding culture throughout the school.
- Teachers are aware of the school's procedures for safeguarding. All members of staff are checked for their suitability to work with children. Records of these checks are accurate and up to date.
- The designated lead for safeguarding is well trained and runs a tight ship in ensuring the safety and well-being of all pupils. Records are comprehensive and organised. Processes for making referrals to external agencies are simple, logical and clear. Staff understand and follow agreed systems. Staff receive regular and up-to-date training which relates to the most recent legislation. Consequently, staff are alert to changes in pupils' behaviour and other signs that raise concerns.
- Leaders and other staff know pupils and families very well. Leaders take the school's context into account in relation to all safeguarding matters. As a result of leaders' accurate understanding of the potential local risks, parents and families receive appropriate support.
- Pupils are very confident that the school is a safe place. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, or spoke to inspectors agree with this view. Pupils trust adults in the school and say they know whom to talk to if they have concerns. Pupils who spoke to inspectors talked knowledgeably about how the school keeps them safe, including how to stay safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good because teachers plan learning that is well structured and engaging.
- Expectations for pupils' behaviour and presentation of work are consistently high. Teachers establish a productive working atmosphere. Strong working relationships between pupils and staff and with each other result in lessons keenly focused on learning.
- Teachers use questioning well to sharpen pupils' understanding and correct misconceptions. Feedback to pupils, particularly in English and mathematics, helps to move pupils' learning on. This is because pupils respond quickly to feedback by making improvements and corrections to their work.
- Following a dip in reading results in 2017, leaders introduced a different approach to teaching the subject which is successfully improving standards. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their love of books. In Year 6, pupils are developing their reading skills to understand more deeply the context and content of what they are reading. As a result, their progress is improving across a range of subjects.
- Senior leaders have strengthened the teaching of phonics. Pupils who read to inspectors used their phonics knowledge to attempt unfamiliar words.
- Teachers' subject knowledge in English and mathematics is good. However, insufficient leadership in some of the foundation subjects means that pupils' achievement in subjects such as art and geography is uneven across the school.
- The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong. Effective targeting of additional support meets the needs of these pupils. As a result, they make good progress.
- Teachers have a good understanding of what pupils are able to achieve. Nevertheless, on occasion the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, could be further challenged by moving on to harder work more quickly. These pupils would then be better placed to achieve higher standards.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and report that they feel safe in school. Parents who spoke to inspectors agree with this view.
- Leaders effectively identify the needs of pupils and families early and provide support where necessary.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to their learning. They concentrate well and are keen to learn. One pupil enthusiastically explained: 'We are so excited to go to our lessons because our teacher really cares about our learning and wants us to do well.'

- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. Pupils understand how to manage risk and what to do if they see a stranger on the school site. They understand the risks of using the internet and social media.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the various forms of bullying and how to protect themselves from it. They report that bullying is rare but when it does occur they are confident that staff take swift and effective action.
- The school's ethos promotes effective reflection on faith, culture and personal choices. Time for reflection and prayer enables pupils to consider what qualities they need to be a true friend, and how they could be a 'good friend' in the playground. Pupils have a good understanding of different cultures and of British values, which prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils have access to the well-organised and popular breakfast club. This ensures that they are prepared and ready to learn at the start of the day.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They are courteous, polite and engage confidently in conversation. They listen well to adults and their peers, showing respect for the views of others. For the most part, they play cooperatively in the playground. Movement around the school is orderly.
- Instances of low-level disruption in classrooms are rare. Pupils work harmoniously together and positive working relationships exist between adults and pupils. As a result, pupils work hard and make good progress.
- Staff apply the well-thought-out 'stay on green' behaviour management system consistently across the school. Pupils value the recognition of good behaviour and understand the consequences of poor behaviour.
- Rates of attendance are broadly average. Leaders' work with parents of pupils who are persistently absent from school is thorough. No stone is left unturned to engage with hard-to-reach families. Despite the persistent absence of some pupils being higher than average, leaders' efforts are positive and improve attendance for many families.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2016, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who achieved the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined was higher than the national average. However, in 2017, this figure fell below the national average. This includes the proportions of pupils achieving a higher score.
- Leaders acted swiftly to understand the reasons for the disappointing key stage 2 results in 2017. They identified that insufficient reading skills hindered pupils. Leaders have introduced focused interventions to better teach pupils how to develop reading comprehension skills. As a result, there are clear indications that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress across a range of subjects.

- Standards in key stage 1 are in line with the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. This includes the proportions of pupils achieving at a greater depth in these subjects.
- The headteacher and team leaders carefully analyse pupils' assessment information. They are aware of how different groups of pupils are progressing in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, swift identification of any pupils who fall behind ensures that they receive quickly the help they need to catch up.
- Effective use of the pupil premium funding improves the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils. They make good and sometimes better progress over time and in relation to their starting points. Careful tracking of progress and tailoring of additional support by teachers and teaching assistants specifically meet individual, academic, social and emotional needs.
- The teaching of phonics in the early years and Year 1 is good. Most pupils reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check, including disadvantaged pupils. Pupils quickly develop secure reading skills so that they can decode unfamiliar words.
- The achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. The school's culture ensures that everyone shares responsibility for the achievement of this group of pupils. As a result, they make good progress because they receive high-quality teaching and additional support from skilled teaching assistants.
- Pupils' achievement across the full range of subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics is variable. Pupils, particularly the most able pupils, do not always develop the skills they need to study in any real depth, for example in geography and art.
- Teachers frequently moderate their assessments of pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics with other schools. This ensures that assessment information is an accurate reflection of pupils' abilities. Consequently, the next steps in pupils' learning are planned carefully.

Early years provision

Good

- The majority of children enter Nursery and directly into Reception with communication and literacy skills that are well below those of other children nationally. There are strong links with outside agencies, for example the school nurse and educational psychologist.
- Leadership in the early years is good. The leader ensures that relevant action plans are written and evaluated regularly. Consequently, areas for development are identified and improved during the academic year.
- Attainment is broadly in line with national figures. The proportions of disadvantaged children who achieve a good level of development improved in 2017. This indicates good progress from relatively low starting points. Leaders are therefore ensuring effective use of the pupil premium funding.

- The Nursery and Reception classes are stimulating and enjoyable places to learn because of the exciting curriculum and the broad range of learning opportunities. Staff meet children's needs effectively.
- Adults provide strong support for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They know the children well and understand their needs. This has contributed to children making good progress from their various starting points.
- The behaviour of children when completing activities is good. As a result of interesting and stimulating activities, children's learning is sustained and focused. However, some children are not given enough opportunities to develop their language skills.
- Children in the early years are well prepared for the next stage in their education because the quality of teaching is consistently good. Careful planning for the transition between Reception and Year 1 ensures that children are ready for the fresh challenge of the Year 1 curriculum.
- Adults encourage safe play and use of resources. Children are kept safe at all times and are well looked after by the caring staff. This ethos ensures that children play happily and fairly together. Parents speak highly of the provision their children receive.

School details

Unique reference number	133669
Local authority	Hackney
Inspection number	10031772

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	409
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eileen Bryant
Headteacher	Deirdre Finan
Telephone number	020 8985 0995
Website	www.stdominics.hackney.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stdominics.hackney.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 October 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- There is a Nursery and two Reception classes in the early years provision.
- The majority of pupils are of Black African heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high, but only a few are at the early stages of learning to speak English.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum

expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club for pupils at the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in all classrooms, some together with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work, listened to pupils read and spoke with pupils about their enjoyment of school and their opinions of behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of school documents. These included the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement and learning plan, behaviour and attendance records, governing body documents and documents relating to the monitoring of teachers' performance.
- Inspectors held informal discussions with several parents and considered five responses to Parent View.

Inspection team

Carolyn Dickinson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Roger Easthope	Ofsted Inspector
Noeman Anwar	Her Majesty's Inspector
Brian Simber, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector

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