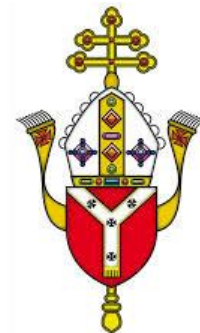


St Dominic's Catholic Primary School

Ballance Road, London E9 5SR

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 26 May 2022



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- The contribution of religious education is evident and permeates all aspects of the learning environment of the school.
- The scheme of work is used creatively and is delivered using a good range of resources.
- Staff create a positive, safe and nurturing climate of learning for all pupils.
- Pupil attainment is in line with other core subjects.
- Pupils are offered a creative and varied curriculum to support them in becoming critical and independent thinkers.
- Behaviour and attitudes to learning by all pupils is consistently positive, enabling them to make good progress.
- Effective teaching strategies are evident in RE lessons and lead to good outcomes for most children.
- Senior leaders, governors and the subject leader for religious education demonstrate a clear vision and commitment to high standards.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- There are some inconsistencies in approaches to teaching, so opportunities for challenge are sometimes missed.
- Pupils need further opportunities to develop the skills of analysis and evaluation, especially in KS2.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- This is a very welcoming and vibrant school, fully living out the school's mission: 'In Jesus, we love, learn, hope, trust and care'.
- Religious education is at the heart of the school.
- Pupils are actively involved in supporting those in need and proactive in responding locally, nationally and globally.
- The quality, strength and warmth of the relationships of all members of the school are outstanding and the school creates a tangible sense of unity and mutual respect.
- The partnerships between school, parents, parish, governors and diocese are exceptional and are a key, vibrant and central part of the school's understanding of itself as a community.
- The headteacher, leadership team, staff and governors are an example for all - outward facing and inclusive - and they have created a cohesive and joyful school.
- Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school and pupils are offered many opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation throughout the liturgical year.
- The ways in which the school expresses its Catholic identity affirm the cultural richness of the community it serves.
- The school offers outstanding support for all staff which enables them to contribute well to the Catholic life of the school.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

The previous inspection highlighted the need to improve teaching and pupil progress by ensuring that teachers set work at the right level in order to develop pupils' extended writing skills; that they provide pupils with more detailed feedback on how to improve their work and that they use questioning more effectively, particularly for the most able pupils.

The school remains committed to these areas; school leaders and staff are continually striving for improvement in classroom teaching and are ready to adapt current practice in order to improve standards. Pupils' work demonstrates plenty of opportunities for pupils to write at length. Teachers' marking now provides some feedback to pupils on how to improve their work. More effective questioning in religious education lessons is apparent in lesson observations.

All areas in the previous inspection have been fully addressed.

The content of classroom religious education is good

The content of the religious education (RE) curriculum of this school meets the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* (RECD). Pupils are encouraged to be creative and are given the opportunity to present their learning in a variety of ways: art; drama; mind maps; technology; debates and discussions. Pupils clearly enjoy singing and Key Stage 2 pupils sang joyfully during the Ascension Day Mass at St Dominic's church. The emphasis on prior learning enables pupils to consolidate their knowledge as they move through the key stages of learning. Pupils are encouraged to think about key concepts through the use of 'talk partners' which helps them to become informed, independent and critical thinkers. Key vocabulary, highlighted effectively during lessons, encourages pupils to talk and write about their knowledge and understanding of their faith. One parent was 'proud that their child can pray so well'. Another parent declared, 'pupils' achievement is regularly celebrated and that inspires the children'. The school invites outside speakers as well as school staff of other faiths to help the children learn about other religions. Pupils are also given opportunities to visit places of worship in the community. One pupil stated that 'we need to be able to relate to anyone we meet'. Another pupil announced that 'everyone is accepted here'.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Pupil achievement is good when measured against the diocesan 'Standards Document', the school's own internal tracking system and deanery and diocesan moderation. Pupils are articulate and enthusiastic. The behaviour and attitude of pupils observed across the school is good. Children in Early Years were able to demonstrate excellent religious literacy by naming and explaining the key events of The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus. Reception children were able to explain that the Holy Spirit gives them strength, power, love and energy and makes them feel 'strong, happy and excited.' Pupils in all key stages are keen to share their work and discuss what they know about their faith in peer and class discussions. Year 4 responses in answer to the question on display, 'After the Ascension, where is God now?' included the following: 'God is in us...in kindness...in laughter too'; 'God is beside me at all times'; 'God is in our family and friends'; 'God is love'. Pupils are aware of the purpose of marking but are not always given the detailed feedback they need in order to improve their work. Internal, deanery and diocesan moderations are used to improve teacher subject knowledge of the age-related expectations, thereby developing a shared understanding of assessment across the school. Pupil attainment is in line with other core subjects. Most pupils make good progress in RE and pupils' discussions in RE demonstrate a confidence in their use of religious vocabulary and in their understanding of key concepts.

The quality of teaching is good

The quality of teaching across the school is good. This leads to pupils achieving well over time. Through carefully planned professional development, teachers have improved their subject knowledge and this is leading to the planning and teaching of lessons which are beginning to deepen pupils' religious literacy. The RE subject leader has changed the planning meetings so that teachers are individually supported, a strategy which has been highly effective in improving the planning and delivery of lessons. Teachers have worked hard to develop learning intentions, supported by success criteria and driver words, to improve outcomes for all pupils. Teachers make links to previous learning in order to deepen understanding. In a Year 5 class, one pupil was able to talk through a topic confidently from beginning to end: Shrove Tuesday to Easter Sunday. The teaching in the Early Years classes included a good variety of activities which ensured the interest and engagement of all pupils. Differentiation was seen in some classes but this now needs to be shared so that all groups benefit from work set at the appropriate level. Support staff were observed playing a key role in supporting children with special educational needs. Teachers endeavour to ensure all pupils are engaged in their learning. However, there needs to be further consistency in applying appropriate challenge to all classes in the school.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is good

Leadership and management of RE are good in this school. The RE subject leader, along with senior leaders, has a clear vision which is shared by all staff members and the governing body. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, recognising areas for development and highlighting effective strategies already in operation to address areas for improvement. Religious education targets form part of staff appraisals and reflect the current priorities in the school development plan. Teaching is monitored regularly and rigorously over time. The leadership team have worked hard to develop systems to support the staff in planning and delivering good RE lessons which engage and challenge pupils. School leaders are particularly committed to staff training and development. All staff, including those from other Christian traditions and other faiths, know that they are valued and there are excellent systems in place to enhance their contributions to the Catholic life of the school. The school recognises its areas for development and is committed to moving the school further forward. The governors are well informed and have been instrumental in ensuring that there is a clear vision and commitment to the school's key role in the educational mission of the church.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- To ensure teachers offer regular opportunities for stretch and challenge.
- To ensure all pupils have opportunities to develop the skills of analysis and evaluation, especially in KS2.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The previous inspection highlighted the need to increase the number of visits that are related to pupils' religious education topics, and to explore the possibility of introducing a Retreat programme as well as increasing the proportion of teachers who hold the CCRS qualification.

The school has worked hard at providing a range of speakers, especially in the teaching of other faiths. The knowledge of school staff of other faiths has been well-utilised to enhance lessons. In addition, high quality speakers deliver scripture workshops and planning sessions to support staff subject knowledge of the Catholic faith. A retreat programme for Years 5 and 6 has been established in collaboration with a local Catholic secondary school. School visits have included frequent visits to Westminster Cathedral. The number of teachers who hold the CCRS qualification has increased to 4 with another member of staff currently enrolled on the course. A number of both teaching and support staff have completed the Foundation Stones course in order to increase their knowledge of the Catholic faith.

All areas of the previous inspection have been fully addressed.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum is outstanding

The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference with 10% of curriculum time allocated to RE. The budget for RE is on a par with the budgets for other core subjects. An annual professional development day is focused on the religious education curriculum and the Catholic life of the school. This is attended by all staff, parish clergy and governors. The school rightly recognises the centrality of religious education and staff are encouraged to complete the Foundation Stones course to support their knowledge and skills. The leadership team, supported by the parish priests and governors, work very hard to ensure that pupils are provided with the best opportunities possible and that staff are well-supported in their professional development. Teaching assistants are allocated to every RE lesson as well as appropriate 1:1 adult support for pupils with special educational needs. RE displays and prayer corners are in place in every classroom with key words being prominent to enhance pupils' religious literacy. Human flourishing is celebrated through themed displays in all communal areas throughout the school. Displays are of high quality and are reflective of the school's work in Catholic social teaching and racial justice. Parents recognise the importance the school places on its Catholic life. Governors are very well-informed and work closely with the leadership team to develop and review the quality of pupils' religious experience and are aware of areas for further development. The school clearly places a high emphasis on the centrality of the Catholic faith to its mission and life.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community is outstanding

The school excels in offering daily opportunities for pupils to pray and reflect. It meets its commitment to ensuring prayer and worship are part of the daily rhythm of pupils' experience at school. There is an excellent planned programme for prayer and worship so that pupils are afforded every opportunity to experience the breadth and richness of the Catholic tradition. The liturgical year is the foundation upon which the rich prayer life of the school is based. Mass is celebrated on Holy Days and Feast Days throughout the year. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered at key

times. Since the pandemic, pupils are becoming more confident in preparing and leading acts of worship and do so with reverence and pride. Even the very youngest pupils in the Early Years classes are able to show reverence during prayer times and can confidently pray the Sign of the Cross and the Hail Mary. The school's chaplaincy team, the Doves, know the school's mission statement and can recite it confidently. The Doves supported the preparation of worship in a Key Stage 1 liturgy. In a Year 4 class act of worship, pupils were able to share spontaneous prayers based on the meaning of the mission statement in their own lives. In discussion, the Doves shared that St Dominic's is a place where 'they are not told, but they are shown how to behave'. Staff are excellent role models for their pupils. The *Capture That Thought* book in each class from Year 1 to Year 6 is an excellent record of enabling pupils' voices to be heard through personal thoughts, prayers and reflections throughout the liturgical year.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –

is outstanding

It is clear that the school is a very nurturing environment where pupils are encouraged to develop and celebrate their gifts and talents so that they can flourish and become valuable members of the community. Pupils have many opportunities to explore and share these talents. The Doves, the school's chaplaincy team, are actively involved in service within the school, supporting prayer and worship, particularly for the younger pupils. Pupils' individual talents, achievements and service are celebrated in golden tree award assemblies. Pupils speak about how they feel valued by the acknowledgement of their gifts and talents during these celebrations. Pupils are extremely polite, welcoming and friendly and it is evident that they are taught to respect, value and celebrate everyone in their school and the world around them. The school promotes service and self-sacrifice in all aspects of school life and this is modelled by school staff. During the pandemic, the deputy headteacher organised a food and clothing bank and a teaching assistant volunteered at the local food bank. As a result, the pupils understand the importance of supporting those in need. The call to serve was the theme of the retreat for Years 5 and 6 in October 2021. Through regular assemblies and fundraising events for charities, including the Catholic Children's Society, Save the Children and Cafod, pupils understand that the Catholic community has a collective responsibility to be of service to the local community and to the wider world. Most recently, the pupils raised money for the Ukraine and for the Little Princess Trust. Pupils are committed to answering the call to service as disciples of the faith and as active global citizens.

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

is outstanding

Partnerships at all levels are outstanding and the school should be proud of its work in this area. Parents are very complimentary and appreciative of the school's work as demonstrated by the responses when meeting inspectors and by the questionnaires reviewed during the inspection. Parents appreciate the welcome the school offers and the many invitations to join their children in worship. They also value the prayer bear sent home for children to pray with families, which is then sent back to school with prayers composed at home. Parents are actively supported by the school when faced with the challenges of inadequate housing and financial hardship. The school leadership team works closely with other Catholic schools in the deanery and is actively engaged with the diocese for moderation, collaboration and to participate in meetings and training. The school puts itself at the service of the diocese in a number of ways, including sharing their work on racial justice and unconscious bias. There are excellent links with the parishes of Immaculate Heart of Mary, St

Dominic's and St Jude's and the parish clergy are regular visitors to the school. The leadership team and the governing body are forward thinking, always seeking and forging a variety of positive partnership opportunities. They are invested in a long-term understanding of the school within the immediate and wider community and they actively follow their pupils' faith journeys by effective collaboration with the Catholic secondary schools attended by their pupils.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school

is outstanding

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The headteacher with the senior leaders, governors and staff are an example for all – outward facing and inclusive – and they have created a wonderful, joyful school community. Senior leaders have a clear and accurate action plan which identifies the areas for further improvement. Governors are clearly effective and play a proactive role in supporting the Catholic life of the school. The link governor for religious education is highly involved and works with school leaders to provide insightful, strategic challenge. All leaders are fully committed to the Church's mission in education and the school's mission statement, 'In Jesus we love, learn, hope, trust and care' is at the heart of all they do. Faith is articulated and a bridge is built from the outside world to the Catholic life of the school. Displays throughout the school, where each child may see themselves reflected as a unique child of God, also reflect the cultural richness and diversity of the school community. The vision of true human flourishing, through a rich experience of Catholic life, is shared by the whole school community. As a result, pupils and staff experience an inclusive community dedicated to the development of the whole person. The outstanding leadership enables pupils and staff, of all faiths and none, to be nurtured and developed.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- To further develop pupils' understanding of Catholic Social Teaching throughout the school and their articulation of the theology behind their actions.

Information about this school

- The school is a two-form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of Hackney.
- The school serves the parishes of Immaculate Heart of Mary and St Dominic, Homerton, and St Jude's, Lower Clapton.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 56%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 43% and from other faiths is 3%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 40%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 4.
- There are 30% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 9 have Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average.
- There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 159 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (53%).

Department for Education Number	204/2900
Unique Reference Number	133669
Local Authority	Hackney
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary-Aided
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	299
The appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair	Mrs Eileen Bryant
Headteacher	Ms Deirdre Finan
Telephone number	0208 985 0995
Website	www.stdominics.hackney.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stdominics.hackney.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 January 2016
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Good
The Catholic life of the school	Outstanding

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection, 12 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 3 class acts of worship and the celebration of Mass for Key Stage 2.
- Meetings were held with parents, school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Ms Norah Flatley

Mr Tony Gorton

Ms Aisling Meehan

Lead Inspector

Associate Inspector

Associate Inspector

Information about inspection

The purpose of Diocesan inspection is to report to and advise the Archbishop on the quality of classroom religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The inspection report is also used to inform parents and carers, and the wider Catholic community. Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools. It also assists schools in the work of self-evaluation and improvement, and enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

This report is published by the Diocese of Westminster and is available at:

<http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

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