

St Dominics Catholic Primary School

Southampton Rd, London NW5 4JS

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 11 October 2017



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- The content of the religious education syllabus is fully in accord with the Bishops' Conference Religious Education Curriculum Directory.
- The planning for and preparation of classes are good.
- The teachers' knowledge of religious education is good.
- The school provides regular opportunities for the teachers to have training to know more about religious education.
- The quality of teaching at St Dominic's in religious education is outstanding.
- The pupils make good progress in the subject.
- The governors and senior leadership team focus on ensuring that religious education is regularly reviewed, with a view to improving it yet more.
- The pupils enjoy their religious education classes and can speak about what they have learned with confidence.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- The pupils need to write down in a more formal way what they have learned in class in religious education.
- The pupils need more knowledge about the levels of attainment to enable them to know more specifically how to reach the next level.
- The school needs to develop further the programme for teaching about other world faiths, Islam in particular.

B. The Catholic life of the school is good

- The teaching of religious education at St Dominic's is at the core of the curriculum.
- The school makes sure that the pupils receive 10% of classroom curriculum time on religious education as required by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- The experience of prayer and worship that the pupils receive is outstanding.
- The pupils are confident in praying and in leading prayer, both written and spontaneous.
- The pupils show an outstanding commitment to helping others and they can talk about the reasons for it based on the teaching of Jesus Christ.
- The sense of Catholic identity leads the school to be very generous in supporting people and causes in need.
- There is a good partnership with both the parents and the parish.
- Parents are regularly invited to share in occasions and celebrations in the school or church with their children.
- The school collaborates with the chaplain to devise and provide a planned programme of worship, prayer and liturgy, both within school and in the church.

The Catholic life of the school is not yet outstanding because

- The school is preparing to start a new initiative of setting up a pupil chaplaincy team.
- The partnership initiatives with the parish are making good progress and continue to be developed.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

The previous report suggested three improvement points. The first was to continue to support teachers in developing their subject knowledge particularly in relation to the agreed understanding of the levels of attainment; this has been achieved by arranging for all staff to attend continuing professional development formation sessions each half term, some led by outside religious education specialist consultants. Secondly, it was suggested that the school should develop a tracking system to ensure pupils make good progress across both key stages. The school now has a tracking system which comprehensively covers AT1 (Learning about religion) targets throughout the school and is on track to include AT2 (Learning from religion) targets as well. Finally, they were asked to ensure all classes have enough Bibles to enable all pupils to have access to the text of the Scriptures. This has been achieved.

The content of classroom religious education is good

The school has been using a commercially available Catholic religious education (RE) scheme for the past five years and has become adept at using it effectively and creatively. It is fully linked to the headings and outcomes of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). It provides a good framework for teacher planning and teaching, as well as assessment of progress. The scheme also provides the material and approach for teaching about two world faiths which the school concentrates on, Judaism and Islam. The school needs to develop this material further, especially in teaching about Islam. In order to extend pupils' knowledge of Catholic Social Teaching, the school is also using the 'Caritas in Action' programme. As well as informing RE teaching, this programme is also informing the wider curriculum including personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (SMSC). The content of classroom religious education is further informed by using the Wednesday Word, which the pupils take home to provide family preparation for the Sunday Gospel.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Pupil achievement, attainment and progress in RE are good. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good and they are engaged and interested in their learning. They are given a variety of opportunities to engage with the subject including individual work, groupwork and whole class work. Teachers plan effectively to ensure that a creative approach is used to maximise pupils' engagement and enjoyment of the subject. A good level of challenge is offered to all pupils, both in the careful planning for challenge and the meticulous marking of pupils' work. This school has introduced the SOLO taxonomy skills framework which is leading to deeper conceptual understanding and higher ability thinking skills which are all contributing to pupil achievement.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers create a positive climate for learning where pupils are engaged and attentive. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and use higher order questioning to great effect. This is evidenced in a Year 6 class where teachers made excellent use of team teaching and consistently asked probing questions to further challenge pupil knowledge and understanding of the lesson content. Teachers are confident in the delivery of key religious concepts. Excellent use was made of resources to match pupil needs, and these resources helped create stimulating and challenging lessons. In the light of the structure of the classes responding to the needs of a school with one and a half forms of entry, it was noticeable how much effort and planning went into differentiation of task in the light of the wide levels of achievements in the classes. This provided a clarity of specific learning outcomes for different groups of pupils. The classroom

assistants showed their effectiveness by cooperating with a very clear idea of the needs of the specific group of pupils they were assisting.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of religious education is good

The leadership and management of religious education are characterised by good focus and vision for improvement. The RE coordinator was appointed to her role this September and, in conjunction with the head and deputy, has put in place a support and development structure for religious education which both caters for the new members of staff and for developing further the good delivery of the subject with experienced members of staff. Clear documentation and planned meetings enable this to be implemented. There is careful monitoring and recording of classroom subject teaching enabling the senior team to provide additional help and resources when needed. Particular help is provided for those teachers of other faith backgrounds, alongside an openness to make use their knowledge and experience of those faiths. The governors take a close interest in the delivery and progress of the subject and provide well the support and challenge that is expected of them.

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

- Look to providing written notes and evidence of the outcomes of pupil progress, giving pupils enough time to develop their articulation in extended writing of what they have learned.
- Pupils need to engage in using levels to achieve their targets.
- Develop further the programmes for teaching about other faiths, Islam in particular.
- Expand the curriculum planning to show how it corresponds to the RECD in the medium term.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The previous inspection report noted that the school should continue to engage parents in a wider variety of ways to enable them to support their children on their faith journey. The school has acted in response by regularly inviting parents to join their children at church and prayer services, by creating a new website which is more parent friendly and engaging and by implicitly sending out the message that the school values and promotes the school/parent partnership. On the day of the inspection an evident number of parents attended midmorning in the church as the school chaplain introduced the reception class to the Lady Altar and the saying of the Hail Mary. The new mission statement is well known to both pupils and parents and provides for a vision of shared purpose.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is good

The status of religious education is recognised as good both within the school and by the parents. The budget for religious education is the highest for any subject in the school and confirms the solid commitment of the governors and school to its central place in its life. The requirement of the Bishops' Conference that 10% of classroom curriculum is devoted to religious education is fully met. The governors take a clear interest in the development of the subject and look to ensuring its position as the core of the curriculum. This is particularly supported by the regular opportunities for ongoing professional development in religious education given to the teachers. The pupils in discussion could articulate that religious education was very special in St Dominic's Catholic school.

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

is outstanding

The provision for Catholic worship, prayer and liturgy for the whole school community is outstanding. Innovative and creative opportunities for prayer reflect the deep understanding St Dominic's has of itself as a vibrant Catholic worshipping community. Class visits to the church are encouraged to enable pupils to learn more about the saints and to offer them the opportunity to experience the riches of the Catholic tradition. The names of the classes in St Dominic's correspond to the names of the saints of the altars in the church. Pupils in the Early Years were welcomed in the church by the school chaplain and introduced to praying the Sign of the Cross and the Hail Mary. Many parents accompanied the pupils on the visit. In the Year 2 class, pupils were observed to engage in spontaneous prayer by picking up a footprint template and then offering their prayer in a basket. The mission statement was brought to life through music and song in a collaborative worship experience which explained the Catholic values so evident in both principle and practice in the school.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice

is outstanding

Pupils are clear about their role of stewardship in school and the wider community. They are actively engaged in acts of service during the year and have an excellent understanding of why they should support others both locally and globally. "God gave us the world to look after, so we should look after it by helping others" said a Year 5 pupil. The use of Caritas in Action resource book to support the RE curriculum has strengthened pupil understanding of the Church's call to action and is evident in teaching and learning. Pupils are regularly given opportunities to develop their gifts and talents through the School Council, assemblies, the buddy system and leading pupils in the Church's call to action for justice. The School Council in particular leads the school in highlighting the needs

of others, and was instrumental in emphasising the response of the school to the families in need as a result of the Grenfell fire.

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

is good

Following the recommendation of the previous report the school has taken a number of effective steps to build partnership with the parents. The parents' questionnaire indicated both high satisfaction with the Catholic identity of the school and their support of the school. The school has built a good partnership with the parish next door and is working in collaboration with the newly appointed Dominican priest chaplain to the school to take forward a number of initiatives which will enhance this. Parents in discussion with the inspectors implicitly confirmed the solid partnership between home, school and parish. The school works closely with its RE adviser and attends diocesan conferences and meetings on a regular basis. The school rightly rejoices that the chairman of the Catholic Education Commission of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales was a pupil at the school.

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

is good

This leadership and management are good as the mission statement clearly underpins and informs the key policies of the school. On the day of the inspection, the pupils were taught the music for singing the school's mission statement, each verse developing an aspect of it. This enhanced the pupils' understanding of the mission of the school and is an indication of the effective leadership promoting the Catholic life of the school. With the full support of the governors, the leadership team have concentrated on building up the sense of the Catholic identity of the school, devoting in service opportunities to study and develop the Catholic educational vision prevalent in all aspects of school life. Through good communication with staff, pupils, parents and governors the leadership team has disseminated the message that the pupils are to grow as children of God and disciples of Christ.

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

- Put into effect the plans to establish a pupil chaplaincy team.
- Continue to develop existing partnership initiatives with the parents and the parish.

Information about this school

- The school is a one and a half form entry Catholic Primary school in the locality of Camden/Kentish Town.
- The school serves the parish of St. Dominic's, Kentish Town, Camden
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 66%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 12% and from other faiths is 9%. The remaining 13% of pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 68%. This includes school leaders and support teachers.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 3.
- There are 19% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 7 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP). This is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average at 67%.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average at 34%
- There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals at 36%.
- 124 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (49%).

Department for Education Number	2023429
Unique Reference Number	100039
Local Authority	Camden

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	250
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Margaret Harvey
Headteacher	Miss Jennifer O'Prey
Telephone number	020 7485 5918
Website	www.st.dominics.camden.uk
Email address	admin@stdominics.camden.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	March 2013
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Good
The Catholic life of the school	Very Good

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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 8 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 3 of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with 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.

Deacon Anthony Clark

Lead Inspector

Mrs Norah Flatley

Associate Inspector

Mrs Sinead Steed

Associate Inspector

Diocesan inspection has four grades:

- outstanding
- good
- requires improvement
- causing concern

Published by the Diocese of Westminster

This publication is available at: <http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

Vaughan House
46 Francis Street,
London
SW1P 1QN

T: 020 7798 9005

E: education@rcdow.org.uk

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