

St Dominic Catholic Primary School

Southampton Road, London, NW5 4JS

Inspection dates 7–8 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching across the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is not yet good enough to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress. Teachers' expectations are not always high enough.
- More-able pupils have to spend too much time listening to teachers' explanations, even when they have fully understood what they need to do, which slows their progress.
- In some lessons, additional adults do not support pupils' learning well enough during those parts of the lesson when the teacher works with all of the pupils.
- When marking pupils' work, teachers do not regularly expect pupils to do follow-up activities so that they learn from their mistakes.
- Some teachers in the lower years are not skilled enough to ensure pupils make good progress in their early reading skills.
- Some leaders do not check the work of their colleagues closely enough, nor use information about pupils' progress to identify those who are falling behind and take quick action to bring about improvements.
- Governors have not held leaders to account well enough about pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has rapidly set about raising expectations and has identified the key priorities for improvement. She is bringing about improvements in the quality of teaching through a comprehensive programme of monitoring and training.
- Since the start of this academic year, teachers have begun to plan a better range of activities to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Attendance has improved significantly since the time of the previous inspection.
- Improvements in the quality of teaching in Year 6 last year led to an above average proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children settle in very quickly in the welcoming environment of the Nursery and rapidly develop their social skills.
- Pupils behave well and display good attitudes to learning. They all get on well together and say that they enjoy school and feel safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons taught by 13 teachers. In addition, inspectors observed the teaching of phonics (letter patterns and the sounds they represent). Many of these observations were made jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher of the school.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other members, a representative of the local authority, parents and carers, staff, including senior and middle leaders, and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school documentation, including teachers' planning, the school's self-evaluation and development plans, assessment information, monitoring files, governing body minutes, safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked with them about their enjoyment of books.
- Inspectors considered the 33 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to report on parents' and carers' views by this means.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Carole Beedham	Additional Inspector
Kewal Goel	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are considerably larger than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Most of this group have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and/or speech, language and communication difficulties. The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well above average.
- There are building works on site to establish a new Early Years Foundation Stage unit which means that, at the moment, children in Reception do not have access to an adjacent outdoor learning area.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school does not use alternative provision for any of its pupils.
- Since the previous inspection there has been a large turnover of staff, including the appointment of a new headteacher who took up her post in September 2012. Most members of the current governing body are new to their role.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to ensure that all pupils, especially the more able, make consistently good or better progress across the school by:
 - planning more opportunities in the Early Years Foundation Stage for children to develop their language and mathematical skills at a faster rate
 - ensuring that all adults teaching early reading are well trained in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make)
 - raising teachers' expectations of what all pupils can achieve and ensuring that the more able, especially, are kept actively learning throughout lessons
 - deploying all adults in the classroom to actively support pupils' learning throughout the whole lesson
 - consistently expecting pupils to do follow-up activities after their books have been marked, so that they learn from their mistakes.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - training all leaders and members of the governing body to analyse in depth the information about pupils' progress so that it can be used both to plan for improvement and to hold staff to account for the progress of pupils in their class
 - ensuring that all middle leaders monitor their areas of responsibility frequently and take decisive and timely action to remedy any shortcomings
 - ensuring that the governing body holds school leaders to account for accelerating improvements in the quality of teaching and the rates of pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils make inconsistent progress as they move through the school and do not always reach the levels they are capable of achieving.
- Children enter the school with skills that are below those expected for their age. In the Early Years Foundation Stage they make good progress in their social development. For instance, inspectors saw a group of children in the play kitchen pretending to make and eat breakfast together. Progress in developing language and mathematical skills is, however, just adequate.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 is below average, with very few pupils reaching the higher Level 3.
- Last year, rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics were slower in Years 3 and 4 than in Years 5 and 6, where pupils made good progress. Progress across Key Stage 2 is adequate overall.
- In 2012, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who attained Level 4 in both English and mathematics increased compared to previous years and was above the national average. Attainment at the higher levels, however, remains below average in all subjects, markedly so in reading.
- Pupils' performance in the Year 1 phonics screening test was similar to that found nationally. Older pupils told inspectors that they enjoy reading and they were able to talk about their favourite authors. Some of the reading activities seen during the inspection, however, were not well enough organised to meet the needs of the full range of abilities. More-able readers are not encouraged enough to read increasingly challenging texts that they are capable of tackling.
- There are no significant gaps in achievement between groups of pupils. The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to that of their peers because they receive appropriate support.
- Pupils who are learning to speak English generally communicate well and make progress similar to other pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement as there is not enough good or better teaching to ensure that all pupils learn well and make consistently good progress.
- Teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough to ensure they set their pupils suitably challenging goals and activities. In many lessons, the pace of learning is not rapid enough, especially for the more-able pupils who are sometimes held back from getting on with their work while they sit through whole-class explanations which they do not need.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage there are sometimes lost opportunities for consolidating pupils' learning. For example, in a reading lesson, children were not all encouraged to repeat the sounds being taught and there was no opportunity for the children to do their own writing.
- There are inconsistencies in the teaching of early reading skills. This is because some adults are not well trained in the systematic teaching of phonics, and grouping arrangements do not always cater well for the full ability range.
- Nevertheless, there are good features in the teaching in some classes. In good lessons, teachers set a brisk pace, plan activities that interest and motivate pupils and encourage them to work well. For instance, in a writing lesson, pupils worked enthusiastically to write a letter about a visit to the Amazon rain forest that they had been learning about. With effective support and challenge from all adults in the room, all pupils made good progress.

- In the better lessons, teachers work well with teaching assistants to ensure that they offer good quality support throughout the lesson. However, in a mathematics lesson on Venn diagrams, two additional adults were not actively supporting pupils for the first quarter of the lesson as all pupils were sitting on the carpet listening to the teachers' explanation.
- Teachers mark pupils' work frequently and make encouraging comments. They do not, however, always expect pupils to do follow-up activities so that they can learn from their mistakes.
- Older pupils explained how teaching had improved. One said, 'In the past, teachers taught everybody the same thing. Now they always prepare three different challenges that help us challenge ourselves and learn more.'
- With the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils, the school employed extra teachers in Years 5 and 6 last year to provide one-to-one tuition and small group support for pupils who were falling behind. As a result, pupils who received the extra support in Years 5 and 6 made up lost ground in reading, writing and mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Typically, pupils behave well. They are keen to engage in conversation with visitors and are polite, welcoming and helpful.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to their own work and help their friends who are having difficulties during paired and group activities. Inspectors saw examples of pupils helping each other to solve mathematical problems and in giving constructive feedback to their partners on how to improve the quality of their writing.
- Pupils behave well around the school and navigate the narrow stairways sensibly. Behaviour in lessons is good. On the odd occasion, some pupils get a little restless when teachers talk for too long but are quick to respond to their teachers' directions.
- Pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties are supported well. The school works effectively with external agencies to support pupils and their families experiencing difficulties with behaviour or regular attendance.
- Pupils are able to explain what bullying is. They recognise, for instance, concerns regarding internet safety and are well briefed about staying safe on the school site while the current building works continue. They are confident that there are adults to talk to if they have any worries and say that school staff deal effectively with occasional inappropriate behaviour.
- Pupils of different backgrounds get on well together and there have been no reported incidents of racism for well over a year.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new headteacher, deputy headteacher and governing body have a good understanding of what needs to be improved in terms of pupils' achievement, teaching and in the leadership and management of the school. They have a clear vision of how to set about this and have already made progress.
- Middle leaders new to the school are already checking their areas of responsibility and improving teaching and learning. Some of the longer-serving leaders, however, have not used information about pupils' progress rigorously enough to identify underperformance in order to address weaknesses quickly.
- Following a fall in standards and changes in the school's leadership, the local authority provided strong support last year in organising temporary leadership arrangements, creating an ongoing partnership with an outstanding school to support teachers' training. It also assisted in recruiting new governors and a permanent headteacher.

- Good processes of self-evaluation has led senior leaders and the governing body to accurately recognise that the school requires further improvement. As a result, the headteacher has been set targets to rapidly improve the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of middle leaders to raise standards.
 - New plans and systems are in place to implement teachers' appraisal but this is not yet embedded in order to hold staff fully to account for pupils' progress. The governing body insists that only very successful teachers may be promoted onto the upper pay scales.
 - Recent monitoring of teaching and learning effectively identified strengths and areas for further improvement as well as individual teachers' training needs. This has already begun to result in improvements in some teaching.
 - The curriculum meets statutory requirements. It supports good attitudes to learning, safety, and tolerance of people of other faiths and cultures. With additional opportunities, such as the choir's annual participation in a local music festival and fund raising for a range of charities, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair of the Governing Body recently accompanied senior leaders and a local authority advisor in a day's observation of teaching across the school. Plans are in place to ensure that more governors visit the school regularly in order to directly monitor its work more effectively. Governors are aware of the school's overall strengths and weaknesses but are unsure about the impact of specific additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. The governing body has arranged a programme of training, including the analysis and understanding of progress data, so that it will be better able to challenge and support the school's senior leaders with enough rigour to bring about rapid improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement. All statutory duties are met, including arrangements for safeguarding.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	100039
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	400387

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	307
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Harvey
Headteacher	Jennifer O' Prey
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 June 2010
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