



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection

ST DOMINIC'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Part of the Holy Trinity Multi Academy Company

Margaret Street, Stone, Staffordshire, ST15 8YG

Inspection date	18 th & 19 th May 2017
Reporting Inspector	Dominic Collins
Assistant Inspector	Clare van Vliet

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Academy
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	204
Appropriate authority	Board of Directors
Chair of Governors	Hamish Noble
Telephone number	01785 354070
E-mail address	office@st-dominics-catholic.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	May 2012
DFE School Number	860/3470
Unique Reference Number	142210
Headteacher	Dianne Stokes
Previous inspection:	Good
This inspection:	Good

Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors.
- The focus of the inspection was on the quality, leadership, and impact of the school's provision of Catholic life, collective worship, and religious education (RE).
- The inspectors observed teaching across 4 RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and undertook learning walks in all other classes. All of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic life, worship, and the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- Meetings were held with the chair of governors, RE link governor, headteacher, RE subject leader and parish priest.
- The inspectors attended a whole school Mass, a school assembly, collective worship and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in RE, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, RAISEonline, data about pupils' attainment and progress, the school development plan, teachers' planning and learning journals.

Information about the school

- St Dominic's is a smaller than average Catholic primary school in the parish of the The Immaculate Conception and St Dominic's, Stone, and also serves the parishes of Our Lady's Swynnerton, Sacred Heart, Eccleshall, and Holy Michael's, Aston-by-Stone.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 84%.
- The number of pupils from a minority ethnic heritage group is below the national average.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The number of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is below the national average.
- Attainment on entry is broadly in line with national expectations.
- Significant change has occurred since the last inspection. Following the retirement of the previous headteacher, the current headteacher was appointed in 2015. An experienced teacher within the school was also appointed as RE subject leader and a number of new staff have joined the school.
- St Dominic's became part of the Holy Trinity Multi Academy Company (MAC) on 1st March 2016, in conjunction with 6 other Catholic primary schools and Blessed William Howard Catholic High School.

Main Findings

- The Catholic life of St Dominic's School is good, with several outstanding features.
- St Dominic's is a welcoming and inclusive school with a strong Catholic identity and outstanding Catholic ethos, thus enabling pupils to enjoy their learning and achieve their full potential.
- All staff exercise a high level of pastoral care to ensure each pupil is fully integrated into the school.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership and sets high standards and expectations for all members of the school community.

- The school strives to provide the best possible outcomes for all pupils. This vision is shared by a dedicated staff team and supportive governors, who place the spiritual and moral development of the pupils as their highest priority.
- The excellent chaplaincy support, given through the valuable partnership with the parish priest, provides a significant contribution to the development of Catholic life and collective worship of the school.
- As a result of consistently good teaching in RE, pupils enjoy their lessons and make good progress in their learning.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

Catholic life, collective worship and spiritual, moral and vocational development: provision and outcomes

- The Catholic life of St Dominic's School is good with several outstanding features.
- The school's mission is epitomised in its beautiful school prayer. This prayer, created by all stakeholders, reflects the strong Catholic character and outstanding ethos of the school.
'Loving Father, look down upon St Dominic's. Bless our school and all who come together here. Make it a place of truth, respect and understanding, a place where all are valued. Make it a place of peace and happiness in all that we do. Be our guide as we learn to live and love as children of God. Amen.'
- The community of St Dominic's is extremely successful in creating an ethos that permeates all aspects of school life. This provides a very positive environment, conducive to enabling all pupils to grow and learn in their faith and achieve their full potential.
- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. Pupils are great ambassadors for the school's values.
- Bright and cheerful, pupils conduct themselves around the school in an orderly and relaxed manner, showing genuine friendship, care and respect for one another. The playground is an exciting and happy social gathering where pupils enjoy the company of their friends.
- Pupils know how much they are valued, and realise that they too have a duty of awareness and consideration for all members of the school community.
- Pupils clearly understand the consequences of their own actions and the influence this has on others. They realise the importance of their contribution towards creating a harmonious and happy environment. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary.
- Relationships, built upon mutual respect, are excellent. Pupils are taught the importance of reconciliation and forgiveness, both in RE lessons and through their own experience, as staff help to resolve any minor disagreements that might occur. The school's 'Golden Rules' behaviour initiative is extremely effective.
- The contribution pupils make to the evaluation process through school council representations, questionnaires and discussions, are valued and encouraged. Their eager and perceptive responses enable the school leadership to evaluate the extent to which pupils benefit from and participate in the Catholic life and mission of the school.
- The staff are a dedicated and effective team, who are supportive of each other. They demonstrate a strong commitment to the Catholic ethos of the school and know the children well. They are excellent role models for them;

they foster a happy, caring environment and exercise a high level of pastoral care to ensure that each pupil is fully integrated into the school family.

- Prayer and evangelisation is at the heart of the school community, where all work together with a common purpose to be successful in encouraging the Catholic life of the school.
- Promoting awareness of the needs of others, in school and the wider community, has a high priority in the life of the school. As a result, pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of justice and peace.
- Pupils understand that God is calling them to use their special gifts and talents. They are able to talk about why they should always do their best and try to make the right choices.
- Pupils can relate the teachings of Jesus to our daily lives. They have an understanding of what it means to have a personal vocation and recognise their responsibility to serve the needs of others. Pupils readily respond to appeals in support of local and national charities, including Father Hudson's Homes and CAFOD. Recently, members of the Rosary Club produced hand made notebooks of friendship for a school in Kenya.
- Pupils realise, that through prayer and alms giving, their efforts can make a real difference on the lives of others. These initiatives extend pupils' learning and enable them to become active and engaged in their faith.
- In order to enhance pupils understanding and awareness of other faiths and cultures in the local community the school leadership has recently introduced a Difference and Diversity programme in Years 1-6. This initiative is an additional support to the established 'Faith Week' activities that enable pupils to gain a valuable insight through study visits to places of worship. Informative displays of pupils work around the school confirm the success and enjoyment of these experiences that support pupils understanding of their own faith and the impact it has in their lives. As a consequence, pupils develop friendship bonds that cross all social, cultural and economic boundaries.
- St Dominic's is an integral part of the vibrant parish community and strong links are established. Chaplaincy provision is very strong.
- The parish priest visits school regularly and creates a very effective partnership with all the staff and pupils. He knows the school well and through his valuable support in planning collective worship, sacramental preparation and conducting related parents meetings, makes a significant contribution to promoting and developing its Catholic life and the provision of the Diocesan RE Programme.
- Catholic life is enriched by opportunities for pupils to benefit from and contribute to a variety of high quality religious experiences. For example, Years 3 and 6 attend a day retreat at Alton Castle as part of their sacramental preparation.
- The school has a fruitful partnership with St Dominic's Priory School and Convent. The sisters generously invite pupils to learn about their calling to serve God, by hosting an annual pilgrimage for Year 5 pupils.
- The school is successful in guiding pupils to recognise, that by aspiring to understand and practise the Catholic virtues, they are fulfilling the message of the Gospel values.
- Staff and pupils alike speak highly of the school and celebrate successes and achievements with pride.
- Pupils respond well to the school ethos, driven by the Gospel message that love and respect for one another and the importance of reconciliation and compassion, form the foundation of Catholic community. Pupils are immersed in a unique Catholic heritage where they thrive as happy, confident

learners. As a consequence, they are excited about school because they are able to experience a stimulating learning programme within an atmosphere of love, trust and security.

- The quality of collective worship provided by the school is good. Inspection evidence validates the school self evaluation.
- Prayer and worship underpins the Catholic life of the school and is nourished by the example and commitment of all members of staff. There are many opportunities for staff and pupils to pray and reflect together each day.
- Pupils' response to collective worship is very positive. They are attentive and reverent in prayer and understand the importance it has in their daily lives.
- As well as their secure knowledge of traditional prayers, pupils understand that prayer has a variety of purposes and can take different forms. They demonstrate a genuine eagerness to participate in collective worship both as a class or in a whole school setting. Pupils are able to compose and express their own prayers and petitions confidently.
- Pupils are proud of their Catholic identity, are at ease when praying and clearly enjoy opportunities for discussion and reflection. A voluntary lunchtime Rosary club, initiated and led by Sister Valery each week in the school prayer garden, is very well supported. Pupils speak enthusiastically of their membership and participation in the connected club activities.
- Collective worship is well organised and planned by the RE leader and parish priest. A termly collective worship rota, that embraces all year groups, is prepared in accordance with the liturgical calendar. Celebration of fortnightly school Mass and prayer assemblies are prepared and led by individual classes.
- Pupils enjoy celebrating religious feasts throughout the year, including their class patron saint. Good examples of collective worship were observed during the inspection.
- Pupils are guided to lead worship and do so with enthusiasm and a degree of independence. However, opportunities now need to be broadened in order to develop these skills further in all year groups.
- The school is successful in fostering a close relationship with parents and they are welcomed and encouraged to join the school in collective worship.
- In order to encourage family prayer and reflections, a class prayer bag is available for pupils to take home each week. The parish also provides a weekly copy of the 'Wednesday Word' for each family.
- There is an opportunity for pupils to explore and reflect upon the Sunday Gospel each Monday during school assembly.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership of Catholic life and Collective Worship

- The leadership of Catholic life and collective worship of the school is good with some outstanding elements.
- There is clear evidence that the school's leadership is deeply committed to the Church's mission in Catholic education.
- This dedicated staff team and supportive governors place the spiritual and moral development of the pupils as their highest priority.
- The school's leadership perceives self evaluation as implicit in the drive towards a continuous momentum of development.
- Based on a thorough knowledge of the school and its mission, a comprehensive audit of Catholic life and collective worship has been conducted in order to identify strengths and areas for development.

- The headteacher sets high standards and expectations for all members of the school community; she inspires a staff team who confidently contribute to school improvement. As a consequence of this collegiate approach to leadership, the monitoring of Catholic life as a shared responsibility is very effective.
- The mission of the school informs to all areas of Catholic life at St Dominic's; it serves as a reference for self evaluation and quality assurance.
- The school's accurate self-evaluation of monitoring is shared with all stakeholders and is used to inform future development.
- The newly formed governing body are committed to the Catholic mission of the school. However, the governors would benefit from training to support the development of their strategic roles, as academy status is embedded.
- Governors are fully involved in ongoing school development and they ensure that agreed action planning is adequately funded and resourced to support identified objectives.
- All school policies are regularly monitored to ensure the Catholicity of the school is implicit in its documentation.
- They recognise the importance of ensuring that continuous professional development is provided to maintain the needs of staff, pupils and whole school priorities. An annual day retreat is arranged for all academy school staff.
- Through their visits to school, termly meetings of the mission and ethos committee and reports from the school leadership, governors are kept informed of how the school witnesses to the teachings of Christ. As a result, they are able to fulfil their responsibilities and provide support for sustaining and developing the Catholic life of the school.
- Although the monitoring and evaluation of Catholic life is undertaken by the school leadership, in order to track progress more rigorously, a cycle of additional, formal methods is required. The inclusion of more focused governor/director visits would be beneficial to this process.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education

- The provision of religious education at St Dominic's School is good.
- School self evaluation is accurate in its judgement that pupils make consistently good progress in their religious education throughout the school. Inspection evidence confirms this view as reliable and fully justified.
- The school has devised a comprehensive RE plan that highlights areas of development. Key actions and a realistic success criteria, that is both practical and informative, are identified to achieve these aims.
- Regular scrutiny of RE lesson planning, assessment and moderation of pupils' work in RE, pupil interviews, class discussions and focussed learning walks, give a clear and reliable insight into the quality of RE provision and the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.
- An annual cycle of formal lesson observations, in addition to intermittent class visits provides quality assurance of teaching and learning. The quality of teaching in RE is consistently good with evidence of some outstanding teaching also.

- Feedback to staff is developmental and receptive; support and guidance is always included where appropriate. A strength of the school is that teachers are constantly focused on developing teaching and learning in RE, in an effort towards improving pupil outcomes and maintaining high standards.
- RE lessons observed during the inspection were characterised by planning based upon pupils' prior learning, clear learning objectives and well matched activities to engage all learners. However, attention must now be given to develop pupils' independent learning to ensure pupils engage in and respond to questions of the meaning and purpose of RE.
- Religious education is very well led and managed by the RE leader. In addition to supporting staff in the delivery of the RE curriculum, she has worked effectively to address the recommendations from the previous inspection.
- The meticulous analysis of tracking data shows a continuous improvement in pupil progress and attainment across each key stage. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' work, knowledge and understanding, develops well in maturity, quality and presentation.
- Pupils demonstrate an excellent work ethic, are eager to achieve and highly motivated by the varied learning routes they are able to experience.
- Marking is used effectively to inform pupils about their progress, they receive high quality feedback and guidance of how to improve further.
- As a result of self evaluation, support staff are effectively deployed to guide individuals and groups in their learning.
- Learning is further enhanced by the excellent behaviour and attitudes of pupils.
- Relationship and Sex Education is taught appropriately in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Recommendations

In order to improve the school should:

- Broaden pupils' skills in the preparation and leadership of collective worship.
- Further develop independent learning to ensure pupils engage in and respond to questions of meaning and purpose of RE.
- Engage governors with appropriate support in order to develop their strategic roles within the newly formed MAC.
- Develop more formal methods of monitoring and evaluating Catholic life and RE which include governors and directors.