



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## INSPECTION REPORT

### ST DOMINIC'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL STONE, STAFFORDSHIRE

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Inspection dates 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> May 2012  
Reporting Inspector Barry Desmond

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 – 11 years
Number on roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Claire Adams
School address	Margaret Street Stone Staffordshire ST15 8YG
Telephone number	01785 354070
E-mail address	headteacher@st-dominics-catholic.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	February 2007
DFE School number	860 3470
Unique Reference Number	124363

**Headteacher** Francesca Devine

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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



## Evidence

The inspection was carried out by 1 Diocesan Inspector. The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of religious education (RE) and Catholic life. To validate the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspector observed 3 full RE lessons. In addition the inspector completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. He held meetings with a governor, staff, and parish priest. He observed a prayer service 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. He looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence about assessment for learning, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

## Information about the school

St Dominic's is a smaller than average-sized Catholic primary school serving the parish of The Immaculate Conception and St Dominic. The school is situated in the centre of the market town of Stone. 81% of pupils are Catholic with only a very small number coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is 13% with a well below proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals. School data tracking the attainment of children in RE on entry indicates children's knowledge and understanding in this area is falling.

## Main Finding

In its self evaluation St Dominic's judges itself to be a very good school with some excellent features; the evidence gathered as part of the inspection process would support this view. The school has made great strides since the last inspection in 2007. It now has in place a committed headteacher, deputy and a co-ordinator team all of whom have been appointed since the last inspection. Together they have implemented and driven a range of planning, delivery and evaluation strategies that have positively impacted on standards and the Catholic life of St Dominic's School. The school in its mission has been well supported by the parish priest and governing body. This support has included regular visits and discussions that have undeniably helped shape the school's direction of travel. The school sees itself as a caring Catholic family community that strives to do its best and live out its Catholic mission in the parish and wider community. The evidence gathered from a range of sources would indicate that the school has a very good capacity to continue that improvement in the coming years

## School self evaluation

The school's self evaluation of its religious education and Catholic life is accurate having been monitored carefully by senior leaders and governors over a period time. Outcome statements of this evaluation are at times a little too descriptive and improvement outcomes would be sharper if the school makes better use of the data it already generates. School documentation did however demonstrate that learning walks, discussions and evaluations had led to improvements and informed appropriate development targets set out in its own self evaluation document. The school's mission statement is evident throughout the school and lies at the heart of how the school views its work. Throughout the school there was a range of bright attractive displays providing information about the life of saints, the parish, including its rich Catholic history, as well as about the sacramental life and preparation programmes. Children spoke about seeing

religious education as important and central to the life of the school and how events such as Mass, the high quality collective worship and retreat days helped them deepen their relationship with God and enabled them to "get to know him better". Discussions also indicated their understanding and belief that as part of this caring Catholic community they should help and support those considered as "in need" through prayers and charitable works.

The school judges that the quality of collective worship, including Mass, is excellent. The inspection saw that this is carefully planned and monitored by the co-ordinators. The overall quality seen during the inspection was very high. Children took part with respect and reverence, during the different services observed, with periods of reflection, traditional and personal prayer and singing contributing effectively to the quality of worship.

The school has in place a very good, committed and dynamic leadership team. The team has ensured the school has continued to grow and develop over a sustained period of time, driven by a deep desire to see the school and its mission succeed, providing the best possible opportunity for the children to grow in the image and likeness of Christ. Since the last inspection the school has established a wide variety and range of monitoring and evaluation activities. It is evident from files seen that outcomes and processes are reviewed and changes are made over time to improve this process. Evidence seen demonstrates planning is reviewed, the quality of teaching is monitored and pupil outcomes at the end of a unit of work are tracked. Co-ordinators summarise outcomes and present these to the headteacher, staff and governors on a regular basis.

The team have put in place an effective structure that they have worked hard to ensure is fully embedding in the life of the school. They monitor regularly and evaluate strategically the success of initiatives, but this could be even more successful with more precise success criteria that would clearly support and demonstrate the progress already made.

### **Overall effectiveness of the school<sup>1</sup>**

Outcomes and provision for pupils are at least good, with some excellent features. The RE curriculum meets the needs of all children. The curriculum is based on the diocesan Curriculum Strategy with the time allocated to the teaching of RE meeting the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. Pupils enter the school with limited experience of the Catholic faith and by the time they leave they have made good progress, deepening their knowledge of Old and New Testament stories, deepening their understanding of Christ's teaching and developing their knowledge and use of a many forms of prayer to support a growing personal relationship with God. Provision for the children's spiritual and moral development is a strength.

Teaching is good with progress for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities also being good; classroom assistants contribute very effectively to the quality of teaching and learning within the school. Children's response within lessons is generally positive and children report that they feel suitably challenged in lessons.

Pupils are very positive and proud of their community. Behaviour in collective worship as well as around the school is generally excellent. Pupils clearly enjoy the subject and in discussion are able to articulate what they enjoy about RE and describe the variety of ways the subject is presented and delivered to them in lessons. Relationships between

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<sup>1</sup> As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform to those of the school.

pupils and between adults and pupils are also excellent, with one child describing how: "teachers are always looking out for you to make sure you are OK."

There is a clear and strong sense of vision, leadership, drive and unity that guides the continuing progress of St Dominic's school. This commitment to continuing school improvement should ensure St Dominic's continues to grow and flourish in years to come. The headteacher leads and guides the school well. She is effectively supported by the parish priest who is a regular and welcome visitor to the school. She is also ably assisted by her deputy and her hard working, and committed co-ordinator team. Together they have ensured that assessment and moderation procedures are developing well, that the quality of teaching is regularly reviewed and that initiatives are introduced, developed and monitored that continually seek to improve in-school provision.

### **Recommendations**

The school has progressed well since the last inspection and has identified itself many of the improvement areas it will address in the coming terms. However it would continue to improve further if:

- it enhances the children's understanding and awareness of other faith communities and cultures in the local community and beyond;
- it uses more critically the data it is already collecting to inform strategic planning and clearly indicate the success or improvement required.



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May 2012

Dear Parents and Carers

**Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Dominic's Catholic Primary School, May 2012**

I am writing this letter to share with you the findings of the diocesan inspection of your children's school. Diocesan inspection now explores in detail the school's own view of itself as expressed in its self-evaluation. For this reason, much of the report is more technical than used to be the case. You are still entitled to have a copy of the full report should you want one and it will be available on the school website or by request from the school office.

The school has made great strides since the last inspection in 2007 and is now a very good Catholic school. The values, drive and determination of the headteacher and her team ensure that the school lives out its Catholic mission. In this it is well supported by the parish priest and governors. The pupils clearly enjoy being part of the school and its Catholic life and view the school as a harmonious community where everyone is supported. On entry to the school many children have limited religious knowledge, but they make good progress so that by the time they leave they have attained good standards. The children have a good knowledge of Christ's teaching, the basic tenets of our Catholic faith, know many stories from the Old and New Testaments, and develop and use a range of personal and traditional prayers.

In order for the school to continue its good progress we have recommended that in its strategic development planning the school makes more effective use of the data it collects to set targets that clearly identify the success or improvement it is working towards. In addition it should continue to work towards developing the children's understanding and awareness of the other faith communities and cultures in its locality and beyond.

It was a pleasure and a privilege to inspect the school and see how well it is doing. I was warmly welcomed by the staff and pupils and was very impressed by how keen everyone is for the community to continue to grow and evolve for the benefit of the pupils.

Yours sincerely

Barry Desmond  
Diocesan Inspector