

# Blessed Dominic Catholic Primary School

Great Strand, Colindale, London NW9

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 1 December 2021



## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- The leadership and management of religious education (RE) are judged to be outstanding. The headteacher sets high expectations for her staff and challenges them to give of their best.
- Planning and sequencing of learning is of a high standard. The headteacher is supported by a dedicated and well qualified religious education leadership team who help to promote RE in the school.
- The content of Blessed Dominic Catholic Primary School's religious education curriculum fully meets the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. There is a systematic programme of study which covers all the strands of the Curriculum Directory.
- Children get an excellent start to their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children in the Nursery and Reception years quickly learn religious vocabulary, such as the names of Joseph and Mary and can describe the candles in an Advent wreath.
- When pupils leave at the end of Key Stage 2 they have high levels of attainment and knowledge. Both attainment and progress overall are judged to be outstanding in religious education.
- Behaviour of pupils in lessons, playtimes and all around the school is also outstanding. Pupils and teachers display mutual respect towards one another. Lessons are orderly and no disruption was seen in any lesson.
- There is a strong and committed governing body. It is being well led by an experienced chair, a well-informed RE link governor and the parish priest. They are passionate and united in their support for the school and its Catholic ethos.

### B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- Parents and pupils recognise and value the importance the school places on its Catholic life. The commitment from school leaders and governors to the effective leadership of RE is what makes this judgement of Catholic life outstanding.
- Prayer and worship are central to the life of this school. There are extensive opportunities within the school for collective worship and prayer. Pupils are deepening their understanding of the richness of Catholic traditions and the various celebrations that occur during the course of the liturgical year.
- The school is outstanding in its work to promote the Common Good. Blessed Dominic school recognises the value and dignity of each member of their community and those in the wider world. Pupils have an opportunity to share their unique gifts and talents for the good of all. Pupils at Blessed Dominic live out the call to justice and service at a local, national and international level.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and its headteacher. Parents say that their children receive a very good start in their Catholic life as soon as they enter the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This inspection affirms this.
- The school has worked closely with parents to provide support in so many ways during the recent lockdowns.
- The parish priest is equally well informed about Catholic education and its development in the school.

## A. Classroom Religious Education

### What has improved since the last inspection?

Teachers now have the chance to observe and support their colleagues in delivering high quality religious education (RE) lessons.

### The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The content of Blessed Dominic's religious education curriculum fully meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. There is a systematic programme of study which comprehensively covers all the strands of the Curriculum Directory. In addition to a published scheme the school effectively uses other resources to enrich learning and develop further aspects, such as appreciating art and design and enhancing Catholic teaching on social justice. The teaching of the Jewish, Islamic and Hindu faiths is built into the curriculum enabling pupils to broaden their knowledge and understanding of other cultures. This work is supported by visits to places of worship, Covid19 permitting. The school is developing links with a local Jewish school to afford pupils the opportunity to observe their rituals and celebrations. The RE coordinator ensures that new staff and non-Catholic staff receive high quality induction and support. All staff have the opportunity to observe colleagues teaching religious education. The school has devised its own unique programme of support for non-Catholic teachers that needs to be disseminated wider in the diocese as it is a model of good practice and was evidenced during this inspection. Pupils all know and try to live in their lives the school motto: 'Love, Learn, Believe'.

### Pupil achievement in religious education is outstanding

Children enter the school in the EYFS with a wide range of abilities. Progress is consistent across all phases and key stages of the school. When pupils leave at the end of Key Stage 2, they show high levels of attainment and knowledge. Therefore both attainment and progress are judged to be outstanding in religious education.

Pupils' work is regularly assessed and often self-assessed and marked in accordance with school policy. The school has rigorous systems in place to moderate the standards of pupils' work and ensure accuracy of judgements. The school's own internal moderation systems are of a high standard. Pupils show a growing level of critical thinking and awareness of how to improve their work.

Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils and want all their pupils to do well. Questions and success criteria are generally age appropriate for the abilities of pupils. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is of a high standard.

Children get an excellent start to their learning in the Early Years Foundation stage. Children in the Nursery and Reception years quickly learn religious vocabulary such as the names of Joseph and Mary and can describe the candles in an Advent wreath. A delightful place of worship was set up in the outside play equipment for young children to learn about the birth of Jesus.

Pupils are eager to respond to challenging questions and clearly want to do well in lessons and know more. The school understands how to ensure pupils know more and remember more. RE leaders are looking to develop a Mastery approach to RE to secure pupil understanding. This is being successfully implemented for the higher ability pupils. The school now needs to develop banks of questions for all ability ranges. Several observed classes also confidently applied their thinking and writing skills to some quite complex tasks. In Year 5 for example, pupils compared the accounts of Luke and Matthew in describing the birth of Jesus using Venn diagrams.

Work scrutinised in books seen and conversations with pupils clearly show a very positive attitude to RE in this school. Pupils told inspectors they loved their learning in RE.

**The quality of teaching****is outstanding**

The quality of teaching in this school is mostly outstanding. All teaching is judged to be at least good or better and this leads to the progress that pupils of all abilities make. Teachers are constantly seeking to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. This happens during lessons and is also evidenced by the informative marking that teachers employ in correcting the pupils' work. Those in Years 5 and 6 in particular know how to improve their work and the systems employed by the school are effective and age appropriate. Planning is thorough and ensures that pupils of all abilities are able to engage with the lessons. Work is being well planned and sequenced all through the key stages. Many teachers are Catholic and clearly have strong subject knowledge of RE and are committed to delivering a high standard of education. This is most clearly in evidence when one observes teachers using high order questions with pupils. This is a regular feature of lessons for all classes in this school. Non-Catholic and early career teachers (ECTs) are being well trained.

Support staff play a key role in helping pupils of all abilities learn. This is particularly so with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Behaviour of pupils in lessons, playtimes and all around the school is also outstanding. Pupils and teachers display mutual respect towards one another. Lessons are orderly and no disruption was seen in any lesson.

Homework is regularly provided and is appreciated by both parents and pupils as it gives a chance for families to work together and deepen their children's understanding.

**The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education****is outstanding**

The leadership and management of RE are judged to be outstanding. The headteacher sets high expectations for her staff and challenges them to give of their best. The RE coordinator's planning and documentation are of a high standard. She is supported by an RE leadership team who help to promote religious education in the school. There are structures to assess and monitor standards in RE. The school participates in moderating pupils' work at a deanery level and staff attend all diocesan meetings relevant to the development of RE. Training and continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities are made available for all staff, including new and non-Catholic teachers. Teachers are very well qualified in Catholic teaching in this school. Many of them have extra qualifications in teaching religious education.

The school self-evaluation (SEF) is a thorough and comprehensive document. It is well written and identifies areas of strengths and some areas for development.

There is a strong and committed governing body. It is being well led by an experienced chair, a well-informed RE link governor and the parish priest. They are passionate and united in their support for the school and its Catholic ethos.

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

- Develop challenge questions further for pupils of all ages and abilities to ensure pupils develop a level of Mastery in RE.
- Refine even further the key vocabulary the pupils need to know, in order to know more and remember more in RE. Make sure that their working memory is not overloaded with too much RE vocabulary.

## B. The Catholic life of the school

### What has improved since the last inspection?

The school has addressed the main area for development since the last inspection in a creative manner. The school moved location and is now developing a beautiful outdoor prayer garden.

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

In a new building and a rapidly changing environment, the school proudly celebrates Catholic traditions. There is at least 10% of curriculum time devoted to RE in every class, as required by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. This is timetabled for every class and is central to the life of the school. A generous budget has been allocated for the last three years and many books and resources have been bought to develop more creativity in the RE curriculum. Parents and pupils recognise and value the importance the school places on its Catholic life. The passion and commitment of the leadership of RE from both school and governors is what makes this judgement outstanding.

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

Prayer and worship are central to the life of this school and are judged to be outstanding. There are extensive opportunities within the school for collective worship and prayer. Pupils are deepening their understanding of the richness of Catholic traditions and the various celebrations that occur during the course of the liturgical year. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are quickly introduced to the prayer life of the school in an age-appropriate way. All classes have prayer areas, a prayer focus and liturgical colours that reflect the seasons of the year such as purple for Advent. Displays of work around the school are of high quality. The displays in the hall are of a particularly high standard and celebrate every aspect of Catholic life including respect for the environment.

Children at all key stages play an active role in prayer and liturgy in a wide variety of ways. Prayer and worship are integral to the daily life of the school. Allowing for the pandemic, the parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor. Feast days and special times of the academic year are marked by acts of liturgy and prayer, either in school, remotely or in the church. Mass is carefully planned and prepared by the priest, RE leaders and pupils. Pupils participate actively during the Mass and parents are invited to attend these services. The elected RE councillors support this work effectively.

Other sacramental celebrations are offered at key times throughout the liturgical year. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are carefully fostered in the school. Leaders are ambitious for pupils to experience a wide and rich experience of prayer and worship. Pupils are developing a growing awareness of the liturgical year. Opportunities for quiet reflection, sharing thoughts and ideas are widely encouraged by staff both indoors and outside.

### The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice is outstanding

The school is outstanding in its work to promote the Common Good. Blessed Dominic school recognises the value and dignity of every member of their community and those in the wider world. Pupils have an opportunity to share their unique gifts and talents for the good of all.

The school encourages its pupils to put others before themselves and work for the Common Good. Each member of the school community is expected to contribute to the good of society, in the interests of justice and to support the poor. Pupils at Blessed Dominic live out the call to justice and service at a local, national and international level. They wrote letters to a local care home in Colindale as the pandemic started to remind the elderly they had not been forgotten. The school supports an annual CAFOD appeal. They host annual assemblies from the Catholic Children's Society and donate

generously to their Lenten appeal. This year the school participated in the 'Walk the Diocese Challenge' during lockdown. The school's Eco Council have investigated ways in which they can have a positive impact on the local environment. This has made pupils aware of their stewardship and the responsibility they have to care for God's creation and our communal home.

Representatives from the Mini Vinnies group support Fairtrade projects. This allows pupils to understand the importance of striving for equality and fairness in our global community.

The main charity they recall with pride is 'Mary's Meals' - in conjunction with the local parish and secondary schools they make clothes donations and boxes. The pupils support so many charities that at times they struggle to explain what, for example, CAFOD actually means or does and the reason why they are doing good works. The school needs to review and refine its work in this area.

**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. Parents are very supportive of the school and its headteacher. Parents highlighted this in response to a recent survey and in letters sent to inspectors. Parents say that their children receive a very good start in their Catholic life as soon as they enter this school in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This inspection affirms this. Parents are invited into the school for all assemblies, Masses and liturgies when conditions allow. The school has worked closely with parents to provide support in so many ways during the recent lockdowns.

The parish priest is equally well informed about Catholic education and its development in the school. The school participates in all diocesan activities and regularly attends both deanery and diocesan moderation of pupils' work. Opportunities for staff training are regularly provided for all staff. The school is working closely with the diocesan adviser who is providing outstanding guidance and support. He has played a key role in the outcome and judgements for this inspection.

The school is committed to working in close partnership with all stakeholders and is judged to be outstanding.

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

**is outstanding**

Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are judged to be outstanding.

One immediately becomes aware that this is a Catholic school from the minute you enter. It proclaims its faith proudly to all visitors.

There is a shared vision and commitment from staff and governors to ensure the importance of the Catholic life of this school. The school is not complacent and regularly reviews its practice and is open to best advice where needed. The leadership and management of this school is layered with experts in curriculum, teaching and learning and Catholicity.

Governors are experienced and are dedicated to the school and its mission. They provide senior leaders with support and quality oversight. Governors are regular visitors during the school day when circumstances permit and have provided clear direction for strategic development.

Self-evaluation of the Catholic life of the school is rigorous. It is also mostly accurate and reflects the inspection judgement of outstanding.

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

- Deepen and revisit the theology around the Common Good so pupils have a greater understanding of why they are called to serve others.

## Information about this school

- Blessed Dominic is a two-form entry Catholic primary school in the Local Authority of Barnet and the locality of Colindale.
- The school serves the parish of St Margaret Clitherow, Grahame Park.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 73%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 18% and from other faiths is 6%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 80%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 9.
- There are 77 (17%) of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 5 have statements of Special Educational Needs and /or Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups at 91% is well above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average at 81%.
- There is an average rate of families, 21% claiming free school meals.
- 116 (25%) pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

<b>Department for Education Number</b>	302 3511
<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101339
<b>Local Authority</b>	London Borough of Barnet

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary Aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	456
<b>The appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Stephen Frayne
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Geraldine Pears
<b>Telephone number</b>	0208 205 3790
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.blesseddominicprimary.co.uk">www.blesseddominicprimary.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@blesseddominic.barnetmail.net">office@blesseddominic.barnetmail.net</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> October 2015
<b>Grades from previous inspection:</b>	
<b>Classroom religious education</b>	Outstanding
<b>The Catholic life of the school</b>	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 4 acts of prayer and worship in classes and also remotely.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors, including the chair of 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, at playtimes and examination of school documentation.

## Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

## Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Mr Sean Flood  
Mrs Dee Abbott  
Mrs Jade Cahill  
Mrs Winnie Greer  
Mr Paul Higginson

Lead Inspector  
Associate Inspector  
Associate Inspector  
Associate Inspector  
Shadow Inspector

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](mailto:education@rcdow.org.uk)  
W: <http://rcdow.org.uk/education>