

# Westminster Diocese Inspection Report

## Blessed Dominic Catholic Primary School

Lanacre Avenue, Colindale, London, NW9 5FN

Date of inspection: 15 October 2015



### A. Classroom Religious Education

**What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?**

**Overall Grade I**

Blessed Dominic Catholic Primary School offers outstanding provision for religious education. The pupils benefit from a rich, stimulating and creative curriculum. They make outstanding progress over time from their starting points. More able pupils are being challenged to reach higher levels of attainment in religious education, matched to the agreed understandings. Pupils with additional needs, including those who are disadvantaged, receive effective support and guidance from well matched programmes and activities. The typicality of teaching overall, results in excellent outcomes. Pupils across the phases demonstrate a 'thirst for knowledge', are highly motivated and enthusiastic in their learning. This results in excellent provision which empowers and enhances the religious literacy of all pupils, staff, including newly qualified colleagues, and those new to Catholic education. They are very well supported and guided to provide the highest quality provision in religious education. The headteacher currently leads the religious education team and in partnership with the governing body, ensures that planning, teaching, monitoring and assessment, which promotes highly effective learning, is consistently evaluated and reviewed. Parents are supported as key partners in the learning of their children in religious education.

### B. The Catholic life of the school

**What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?**

**Overall Grade I**

The overall effectiveness of Blessed Dominic Catholic Primary School's commitment to the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. Blessed Dominic fully meets the 10% requirement of the Bishops' Conference. The governing body, in full partnership with the headteacher, ensure that highly effective systems and structures are in place for the Catholic life of the school. The outstanding provision ensures that the Catholic philosophy, which underpins all aspects of the school, also influences the way pupils are empowered to know and understand their call to serve for social justice and their own human flourishing. The rich range of liturgical events includes the regular celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation is available during Advent and Lent. The headteacher and the governing body provide quality opportunities for the spiritual and faith development for pupils and all members of the school community. The collaborative partnerships between the school, the deanery and diocesan networks, secures the school's dedication to its ecclesial dimension.

## Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent a day in school, visited 13 lessons, an assembly, and a collective worship and carried out 5 interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of Blessed Dominic, Barnet was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

## Inspection Team

Mrs. Tina Cleugh  
Mrs Evelyn Ward

Lead Inspector  
Associate Inspector

## Description of School

This Voluntary aided school is a two form entry in the LA of Barnet and the locality of Colindale. The school serves the parish of St. Margaret Clitherow, on the Grahame Park estate. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 89%. The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 9.4% and from other Faiths 1.6%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 100%.

There are 392 pupils on roll, with 9 pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health & Care Plans (EHC). The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average. There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals. 99 pupils receive the Pupil Premium.

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DFE Number: 302 3511  
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Headteacher: Mrs Geraldine Pears  
Chair of Governors: Mr Peter McNamara

Date of previous inspection: May 2010  
Previous Inspection grades: Outstanding (Grade 1)

**Key for inspection grades:**

|                |                             |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Grade 1</i> | <i>Outstanding</i>          |
| <i>Grade 2</i> | <i>Good</i>                 |
| <i>Grade 3</i> | <i>Requires improvement</i> |
| <i>Grade 4</i> | <i>Causing Concern</i>      |

## **A. Classroom Religious Education**

*How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?*

### **What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?**

The school is committed to improvement from its identified area of 'challenging more able pupils in religious education'. The range of continuing professional development includes review of the marking policy and process, the 'green pen' method, whereby, through planned questioning from the teacher, pupils are engaged and challenged in their 'next steps' in learning in religious education. The training has included development of pupils' thinking skills which has impacted on improved higher levels in religious education, for the early years foundation stage and by the end of Key Stage 2. Through the recently installed system of tracking and recording progress, the school has recognised the impact on improved standards over time across the phases for religious education, as for other core subjects. The introduction of the 'whole school learning model' has also improved standards in religious education, linked to succinct medium and weekly planning. Their links with deanery and diocesan schools for moderation has impacted upon the accuracy of their moderation of progress, against the agreed understanding of the levels of attainment in religious education. The early years' foundation stage progress in religious education is recorded against the agreed diocesan early years' foundation stage model.

### **How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?**

#### **Grade I**

There is evidence that the school fully meets the 10% requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference and the Curriculum Directory for religious education. 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' programme is now being supported by the composite units for Years 2 and 6. The school has ensured that the breadth and depth of the content taught includes the movement through the liturgical cycle and the exploration of other faiths. All planning in religious education is succinctly linked to the Curriculum Directory. This builds on the progress of the pupils, year on year. The promotion of religious literacy is central to all aspects being taught. There is clear evidence of this in the individual assessment portfolios for each pupil in religious education.

### **Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education**

#### **Grade I**

From their starting points the pupils across the phases are making outstanding progress. There is evidence of outstanding rates of progress for pupils in different year groups, particularly in the early years foundation stage and by the end of Key Stage 2. The school is actively challenging the more able groups. The recent development of moderation with deanery and diocesan colleagues has supported the accuracy of their assessments. An example of this is where one of their higher level samples is published in the diocesan moderation booklet. The tracking system, now in place, supports the monitoring process, whereby those pupils from the different groups, including the disadvantaged and those identified with special educational needs, make excellent progress over time. The impact of the school's 'shared learning model' is now impacting on the rate of progress of pupils and those identified for higher challenge. The school sets targets in religious education which are monitored and shared with parents through verbal and formal end of year reports. The homework system linked to the 'Wednesday Word' is greatly appreciated by parents. Those parents, who met with the inspectors, spoke passionately about the way the school "is promoting the religious understanding of their children", which also reflects their own faith development. They greatly value "the lengths to which the school goes to support their children".

## **The quality of teaching**

### **Grade 2**

The typicality of teaching overall is good, with some outstanding practice. The triangulation of the evidence gathered from the scrutiny of work in the books, discussions with staff and pupils and the observations of pupils in their learning, support the accurate self-evaluation by the school of the teaching in religious education. Teaching is not yet outstanding as strategies are being embedded across all classes and within all phases, especially for newly appointed and inexperienced staff. The school has developed a wide range of teaching strategies since their last inspection towards outstanding provision. This includes thinking skills, reasoning, enquiry and research, following a range of continuing professional development programmes. Their 'whole school learning model' influences the range of strategies employed, whilst providing consistency across the phases. Their planning in religious education includes links to the local and more international cross-curricular opportunities, providing effective links in the learning process for the pupils. The creative curriculum, supported by the wide range of religious resources and artefacts, supports the delivery of effective religious education. This includes opportunities to develop pupils spiritually, morally and culturally. The role of the other adults in the learning process is effective and their planned and well prepared activities support the learning for all pupils. The school is committed to encouraging the pupils as independent learners, with opportunities for peer assessment, talk partners and responding to their next steps in learning. This is enabling pupils to develop their religious literacy and depth of understanding in religious education. The school has supported teachers new to Catholic education with effective coaching, mentoring, modelling and a range of continuing professional development opportunities. Religious education is a regular focus in staff meetings.

## **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education**

### **Grade 1**

The headteacher currently leads the religious education team, including the newly appointed leader of religious education. They have a definite purpose and commitment to excellence in religious education for all pupils. They ensure that effective professional development opportunities are provided. They monitor and assess the quality of the teaching in religious education through a range of observations, learning walks and informal discussions. They are rigorous in their determination for all pupils to excel and in particular have identified the need to challenge the more able as their priority. All teachers have performance management objectives related to religious education and the promotion of the Catholic life of the school. Their membership of 'Challenge Partners' through the 'Compton Alliance,' a group of local schools which undertake peer reviews, has provided opportunities for leadership training in rigorous self-evaluation. The headteacher has developed collaborative partnerships with other headteachers from Catholic schools, both through the deanery and the diocese. This has impacted on the range of innovative activities, which enhance the provision for all in the community. She has ensured the centrality of religious education within the whole school provision. This has influenced the depths of knowledge and appreciation by staff in meeting the needs of all pupils in religious education. Her dynamic and determined vision for the role of the school, in meeting the needs of all pupils to achieve effectively in religious education, is an excellent model and example for her leadership team to follow.

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

- In order to move teaching and learning in religious education from Good to Outstanding, the modelling of excellent practice from outstanding colleagues is recommended

## **B. The Catholic life of the school**

*How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?*

### **What has improved since the last inspection?**

The school has developed a wide range of worship opportunities for the pupils since the last inspection. They have planned termly and annual liturgical celebrations. These have included more pupil led worship, witnessed during the inspection. The pupils who are members of the 'Mini Vinnies' also take active roles in promoting prayer and worship in the school. They are also influencing the current development of the new Prayer Space in the school, with the religious education pupil council.

### **The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget**

#### **Grade I**

The governing body, within its committees, in partnership with the headteacher and her leadership team, are fully committed to enabling pupils to achieve the highest possible outcomes, from their starting points. They ensure that effective planning and budget allocation provides the means for all to benefit from excellent resources and accommodation. This has been expanded in recent years, as the school has grown from one form entry with excellent provision for learning. The importance of religious education and the Catholic life of the school is given very high priority and is central to the mission and vision of the school. This includes the excellent status allocated to both religious education lessons and the development of the liturgical cycle across the year. The school provides the statutory time allocation, including the full 10% for religious education. The school has carried out major refurbishment, including the development of different sections of the outside areas. This has encouraged and enhanced the prayer opportunities, across the liturgical cycle and devotion to Our Blessed Lady. The school has undergone major staff changes in recent times, and the newly appointed staff have benefited from highly focused mentoring and coaching from the senior leadership team. This has also included effective continuing professional development opportunities, especially for those new to Catholic education. The very close collaboration between the school and the parish of St. Margaret Clitherow, is worthy of note. One of the parents, who met the inspectors, is an active member of the parish council. He outlined in great detail the excellent relationships between the parish and the school, whereby, "the school is an integral part of our Catholic community instilling good values in our children."

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

#### **Grade I**

Worship and prayer are central to the life of Blessed Dominic Catholic Primary School. During the observation of an assembly and a collective worship liturgy, pupils participated in prayer and sang hymns with an obvious interest, reverence and sense of wonder and awe. The younger children contributed enthusiastically, whilst older pupils had opportunities to participate and plan their liturgy. Attention was paid to mood and setting and this enabled pupils to reflect on the central message and provided opportunities for spiritual growth. Displays in the public areas reflect the liturgical year and there was a particularly pleasing Rosary display in the hall. The 'we are called to serve,' display in the

public areas and the hall was described by pupils who are very proud of their efforts in supporting those in need locally and more globally. The role of the 'Mini Vinnies' carrying on the work of St. Vincent de Paul, both in their school community and the programmes for serving others, is another example of the way the pupils are confident to discuss their prayer life in school. This includes their membership of the 'Rosary Club.' These pupils will be overseeing the development of the new 'Prayer Room,' with planned access for all pupils. Pupils were able to articulate their ownership of the development of the new prayer room and were able to talk about their responsibility to buy new resources to further contribute to this area. All classes had very attractive prayer corners where children's work and their individual prayers are celebrated as well as displays depicting the various aspects of their learning in religious education. In some classes these displays posed "big questions," where responses were encouraged, using post-it stickers, such as for the Syrian Refugees and the call from Pope Francis to help them.

## **The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice**

### **Grade 1**

The school makes outstanding contributions to the common good and social justice. The articulation, confidence and appreciation by pupils of their role, both in their school and their church, demonstrate their understanding of their 'call to human flourishing'. They were able to clarify their different roles in their 'call to serve' their school community in their different roles of responsibility. These include their role as playground buddies and monitors, and to their wider community in their rich range of fund raising activities. They have supported a range of charities, including, CAFOD, Catholic Children's Society, Mary's Meals, LEPR, the NSPCC, Great Ormond Street Hospital and the Homeless in Barnet. Pupils are encouraged and supported to extend and expand their skills and talents for the good of others. They present their ideas to a governing body panel, who ratify a budget to empower them to use their entrepreneurial skills for the good of others. The headteacher and her leadership team are actively encouraging and supporting a range of parental programmes between home and school. Their global commitment includes raising funds to support a 'street wise' Dominican programme for abandoned children in Durban, South Africa. Their planned creative curriculum includes exploration of other faiths, Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam. These activities include visits to their places of worship, including the synagogue in Hendon, Neasden Temple and Regent's Park Mosque. Pupils fully understand the importance of tolerance and respect for all cultures faiths and traditions. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. The movement in and through the school during the day is both orderly and respectful, with many examples of their manners and courteousness to all adults and each other.

## **Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf**

### **Grade 1**

The school demonstrates that it has outstanding relationships with its stakeholders. Parents know that they work in partnership with the school. The group who met with the inspectors spoke enthusiastically about how this commitment is demonstrated through all aspects of the school. They made particular reference to the use of the Wednesday Word and its contribution to the home learning activities in religious education. Parents are extremely proud of Blessed Dominic Catholic Primary School. One parent, whose daughter started in the school without speaking any English, spoke of how her child was nurtured and developed from the beginning and how this impacted very positively on her learning. Parents were keen to tell inspectors that not only did the school encourage newly arriving pupils to learn English and adapt to their new surroundings, they also encouraged pupils to celebrate and respect their different cultures during international week. They told inspectors of the strong relationship between the parish and school and cited the recent "Mary's Meals" as an example of highly successful collaboration. The school attends all relevant

deanery and diocesan moderation, training and networking events. Governors are actively involved in the school, attending in-school training sessions in religious education, contributing to the completion of the school self-evaluation document. They are also involved in scrutinising the learning and progress of the pupils from the work in their books. The governor responsible for religious education spoke warmly of the welcome he receives during his visits, and how the governing body is fully involved in all aspects of school life and diocesan events.

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

### **Grade I**

The partnership between the governing body and the headteacher, with her leadership team, ensures highly effective and outstanding leadership and management of the school. The Mission Statement, 'Love, Learn, Believe' is woven through every aspect of the school. They fully embrace and commit to their role in the Church's mission in education. Their accurate self-evaluation includes their identified key areas for action and ongoing development. The school improvement plan provides evidence of how they have a clear and well established direction for the school. This is through their well-planned strategic vision for ongoing and future developments. The recent expansion of the school and the continued drive to improve standards of attainment in religious education is regularly evaluated and reviewed. The governing body, with the headteacher, ensure that all statutory requirements are fully compliant. They have begun their preparations for the 'Year of Mercy' activities, during the Jubilee Year, as advocated by Pope Francis, with other Catholic schools in Barnet.

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

- The school has identified the continued development of the newly formed Prayer Room for ready access by all members of the school community. This is to be led by pupils as members of the newly formed RE Council.