



ST DOMINIC'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

GOVERNOR NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2019



When Mrs Sollars arrived two years ago, our school had an Ofsted within weeks of her arrival. It was no surprise that we were graded “requires improvement” (with some good aspects). The truth is we had an interim Head in place for a while, some teachers were off long term sick, we had a small governance team, a lack of parent faith in the school and most importantly academically we were not thriving. Additionally, the playground was starting to look tired, our school library system investment lay unutilised, the top field the School owns remained just that – a top field – and underused. Since then, *we’ve been working our socks off* to improve the school for our children and our rating at the next inspection - and this inspection is now just around the corner. So two years on, let’s reflect.

- We have new teachers passionately committed to the school’s success and working with the Head to strive forward.
- We have worked and continue to work with excellent LA and education challenge partners and other leaders in education.
- We’ve broadened our governance structure which now includes excellent people with lots of significant educational experience between them who closely monitor the school’s performance and act as a strong critical friend.
- Mrs Sollars has embedded young teachers, has introduced a creative writing focused curriculum, improved our marking and feedback and hugely raised our academic aspirations in recognition of our weaknesses noted by Ofsted in 2017 and reflected in our results.
- Mrs Sollars has forged ahead with the new Library and ensured the financial commitment to a lending system was not wasted and benefits our writing challenge. She has also pushed through playground improvements, initiated a much longed for Forest School making use of our top field, brought in exciting guest speakers to school, who have made a positive impact in every aspect of school life and which Governors had the pleasure of witnessing first hand when we spent time with Mr Robson.
- Our young Staff work extra hard in day to day teaching and in their extra curricular obligations after School to provide the very best learning opportunities. They have removed any “ceilings” on what our children could achieve. We are incredibly proud of this young team. They have seized the Head’s positive academic vision of the school, taken on external courses to improve their teaching on every level and in practice, and have stood shoulder to shoulder with Leadership to take on some huge challenges. It is not always easy to remain positively focused as families and children drift away from the school as we must all surely appreciate.
- The governors have also got to work. We have reconstituted the Governing Body to become a more effective body and focused on what needs to be done in the school. We have tackled financial challenges, listened to everyone’s concerns, we frequently visit the School, we have rigorously challenged our academic results and have checked and scrutinised the data with a fine-tooth comb.

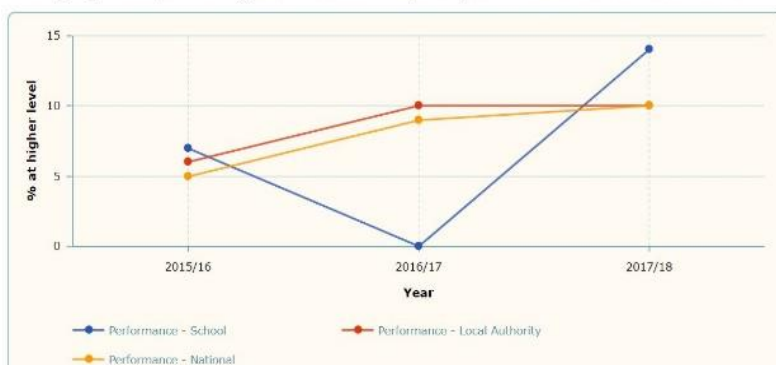
“Good with Outstanding Features” Catholic Diocese Report 2018: We welcomed this very positive result in 2018 and also recognise collectively there is still a lot to do. We thank you, our families, for your commitment to the school and welcome your feedback as we continue to forge ahead.

It is important to remember that in our small school a few children in a year group can represent a high % of our data - as a result in comparing us to other schools our performance data can fluctuate widely when we lose children through a school year. We can still take GREAT heart from these positive results in spite of the pupil losses in 2018 and recognise that with stability we CAN grow these successes quickly!

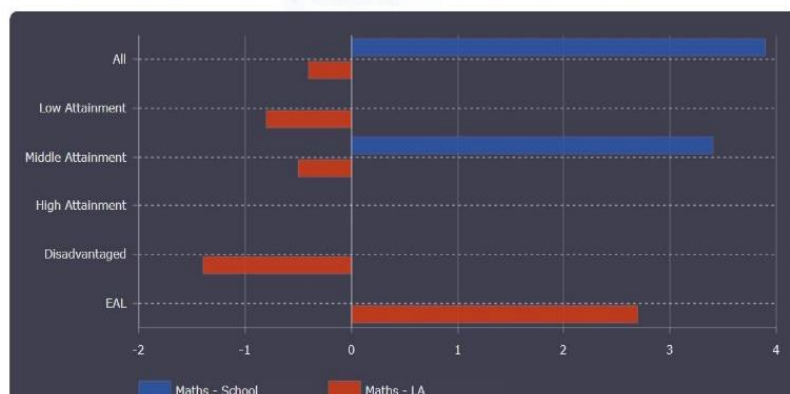
How do children with different levels of attainment at infant level and pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds perform in terms of making progress in reading and how does this compare to local averages?



While pupils are generally aiming to be working at the expected level in reading, writing and maths, what proportion of children at St Dominic's Catholic Primary School had a high score in reading and maths and were working at greater depth in writing, and how does this compare to performance at local and national level?



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A look *back*...

and a look *forward*

We all, staff and leadership, want to continue to move forward with school improvement in a collaborative and positive way. Following feedback from the recent meeting **we are working very hard and quickly** with the staff and Head to examine the effectiveness of our behaviour policy and how it is applied. School leadership is working flat out to bring in experienced and qualified support staff to assist the teachers and Mrs Sollars with our SEN children and across the school. This is not an overnight fix but we are working on it **solidly and proactively** and the **entire leadership fully recognise some of the challenges and are meeting these head on.**

In order to push ahead with excellence in our teaching, this has meant time away for teachers from their classes and whilst we do take on board the concerns we must also recognise that it has been absolutely vital to improving standards. We are constantly reviewing this.

Over the last few months a total commitment to crossing the Ts and dotting the Is has meant additional meetings, assessments and quite often pulled our Head out of the School to do the nitty gritty 'policy' work. We assure you all that this was pre-arranged as statutory Designated Head Teacher Time, available to all head teachers. It is and *has been absolutely vital work*. In addition as our SENCO for the time being and our DSL, Mrs Sollars needs to fulfil the requirements of these two roles which will inevitably mean some meetings and time away from school. We do have measures in place to ensure School leadership is covered. Please be assured that at all times our School is properly supported. We also have an excellent and close collaboration with Amberley and Watermoor schools as part of the Gloucestershire Cluster Schools Partnership.



#GOVERNOR NEWS#: **New Chair:** Simone Thurbon and **New Deputy Chair:** Marilyn Greenhalgh both of whom have a wealth of teaching experience and have already worked hard to support the school and Board.



LIBRARY GRAND OPENING



Please be reassured of our continuing commitment to St Dominic's!

We offer our prayers and very best wishes to staff and leadership

for their upcoming Ofsted review and we say a big thank you to everyone

who has contributed so positively to St Dominic's over the last year and

look forward to so much more in 2019.

Kind regards

The Board of Governors

Some of YOUR FEEDBACK

TO US:

"My children love coming to school and I am really happy with how teachers are helping their progress"

"The School is headed in the right direction, my children are very happy here"

"The staff are very kind and caring"

"Supportive and welcoming teachers"

"Thank you for all your help"

"Mrs Sollars is excellent. The teachers are excellent and there is a better atmosphere here"

"Pleased to watch the improvements being implemented"

WE ARE A COMMUNITY

Parents as Partners

Our parents are our partners in our ambitious vision for the School. We are all absolutely committed to creating a happy, thriving academically strong school where **all** our children see and feel warmth, care and opportunity. **We really do hope that you share our belief in St Dominic's.** Please can we ask you to recognise that any Ofsted inspection, especially one seeking to raise us beyond "requires improvement" involves an enormous amount of extra work for the staff placing everyone under a good deal of pressure in the months anticipating a visit. Therefore, if you wish to make an appointment with Mrs Sollars – and you are very welcome, arrangements should go **via the School Office rather than email please.**

We invite you to always share any concerns in a constructive way, **first and always first through your class teacher**, then through Mrs Sollars, then the Chair of Governors. Please do familiarise yourselves with policies available on line and if relevant challenge the School with these policies in mind. After half term you will see circulated our School Partnership Agreement which we invite you to review and sign in collaboration with our staff and pupils at a Parent evening - to be attended by Governors.

Finally, we also encourage you to post any happy reflections on 2018's school memories, which are always welcome, on Ofsted's Parent Feedback forum. We are all committed to bringing about the best outcome for the school and **we want you all on board to ensure our children's happiness and success at school.**

