

# St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	107119
<b>Local authority</b>	Sheffield
<b>Inspection number</b>	377537
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 December 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Lynne Blakelock

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<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 the school roll</b>	197
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Michael Lavery
<b>Headteacher</b>	Clare Greenwood
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	Creswick Lane Grenoside Sheffield South Yorkshire S35 8NN
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who observed eight teachers in 15 lessons. They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, with members of the governing body and with a group of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation about the attainment and progress of pupils and a range of policies and plans relating to school improvement and the safeguarding of pupils. They analysed staff and pupil questionnaires and the 56 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The team explored the progress of pupils of all abilities throughout Key Stage 2, in English and mathematics.
- The team evaluated the effectiveness of the use of assessment information in planning for pupils' learning.
- The team investigated the capacity of senior and middle leaders in driving and sustaining improvement.

## Information about the school

This school is smaller than average. Around 50% of the pupils have been baptised as Catholics and the rest are from families of many other faiths or none. Most pupils are of White British heritage, although the proportion from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is increasing. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A well-above average proportion of pupils has special educational needs and/or disabilities, of which most relate to speech, language and communication difficulties.

The school has seen significant changes in staffing since the last inspection. This includes a recently appointed deputy headteacher and two other senior postholders, all from within the school. It works in partnership with the Yewlands Family of Schools and with the Notre Dame Family of Catholic Schools, to strengthen provision and resources.

The school has achieved Bronze International School status.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate**  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**4**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**4**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Achievement is inadequate. While children make satisfactory and improving progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and pupils make satisfactory progress throughout Key Stage 1, the progress of all groups of pupils throughout Key Stage 2, from their average levels of knowledge and skills on entry to the school, is inadequate. Pupils' levels of attainment by the end of Year 6 were low in both English and mathematics last year and reflect the inconsistency in the quality of provision. The school's current performance data and inspection evidence point to negligible improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching expected and higher levels of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2.

There has been a marked decline in almost all aspects of the school's work since the previous inspection, when it was judged to be a good school. The headteacher and senior leaders have failed to tackle issues facing the school promptly and effectively. Self-evaluation is inaccurate in parts and has not served to drive improvement quickly enough. In particular, the inadequate teaching over time, which is the root cause of the underachievement, has not been addressed effectively, resulting in inconsistency of provision, especially in Key Stage 2. The situation has been compounded by quick turnover of staff, resulting in inconsistent teaching. As a result, pupils are inadequately prepared for secondary school. Expectations of pupils' learning are not consistently high enough. Data about their progress are not used carefully enough in planning sufficient challenge in lessons for pupils of all abilities, particularly for those capable of reaching higher levels. Too often teachers' marking does not tell pupils about their achievements or how to move forward. There is some effective teaching in Year 2.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is inadequate. Leaders and managers at all levels are not having the necessary impact. Most leaders are new, or relatively new, to their roles and lack the experience, skills, training and support, although not the determination, to be effective. Reviews of progress by senior leaders towards the school's goals, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching,

has not been a consistent or of sufficiently major focus. The curriculum is not promoting continuity or progression of pupils' learning because leaders and managers are not monitoring its impact sufficiently. Equality of opportunity is inadequate and the school provides inadequate value for money. While the governing body asks very probing questions, it has not monitored and evaluated the situation for itself comprehensively. The governing body has not had sufficiently detailed or timely information to take the actions that are needed to turn the school around. Therefore, it too, has had inadequate impact.

Despite the many shortcomings, pupils learn within a caring environment in which all pupils are valued for who they are. Strong moral values permeate the school and promote both pupils' good personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Communication with parents and carers is effective, including that which enables them to support their children's learning.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate the pace of progress throughout the school in English and mathematics by making sure that teaching is consistently good and incorporates:
  - activities which match closely the abilities of all groups of pupils, and which offer sufficient challenge, especially for those pupils capable of working at higher levels
  - marking which consistently informs pupils of their progress and how to move further forward in their learning
  - continuity of pupils' learning and progression, through careful planning of the curriculum.
  
- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels by ensuring that:
  - the school's priorities are a major focus on a daily basis and that there is a regular review of progress towards them, leading to appropriate actions
  - they have the necessary training and support to carry out their roles effectively
  - the governing body translates its comprehensive knowledge of the school into effective monitoring and evaluation of the school's priorities so that it holds leaders more closely to account for the school's performance.

### **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

<b>4</b>
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Although pupils enjoy school, their achievement is inadequate. Pupils are inadequately prepared for secondary education because of their low attainment in English and mathematics and their inadequate application of basic skills. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils. In Year 1, pupils make satisfactory progress in building up their writing skills. While some pupils develop their skills in shaping letters, many form letters accurately and are starting to write in simple sentences. However, in Key Stage 2 there is a lack of sufficient challenge. For example, in a numeracy lesson, pupils in Year 3 were quickly allocated

to ability groups and enthusiastically used sweets to find a method for working out fractions, but more-able pupils, as in other lessons, were not questioned specifically enough to ascertain their understanding or to extend their learning. By Years 5 and 6, there are gaps in pupils’ sentence construction skills, and they make basic spelling errors, and their under-developed application of literacy and numeracy skills to particular situations, are very evident. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have individual education plans but there is little evidence of their use in lessons, where learning is often not matched to their specific targets. The school identifies quickly the needs of pupils who are learning English as an additional language and these pupils receive appropriate support from teaching assistants to enable their communication skills to improve quickly. Nevertheless, because of inconsistencies in provision their overall achievement is inadequate.

Pupils’ happy demeanour in school, their good behaviour and positive relationships with other pupils and with the staff, owe much to the inclusive ethos of the school. Through a wide range of responsibilities, including being members of the school council, they model the ethos, based on strong moral values, showing care for their peers and develop a wide range of personal skills. Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The curriculum and daily practices promote well pupils’ understanding of the beliefs and lifestyles of others and the importance and worth of all cultures. Pupils feel safe. They are able to explain a range of dangers and the steps to take to avoid them. A well-planned programme is also the basis for pupils’ good understanding of the importance of living healthily, both in keeping fit and eating healthily. Pupils’ attendance is average.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account:	4
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account:	3
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Inconsistency in the effectiveness of teaching leads to gaps in pupils’ learning and their inadequate progress over time. While planning consistently provides a clear purpose for learning, it does not regularly result in provision that matches pupils’ needs accurately. The range of learning activities is often not planned carefully

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<sup>1</sup>The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

enough to provide a specific focus or challenge, in particular for those pupils capable of reaching higher levels. This is because assessment information is not used as a matter of course to plan learning. Pupils enjoy learning for themselves and this is particularly noticeable lower down the school. Questioning can be helpful in extending learning but this strategy is not used consistently well. Too many pupils are vague about their targets and marking is inconsistent in telling pupils what they have achieved and their next steps in learning.

The school focuses, rightly, on promoting pupils' achievement in literacy and numeracy, through discrete lessons. Increasingly, both aspects are also being incorporated into other learning. This is resulting in pupils' greater motivation and enjoyment, because they can see the relevance of activities and develop a range of skills. However, for pupils of all abilities the curriculum is inadequate because it does not provide satisfactorily for the full range of learning needs and is not planned carefully enough. It lacks both continuity and the capacity to build systematically on what pupils have already learnt. Provision for pupils with a specific gift or talent is very much a developing aspect of the school's work. There is a reasonable breadth of activities, including specialist teaching in physical education. Music, as well as promoting pupils' musical knowledge and skills, contributes to the spirituality in pupils' learning. There is a growing global dimension to pupils' learning through the good promotion of community cohesion. After-school activities are popular, with many relating to sport.

The care of pupils is given high priority and is supported by satisfactory systems to keep them safe. Pupils trust the staff, who know their needs. Aided by regular, effective communication with parents and carers, and support from outside agencies, staff provide appropriate support and guidance for pupils' individual worries and concerns. Over time, this results in improvements to their confidence, self-esteem and motivation to work. Attendance strategies promote average and improving attendance. Arrangements for pupils moving to secondary school are satisfactory.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>3</b>

## **How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher and senior team have a clear vision which is captured in school improvement planning but their actions have failed to move the school forward. This is communicated to all staff, who share the senior team's ambition and purpose. Most senior and middle managers are inexperienced and have not had the necessary training or support to carry out their roles effectively. Despite detailed tracking being in place and defined goals resulting from it, the information is not always a sufficiently major or regular focus. Reviews of the effectiveness of teaching and learning have not been a recent whole-school focus and as a result, teaching is inconsistent and results in inadequate progress. Equality of opportunity is inadequate

because pupils of all abilities and groups are not making the progress that they should from their starting points.

Documentation shows that the governing body has asked searching questions about pupils' progress. However, the governing body has not acted decisively enough to halt the school's decline or to hold senior leaders fully to account. It lacks sufficient, first-hand knowledge of the school's work and has not evaluated the performance of the school independently. The governing body ensures safeguarding requirements are fulfilled and satisfactorily oversees arrangements relating to these.

The school has a range of partnerships, including those with other schools, designed to strengthen teaching, leadership and management. While partnerships benefit pupils' welfare and contribute to their satisfactory care, guidance and support, the impact of partnerships is inadequate because they do not add value to pupils' achievement. Communication with pupils' families is effective because it is wide-ranging and extends to regular opportunities for parents and carers to learn how to support their children's learning. The school promotes community cohesion well, whether locally, nationally or internationally, because it is built into daily school life and is well-planned across the curriculum. As a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the ethnic, religious and socio-economic context in which they live is continually strengthened.

*These are the grades for the leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>4</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly into the bright, welcoming environment of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The process is facilitated by regular and comprehensive communication between home and school. There is plenty for the children to do and planning covers all aspects of learning.

Staff promote children's personal development well. Children behave sensibly and responsibly and are establishing caring and sharing relationships with their peers. An increasing number enjoy learning independently and making choices. They are proud to be given responsibilities, which they carry out conscientiously.



Children make satisfactory and improving progress from their individual starting points because provision is improving. Planning does not, however, regularly ensure that all children, particularly those who are more able, are challenged sufficiently well to extend their learning. Questioning, while sometimes specific, can be irregular or too general to promote further learning. There is a good balance of teacher-led and child-initiated learning. Outdoor provision has improved since the last inspection, with the outdoor classroom providing a broad range of activities.

Learning journals demonstrate satisfactory coverage of all aspects of children’s learning. Strategic planning is another improving aspect of the satisfactory leadership and management of this stage.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

**Views of parents and carers**

The responses to the questionnaire indicate that parents and carers value the school and its work. Almost all of the parents and carers who responded agreed that the school helps them to support their children’s learning. Most parents and carers agreed with all of the other statements. A small minority of respondents felt that unacceptable behaviour was not dealt with effectively. The inspection team found pupils’ behaviour to be good and appropriately managed. Comments, in particular, reflected parents’ and carers’ satisfaction with the quality of care for their children. The inspection team’s findings about the quality of teaching, pupils’ progress and the effectiveness of leadership and management in particular, did not concur with parents’ and carers’ views.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 56 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 197 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	68	16	29	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	59	19	34	3	5	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	50	23	41	5	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	48	24	43	5	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	0	25	45	3	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	48	26	46	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	54	22	39	4	7	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	27	48	25	45	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	43	30	54	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	29	23	41	10	18	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	30	28	50	8	14	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	41	22	39	8	14	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	55	18	32	4	7	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



5 December 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Sheffield, S35 8NN**

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited you recently. We enjoyed meeting you and watching you at work in lessons. You behave well and enjoy being involved in a range of activities and responsibilities, which help you to practise skills such as team work and making decisions. As a result, your personal development is good. The school staff care for you well.

Although you like learning, you are not making the progress that you should. The levels that you reach in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 are low and mean that you are not prepared adequately for secondary school. Teaching does not help you to quicken your progress enough. We have, therefore, decided that your school needs special measures in order to make very important improvements. This means that the school will be given help to make changes and inspectors will visit regularly to check on the progress that is being made.

We have asked your headteacher to make sure that teaching is consistently good. This includes ensuring that the tasks you are given match accurately the levels at which you are working. Marking must very regularly tell you what you have achieved and the next steps forward. Leaders and managers, including the governing body, must make sure that they monitor all of the school's work in detail and act upon their findings very quickly, so that they can help you to move forward in your learning more quickly.

I hope that you will help the staff to make these improvements by working as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Blakelock  
Lead inspector

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