

St Thomas More Roman Catholic Primary School, Middleton, Rochdale

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 105820 |
| Local authority | Rochdale |
| Inspection number | 377305 |
| Inspection dates | 22–23 February 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Brian Holmes |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 317 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mark Gifford |
| Headteacher | Don McCorriston |
| Date of previous school inspection | 4 June 2009 |
| School address | Evesham Road Alkrington Middleton Manchester M24 1PY |
| Telephone number | 0161 6437132 |
| Fax number | 0161 6437132 |
| Email address | office@stthomasmorerc.rochdale.sch.uk |



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Introduction

Inspection team

Brian Holmes
Ian Wellens
Clare Henderson

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 21 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 14 different teachers and looked at pupils' work. They listened to pupils read and talked to them about how much reading they did. Discussions took place with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors took account of the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They observed the school's work and looked at its assessment data, evidence of activities and events, information about the curriculum, safeguarding arrangements and monitoring and evaluation documents. Inspectors analysed questionnaires from pupils and staff as well as 261 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and at an early stage of learning to speak English is lower than average. The proportion of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs is lower than average. The school has achieved Healthy School status, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Geography Quality Mark (silver). The school has consistently been well above the current floor standard.

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 | 1 |
| Achievement of pupils | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | 1 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 1 |
| Leadership and management | 1 |

Key Findings

- This is an outstanding school. The previous inspection in June 2009, judged the school to be good with outstanding features. High levels of pupils' performance have been maintained, the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of leadership and management have further improved and the school has built on an outstanding curriculum. The school has an excellent capacity to improve further.
- Pupils thrive in a highly cohesive learning community and are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education through the wide range of spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences that are on offer. When children enter the school in Nursery their skills and abilities are below average compared to what is found in most schools. By the time pupils leave the school their overall attainment is well above the national average. Achievement in reading is a strength. All pupils make outstanding progress from their different starting points.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding throughout the school. The use of assessment to raise achievement in literacy is exemplary. In other subjects, pupils are not provided with as much guidance on what to do next, nor as many opportunities to assess their own and other pupils' work, and they have fewer opportunities to use their writing targets.
- Pupils' behaviour, in lessons and around the school is outstanding. Their attitudes and behaviour make an extremely positive contribution to their learning.
- Leadership at all levels is outstanding and is highly effective in driving and sustaining improvement. There is a highly effective team approach from all staff. The leadership of teaching and management of performance by the headteacher and deputy headteacher are thorough and rigorous. There was an extremely high parental response to the questionnaire, with overwhelming support from parents for the school in almost all aspects of its work.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of assessment on pupils' achievement, to be as effective in all subjects as it is in English, by providing pupils with:
 - more guidance on what their next steps are in other subjects
 - more opportunities to use and apply their writing targets in all subjects
 - more opportunities to assess their own, and other pupils' work in all subjects.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points across all key stages. Children get off to an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are extremely keen and enthusiastic about their learning and are fully engaged, whether working with adults or sharing resources with other children. They demonstrate excellent cooperative and independent skills, as seen when boys worked at the independent writing table to practise their writing skills. By the time they enter Year 1, the standards children reach are above those expected. By the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, standards of attainment are well above average in both English and mathematics. Attainment in reading is high at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 and in other year groups. Pupils have extremely good comprehension skills and strategies for decoding unfamiliar words. Older pupils demonstrate excellent higher order skills of inference and deduction. Pupils achieve extremely well in a wide range of subjects, including information and communication technology, geography, modern foreign languages and music.

In all lessons, the quality of learning is at least good and in a large majority it is outstanding. Pupils are actively and enthusiastically engaged and have excellent opportunities to work independently and collaboratively with other pupils. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils made rapid progress working collaboratively to develop strategies for counting in multiples of nine. In a Year 4 music lesson, pupils were captivated by the teacher's use of music to develop their understanding of ternary form. Different groups of pupils, including those with disabilities or special educational needs, the small number of pupils who are vulnerable because of their circumstances, pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and those who are at an early stage of learning English, all make rapid and sustained progress from their different starting points. More able pupils make sustained progress over time to reach and maintain the high standards of which they are capable. The overwhelming number of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire felt that the school meets their children's needs extremely well, that they make good progress and that the school helps them to support their children's learning. Inspection findings agree strongly with the views expressed by parents and carers.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is outstanding across the school and teachers deliver an extremely rich curriculum. As a result, all pupils make rapid and sustained progress. Adults foster excellent relationships with pupils, which results in an extremely positive climate for learning. Teachers have high expectations and use their excellent subject knowledge to structure activities and make learning accessible for all pupils. In a Year 5 literacy lesson, the teacher planned a number of short activities to develop pupils' understanding of cause and effect that captured their interest and engaged them completely. Typically, the needs of all pupils are extremely well met because planning is meticulous. It ensures that learning is challenging and addresses any weaknesses in learning for all groups of pupils. In lessons, teachers correct any misconceptions that arise in pupils' understanding through strong oral guidance. Other adults are used very effectively in a variety of situations to support pupils' learning and help them to catch up, for example, in pre-school 'booster' classes in Years 3 and 4. The use of assessment to improve achievement in English is exemplary, with rigorous use of targets to make clear to pupils what they are aiming for, very clear guidance about what to do next and very good opportunities for pupils to assess their own, and other pupils' work. In other subjects, the use of assessment to improve achievement is not as strong as it is in English.

Teaching promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding very effectively both through the curriculum and through a wide range of enrichment activities. Pupils were given the opportunity to reflect through prayer in an act of collective worship. In geography, pupils have considered issues around recycling and have undertaken a study of life and culture in Africa. Through their drama work, pupils took part in a play about the life of Sir Thomas More, which was celebrated with parents and carers and the local community. Almost all parents and carers feel that their children are well taught and, therefore, prepared well for the future, Inspection evidence agrees strongly with the views of parents and carers.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school. Their attitudes and engagement in lessons make an outstanding contribution to their learning and to a very positive climate for learning. In the large majority of lessons pupils manage their own behaviour, which enables learning to thrive. They respond extremely well to opportunities to show responsibility and to collaborate with other pupils in groups. They are polite and courteous and show consideration to one another around the school. Pupils' behaviour was excellent during the Ash Wednesday whole-school mass. Pupils play very well together and are extremely well mannered, indicating that the standards of behaviour seen during the inspection are those normally seen over time. School records indicate that behaviour is outstanding over time. Whole school and classroom approaches are extremely effective in keeping any disruption to a minimum. School records also show that instances of bullying are extremely rare and there have not been any exclusions. Pupils' attendance is consistently above average and the vast majority of pupils are punctual to school.

Pupils are clear that they feel extremely safe in school and know that their teachers and the other adults will help them should any problems arise. Pupils are clear that

any instances of poor behaviour are quickly dealt with and that bullying is extremely rare. They demonstrate a very good understanding of different forms of bullying, including how to stay safe on a computer, and consider that there is no bullying of any kind in the school. Through the questionnaire responses, almost all pupils and their parents feel that the school keeps them safe. The very large majority of both pupils and their parents and carers say that behaviour is good and that bullying is dealt with effectively.

Leadership and management

Leaders at all levels are highly effective and are fully committed to driving and sustaining the improvement of the school. Senior leaders have a clear vision for the school and the bursar makes an excellent contribution through her highly effective organisational skills. There is a rigorous approach to checking the quality of teaching from senior leaders and the managers for each key stage have a clear role to check the performance of pupils regularly. Very effective professional development has successfully improved the quality of teaching. For example, approaches to develop pupils' abilities to take responsibility and work together as a team have been successfully embedded. All subject leaders make a significant contribution to the improvement of provision in their areas of responsibility, particularly in modern foreign languages, music, geography and sports. The school has an excellent capacity to improve its performance further. Its self-evaluation is accurate. It has built on its achievements, maintaining high standards, whilst further improving the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of leadership and management, and building on an outstanding curriculum.

The governing body is highly committed and knowledgeable about the strengths of the school. It is fully involved in holding senior leaders to account for the school's performance. The governing body and senior staff rigorously ensure that pupils and staff are safe through safeguarding arrangements which fully meet requirements. The school tackles discrimination and promotes equality of opportunities for success extremely well, with all groups of pupils making consistently strong progress from their starting points. The school works extremely well with parents and carers, who express very positive views about how the school responds to their concerns and keeps them informed. There are very close links with the local church and with the parent teachers association, both of which make a significant contribution to the sustained development of the school. The curriculum is outstanding. It is broad, balanced and diverse with a wide range of additional activities on offer, both in lessons and through visits. These activities have built on the school's previous successes and significantly improved the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, particularly through music, drama, geography and modern foreign languages. The school has also built on its tradition of sporting success. There is a very high take-up of extra-curricular activities, for example, through the participation of a large number of pupils in a swimming club.

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 | 46 | 46 | 8 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 8 | 47 | 40 | 5 |
| Secondary schools | 14 | 38 | 40 | 8 |
| Special schools | 28 | 48 | 20 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 15 | 50 | 29 | 5 |
| All schools | 11 | 46 | 38 | 6 |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Behaviour | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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: | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. |
| 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. |
| Safety | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning. |

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.



24 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas More Roman Catholic Primary School, Middleton, Rochdale, Manchester, M24 1PY

Thank you for being so polite, welcoming and friendly when the inspectors visited your school recently. We enjoyed our time at St. Thomas More, particularly time spent talking to you about your learning and the activities you like to do. We know you are proud of your school and that you like your teachers a lot.

St. Thomas More is an outstanding school with many strengths. We were impressed by your excellent behaviour and attitudes to your learning, which help to make the school an extremely calm and happy place to be and to learn. You told us that bullying is rare, that you feel very safe and that all pupils get on extremely well with each other. Teaching is outstanding and you told us that your teachers make your learning fun and teach you how to be responsible. You are provided with a lot of different activities in your lessons and additional activities through clubs and visits, such as drama and the choir. You make outstanding progress in your learning to reach standards that are well above average at the end of Year 6 and high in reading across the school. The school is extremely well led by the headteacher and governing body and all staff do an excellent job in looking after you and ensuring that all pupils do as well as they can.

We are asking the school to improve the assessment of your work in all subjects, to be as good as it is in literacy, by giving you more guidance on how to improve your work, more opportunities to apply your writing targets, and more opportunities to assess your own and other pupils' work.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard, behaving well and doing your best to help the school improve further.

Yours sincerely

Brian Holmes
Lead Inspector

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