

St Thomas More's Catholic Primary School, Havant

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116377
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	357951
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2010
Reporting inspector	John Laver

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	273
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Dove
Headteacher	Denise Willis
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons and observed 13 teachers. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan, the governing body minutes, reports from the School Improvement Partner and assessment data on pupils' past and current progress. They observed the school's work, and analysed 47 parental and carer questionnaires, 31 staff questionnaires and 96 pupil questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- Are those particular groups of pupils identified as previously underachieving, particularly boys, now making better progress?
- Are pupils attaining in mathematics and English as well as they should?
- To what extent has the school improved the consistency of teaching, including the effectiveness with which teachers use assessment in the classroom?
- Does the curriculum contribute effectively to pupils' personal development, attainment and progress?
- How effectively are leaders and managers, particularly at subject leadership level, promoting better outcomes and progress for all pupils?

Information about the school

Most pupils in this larger-than-average school are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which include a range of emotional, behavioural and learning needs, is close to average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average. The proportion of pupils who join the school other than at the usual times is above average. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage in one of two Reception classes. The school has Enhanced Healthy School status, Activemark and Artsmark. The school operates a breakfast club and an after-school club, and has close links with an independently run but on-site pre-school.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school has particular strengths in pupils' personal development. Attendance has improved and pupils enjoy coming to school. Their behaviour is good and they make a good contribution to the school and local community. Partnerships with parents and carers, who hold the school in high regard, are good. Typical of parental and carer comments were, 'A lovely school in many ways' and 'My child cannot wait until he is back at school.' Academically, it is an improving school. Pupils have a good start to their school life and make good progress in Reception. Progress then becomes more variable. Previous national test results, showed below-average attainment overall, although attainment was above average in English, and pupils underachieved by the time they left school. Attainment has improved and is now broadly average. Pupils' progress has improved, mainly because of initiatives introduced since the previous inspection to improve the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum. There are now fewer differences in the progress of different groups of pupils, except that the attainment of boys higher up the school is below average in writing and, although some of them achieve satisfactorily, some make inadequate progress. A few more-able boys and girls do not achieve as well as they should because there is insufficient challenge in some lessons, particularly higher up the school. The minority of pupils who join the school other than at the usual times make slower and sometimes inadequate progress, whereas those who are in the school throughout Years 1 to 6 make increasingly good progress. Whenever they join the school, all pupils are made to feel safe and well supported.

The school's leadership has recognised the need to improve attainment and progress. There is additional support for underachieving pupils and a more coordinated effort to develop core literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum in a range of subjects, through themes such as 'gardening' and 'the Victorians'. This has improved the progress of many pupils. Pupils enjoy the topics, but teachers miss some opportunities to extend pupils' writing skills to an appropriate level. Pupils benefit from good provision in music and physical education, as well as a range of clubs and other enrichment activities. There is good support for vulnerable pupils, for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and for the few pupils who speak English as an additional language. These groups of pupils gain in confidence and acquire knowledge and skills well in some lessons, although their rate of progress over time is satisfactory, similar to that of other pupils. Teaching is good in lessons when there is challenge and encouragement for pupils to learn actively, and where teachers use assessment well to build on pupils' prior learning. However, teaching overall is satisfactory, usually because teachers do not encourage enough independent learning or do not provide enough challenge for more-able pupils. Although most pupils know their targets, they are not used sufficiently in lessons. Feedback to pupils, including the marking of work, does not give precise enough guidance on how that work can be improved.

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The senior leadership team systematically monitors teaching, learning and pupils' progress. It evaluates the school's strengths and weaknesses accurately, and plans appropriately for improvement. Other staff share in the vision for improvement, and subject leaders increasingly share in the process of monitoring and evaluation. However, this process is not fully or rigorously embedded. There are limited opportunities for teachers to share good practice. Progress since the previous inspection in improving teaching, attainment and the use of targets to promote good learning has been satisfactory. Because there is a drive for improvement, there are now more strategies to improve the school's overall performance, and because the school is now much more closely on track to meet its targets than in recent years, the school shows a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise boys' attainment and progress in writing in the coming year, so that the majority reach broadly average levels of attainment by the time they leave school, through providing more opportunities to develop writing skills in subjects other than English.
- Raise the overall consistency and quality of teaching and learning by:
 - raising the expectations of what pupils, particularly the most able, can achieve
 - providing pupils with more independence to further their own learning
 - giving pupils more precise guidance on how to improve their work
 - providing more opportunities for teachers to share good classroom practice.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Attainment on entry to Year 1 varies from year to year, but is usually broadly average. Pupils make satisfactory and improving progress overall. However, the rate of progress varies. For example, although attainment and progress in mathematics has improved during the previous 18 months, due partly to the school focus on this particular area, there has been slower progress in improving the quality of boys' writing. Partly, this is because pupils are given insufficient guidance in lessons on how exactly they can take their learning to the next level. Some more-able pupils make less progress than they should because of insufficient challenge in lessons. This was observed in lessons in which teachers did not give sufficient independent learning opportunities to pupils. For example, when working alone or in groups, pupils were given tasks which were not open-ended enough for more-able pupils in particular to demonstrate enough flair and invention in their writing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make satisfactory progress. In individual lessons, they were sometimes observed achieving well when well supported by teaching assistants or other adults, who helped pupils increase their understanding by good questioning and useful prompting, giving them additional confidence.

Pupil's enjoyment of school is reflected in improved attendance, which is now above the national average. Pupils believe that the school provides a safe environment and are confident that any untoward incidents will be dealt with well. They behave well both in lessons and around the school, including lunchtime and breaktime. Pupils have a good

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understanding of the health benefits of an appropriate diet and exercise, and there is a good take-up of sport. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community. They value the school council, and pupils participate regularly in church and other activities, such as fundraising for charities. Average levels of attainment mean that pupils are prepared satisfactorily for the next phase of education, although the transition procedures between schools are good. Parents and carers particularly value the links with the pre-school which give children a confident start in Reception. Good social and moral development is very evident in the welcoming atmosphere in school and in the effective collaboration in lessons. Pupils enjoy very good opportunities for spiritual reflection, as seen for example in class assemblies.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Pupils are keen to learn and they move smoothly between activities in lessons. Well-established classroom routines are a feature of the best lessons. Good learning then results, as seen for example in a lesson for older pupils in which the teacher used a previous detailed assessment of pupils' written work to indicate how their writing could be improved. The pupils were then encouraged to use these assessments to refine their work, so developing their vocabulary and the technical accuracy of their writing. However, in other lessons, there is insufficient challenge, for example when more-able pupils are given tasks which are too limiting and do not allow them to progress beyond the levels of

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skill or knowledge in which they are already secure. Sometimes, activities are too teacher-controlled, and despite pupils' willingness to learn, they are not given enough independence: for example, when older pupils are given lists of words or phrases to use in their writing instead of thinking for themselves. Teachers sometimes make positive comments in their marking, but rarely give precise guidance on how exactly pupils can improve their work.

The curriculum has strengths in the provision of music, with a high proportion of pupils having music tuition, and a popular choir, and good provision for physical education. Pupils enjoy clubs, particularly for sport, and they enjoy the classroom topics. However, there is limited challenge for more-able pupils, for example in writing tasks which follow on from the topic work. The good quality of care, guidance and support contributes strongly to pupils' personal development. Good attendance procedures and a flourishing breakfast club and after-school club, which provide a healthy and enjoyable start and end to the school day for many pupils, have helped to improve attendance and punctuality. There is good support for the few pupils speaking English as an additional language, and for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school liaises well with external support agencies, so although the academic progress of pupils is satisfactory, most pupils, including the most vulnerable, develop well as confident individuals.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Monitoring procedures have improved since the previous inspection. The leadership is supported by a governing body which has developed more confidence and expertise in analysing the school's performance and in both supporting and challenging the leadership. There are now more systematic methods of assessing pupils' progress, identifying underachievement and introducing strategies to address this. Together, the governing body and leaders have successfully communicated the vision for improvement to the staff as a whole. Staff are now more accountable for progress and subject leaders have a more prominent role in monitoring. However, their role in developing teaching and learning is not fully embedded, so for example, there are still inconsistencies in the way teachers use assessment to improve learning.

There are strong links with parents and carers. They value efforts to involve them in their children's learning, for example through opportunities to discuss the school's priorities and plans. There are links with other local schools that result in joint strategies on aspects such as promoting attendance, although these links have made a limited impact on the learning of pupils as a whole. St Thomas More's is an inclusive school with no evidence of

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discrimination. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory and improving as attainment and progress improve. Safeguarding procedures are robust. Procedures and practices, for example in ensuring safe use of computers, are known by all staff and pupils and are regularly updated. Pupils regard the school as a very safe environment. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. There is a very strong commitment to activities in the local community, for example by working on local art projects and events connected with the children's university. There are developing links with the wider world, with pupils learning about how they can support the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development, and raising pupils' awareness of ecological concerns in a global context.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in Reception make good progress in most aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. They join Reception with skills slightly below those typically expected for literacy and numeracy, but in, most cases, children's attainment is broadly average by the time they join Year 1. However, the attainment of some boys is low in writing throughout their time in Reception. Children develop quickly as confident, independent individuals. Staff share a clear vision which ensures good quality care and support. Good leadership ensures that staff work well to make the curriculum meet individual needs and children's individual interests. Exciting activities cover all areas of learning, including aspects such as role play, sand and water, and number games, both indoors and outdoors. Children are successfully encouraged to be active learners, as was observed during the inspection as children moved sensibly and freely between activities, making their own choices but guided by staff where appropriate. Staff make the best use of outdoor facilities, although the relatively small space restricts the quality of some outdoor activities. The school recognises that enlarging the space is a priority, in order to increase opportunities for the development of physical skills. Leadership and provision in Reception are recognised

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within the local authority as providing examples of good practice. There is good assessment of children's needs and progress, and there are very good links with parents and carers. For example, there are home visits for all children before they first come to school, and there are close and valued links with the nearby pre-school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents and carers who returned questionnaires were very positive about their children's experiences of school. Almost all were convinced that their children enjoyed school and that their children felt safe. Parents and carers had no doubts about any aspect of provision. Typical comments were, 'I feel the staff are caring and dedicated' and 'The school has a great atmosphere of caring and learning.' Parents and carers were particularly complimentary in their comments about the quality of transition between the pre-school and Reception. The evidence of the inspection supported most of the very positive views, particularly regarding the quality of communications between school and home, and the overall strength of care, guidance and support for pupils. The evidence showed that pupils' progress and the quality of teaching are satisfactory and improving, rather than being already of the high and consistent quality which many parents and carers believe.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St. Thomas More's Catholic Junior 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 47 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 273 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	74	10	21	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	70	13	28	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	25	53	22	47	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	64	17	36	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	68	15	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	64	17	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	62	18	38	0	0	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)	30	64	14	30	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	55	20	43	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	43	26	55	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	60	16	34	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	26	55	21	45	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	64	17	36	0	0	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



11 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas More's Catholic Primary School, Havant PO9 3DR

Thank you for your friendly welcome when we visited your school recently. We greatly enjoyed seeing you in lessons and talking to you about the school. We think that yours is a satisfactory school. Until recently, many of you did not do as well in your work as you should have done. Your progress is now improving, because both your headteacher and other staff are determined to help you do even better. This is why they have made some changes already, especially in what you are taught in lessons. Many of you now attend school more regularly than you used to. We know that you behave well and enjoy coming to school, and we agree with you that you are well looked after and are safe in school. You get the opportunity to take part in interesting activities, such as the choir, and you get good opportunities to help each other, for example by being a member of the school council. Some of you find the work in class rather easy, and many boys do not do as well in their writing as they should. Although you know your targets, we found that some of you do not get all the information you need to improve your work. Sometimes, you rely for your learning too much on the teacher instead of working more by yourselves.

Therefore, we have asked the school to do two things:

- make sure that teachers help boys in particular do better in their writing by practising those writing skills more in other subjects besides English
- encourage teachers to share ideas and make sure the work is not too easy for you, giving you more opportunities to learn on your own, and giving you more information on how to improve your work when marking your books or using your targets, so you can learn even better.

You will help your teachers achieve these things if all of you continue to work as hard and enthusiastically as we saw you doing during our visit.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Laver

Lead inspector

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