

# Thomas More Catholic School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	101821
<b>Local authority</b>	Croydon
<b>Inspection number</b>	376631
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Sarah Hill

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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary Aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	835
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	107
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter McFall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Margaret Mulchrone
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 December 2008
<b>School address</b>	Russell Hill Road Purley CR8 2XP
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8668 6251
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8660 9003
<b>Email address</b>	schooloffice@tmore.org.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	21–22 March 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	376631



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Sarah Hill	Additional inspector
John Collins	Additional inspector
Colin Lower	Additional inspector
Genevieve Usher	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 38 lessons delivered by 33 teachers, of which four were joint observations with members of the senior staff, and undertook short visits to lessons to consider students' behaviour. Inspectors met with staff, including senior and middle managers, seven groups of students from Key Stages 3 and 4, and spoke to representatives of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, looked at the school's self-review and planning documents, policies, minutes of the governing body, school performance data, safeguarding procedures and the work of students in lessons. They considered the results of 158 parental questionnaires, 141 student questionnaires and 40 staff questionnaires.

## Information about the school

Thomas More Catholic School is a smaller than average secondary school. There are more boys than girls on roll in all year groups. The majority of students are Catholics. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly higher than the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than the national average, those of White British heritage are the largest ethnic group in the school. About a third of students are learning English as an additional language which is higher than national average. The proportion of students who are disabled or with special educational needs is above average. The number of students with a statement of special educational needs is average. Recently there is a marked increase in the numbers of students joining the school other than at age 11. The school meets the current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

The sixth form is not reported on in this inspection as it currently operates under a franchise arrangement from another local secondary school.

The school has specialist status in science, holds the International Schools Award and has Healthy Schools Status.

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

### Key findings

- This is a good school that has improved rapidly. Since the last inspection, standards in English and mathematics have risen. The school is not outstanding because the effective action to improve the quality of teaching that has secured student achievement to good overall is not consistent and some unevenness across subjects and between groups of students exists.
- Standards of attainment are average and continuing to improve. Students' progress overall is good. It is particularly strong in science. The least-able students, those who are known to be eligible for free school meals disabled students and those who have special educational needs make particularly good progress. Increasing the proportion of students that achieve the highest grades in Year 11 is a key area for improvement.
- The quality of teaching is good. As a result, students develop good knowledge, skills and understanding. However, teaching does not always enable more-able students to make the rapid progress of which they are capable. The good curriculum is personalised and very effectively meets the needs of most groups of students.
- Almost all students behave well and are supportive of each other. Behaviour and safety is good overall. Attendance has risen and is now in line with the national average. Students say they feel safe in school. Parents and carers are very confident that their children are safe in the school.
- Leadership is good. Leaders, including governors, have determinedly secured improvements across the school while maintaining their central commitment to the personalised care of students. Within the school's prevalent culture of continuous improvement some challenges remain. In particular, how accurately leaders' evaluation of the outcomes for the different groups of students against national benchmarks is used to target areas for improvement. However, the rigorous focus of senior leaders on the quality of teaching, an effective programme of staff performance review and focused staff training has successfully improved the school since the last inspection.

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

- Strengthen the overall quality of teaching by promoting more of the good teaching to outstanding and eliminating the very small amount of weaker teaching through:
  - modelling and sharing the outstanding practice more systematically across the school
  - consistently giving all students ample opportunities to learn for themselves and from each other by involving students more quickly in their learning
  - ensuring opportunities are incorporated into all lessons for teachers to assess accurately students' understanding by use of probing questioning
  - developing opportunities for students to respond to teachers' marking and advice.
  
- Eradicate the few remaining inconsistencies in student outcomes, especially through increasing the proportion of students who achieve the highest grades at GCSE by:
  - focusing leaders at all levels, including governors, more sharply on using the evaluation of pupils' outcomes against national benchmarks to target areas for improvement
  - ensuring that leaders at all levels are equally expert in robustly monitoring and evaluating the work of their teams within a systematic framework.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Students' overall attainment has improved rapidly so that it is now in line with the national average though a lower proportion than expected attain grades A\* and A than is to be expected. Scrutiny of the school's current attainment data indicates that gaps in performance between groups are closing with an increase in the highest grades attained by those students who have taken English early. Students join the school at age 11 with attainment which is significantly below average. For those students who join the school with reading ages below their chronological age standards of literacy are rising quickly as a result of highly targeted and well-thought-through strategies. Those students who are learning English as an additional language benefit from similarly focused intervention programmes that are a key factor in their above average attainment. Students learned exceptionally well in a Year 7 mathematics lesson where their mistakes were exploited as opportunities for them to hone skills in explaining their work. This strengthened their literacy skills enabling them to work with increasing independence. However, not all teachers routinely identify common spelling or grammatical errors in students' work and help them to correct them during lessons.

Although boys made better progress than girls last year, progress for each was above the national average with most students making very good progress overall during their time at the school. Students learn well in most lessons and make good progress in many subjects. For example, in a Year 10 science lesson, rich

questioning, which probed understanding, drove rapid progress enabling students to effectively apply a range of new skills to their work on forces.

Almost all parents and carers feel that their children make good progress. The progress of most groups of students is in line with the overall progress because the curriculum is carefully matched to the needs of most groups of students. Those students who are disabled and those who have special educational needs receive effective additional support and their progress is very good. However, although progress of the most-able students and those of White British heritage is good, it is not as strong as that of other groups. Although the school's tracking system enables leaders to identify individual students at risk of underachieving, leaders do not use the information rigorously enough to evaluate the outcomes of different groups of students against national benchmarks and target areas for improvement.

### **Quality of teaching**

Parents and carers are very positive about how well their children are taught and this view was reflected in what inspectors observed in lessons. Students spoke highly about the quality of teaching and extensive support they receive from their teachers. Typically, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to share their enthusiasm with students, setting high expectations and sharing clear learning objectives linked to grades and levels. High quality teaching of students in specialist intervention classes is individualised to match students' specific needs. However, the outstanding practice is not modelled and shared systematically across the school.

Where students are given the opportunity to learn from each other, they work cooperatively and deepen their understanding through discussion. In a Year 9 food technology lesson the teacher's excellent subject knowledge and very effective planning led to high quality dialogue between teacher and students about progress. This planning explicitly built on students' prior attainment and ensured activities and resources were well matched to the full range of students' needs. Questioning specifically designed to make students think about what people with different cultural and faith backgrounds eat, promoted their social and cultural development particularly well. Where questioning does not accurately assess individuals' progress within the lesson, learning is not re-shaped to meet each student's needs and develop understanding. Frequent marking indicates clearly how well students are doing and mostly how they can improve linked to particular standards. Teachers do not give students structured opportunities to improve their work routinely in response to this detailed marking.

In a few lessons, students have to listen for too long to their teachers and complete work that is not well matched to their individual abilities. In a Year 11 lesson, all students completed the same activities which prevented the more-able students progressing at the rapid pace of which they were capable. Questioning in the lesson required them to recall previous information rather than providing them with opportunities to develop their understanding by being involved more quickly in their own learning and learning from each other. Opportunities for students' social and moral development were integrated appropriately into lessons observed. In some lessons the chance to promote students' spiritual and cultural development were missed.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Through discussion and their questionnaire responses students said they feel safe. Their parents' and carers' questionnaire responses endorsed this strongly. Students can explain potential risks and strategies to keep themselves safe. When talking to individuals and groups of students, inspectors probed the views expressed by a minority of parents and carers about students' behaviour, and concerns expressed by a smaller minority as to how effectively incidents of bullying are tackled. While students explained that incidents of bullying, including physical, cyber and emotional types, are very rare, a few individual younger students explained the behaviour of a small minority made them feel uncomfortable on occasions. All students value the high levels of care and support they receive, commenting positively on the approachability of their teachers and accessibility of the school's iBase staff. Students joining during a key stage spoke keenly about the support they receive from staff and other students during their first weeks.

Students stressed that if disruptive behaviour occurs in lessons it is in very few classes. Students' movement observed around the school by inspectors was safe and purposeful. In lessons, students' behaviour and attitudes to learning were good and they settled to work promptly. This supported what students spoke about when discussing what behaviour was like in school typically. Older students spoke enthusiastically of the strongly supportive relationships within the year groups as they progress through the school. The large majority of parents and carers consider their child is well looked after and their particular needs met. This was summarised by one questionnaire response that said, 'My children always come back saying that they had a nice day and that shows how efficient and caring the school is.'

Students are punctual to lessons. Students' attendance has improved steadily over the last three years and is in line with the national average. The proportion of students who were persistently absent from school is reducing though remains higher than national average. Staff monitor absences closely and provide prompt notification of any concerns and effective support for families. However, monitoring for the groups of students in the school is not rigorous enough to ensure resources are used effectively to sustain the improvements in attendance.

The school has effective links with a range of services that provide students with beneficial additional support. Year 11 student ambassadors are involved in many leadership aspects of school life. Their presence at local bus stops and the local community at the end of the school day supports all students. Students' achievements, including contributions to the community, are regularly acknowledged through the school's established reward system which is supplemented by the presentation of the Jack Petchey awards.

## Leadership and management

The headteacher's and the governing body's clear determination for the school's improvement and focused actions over recent years have secured a committed staff who provide a good education for students. Members of the governing body meet with senior staff, regularly holding them to account through reviewing the school's

performance. Governors are aware of the need to deepen their understanding and challenge of the impact of the school's actions on the outcomes for each group of students in the school. Parents and carers show confidence in the school with one summarising the range of positive comments, 'I made a good choice sending my child here.' Appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place and the school meets its statutory requirements.

Staff professional development is matched carefully to individuals' performance management to support improvements. Individual staff are being held to account progressively for student outcomes. All staff who responded to the questionnaire were positive about every aspect of the school and all were proud to be a member of staff. Senior leaders promote equality and tackle discrimination increasingly effectively as shown by the decisive actions taken which have effectively tackled the previous underachievement of students of Black African heritage. Skilled evaluation of learning against the outcomes for all student groups is developing. This is not used consistently by leaders at all levels to inform practice sufficiently to eradicate the few remaining inconsistencies in student outcomes. However, the school has good capacity for further improvement.

The governors' and senior leaders' commitment to the school's motto, 'To care, To learn, To achieve', can be seen in the personalised curriculum that very effectively meets the needs of most groups of students. Pathways to post-16 education are clearly identified. For a few students partnership with local colleges supports them in maintaining their engagement with learning. The extensive extra-curricular programme, including opportunities for each year group to participate in educational visits abroad, and participate in performing arts and sport, is highly valued. The annual Year 7 personal skills activity days at Frylands Wood are integral to students' induction into the school. Students take many routes to contribute their skills and interests to the local community: charity work, the gardening project including the recently constructed pond, local debating successes and music making. Each opportunity promotes students' social, moral and cultural development alongside the promotion of their spiritual development through the school's Catholic ethos.



## 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](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.

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.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.**



23 March 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Thomas More Catholic School, Purley, CR8 2XP**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting and speaking with you.

We think you go to a good school. We judged your behaviour around the school to be good overall. You told us you feel safe. When we spoke to many of you, we found that you think almost all of you behave well all of the time and that bullying incidents are rare. You told us that teachers were very supportive and will always help you. We agree with you that your teachers are very committed and help you to thrive.

You make good progress from joining the school through to completing Year 11 and your achievement is good overall. This is supported by the teaching which when good or outstanding, enables you to improve your subject knowledge and understanding through learning collaboratively together as well as independently. You told us how helpful it was when teachers gave you clear guidance in their marking as to how to improve your work and we agree with you that this is very helpful.

One of the reasons why your school is good and has improved strongly in recent years is that leaders take effective steps to improve all aspects continuously. All the staff want you to do well. We have asked the governors and staff to improve the school further by:

- increasing the amount of outstanding teaching in school, for example by making sure teachers provide plenty of opportunities to develop your independent learning skills and giving you work which is matched to your needs
- giving you time in lessons to act on the advice they give you in your marked work about how to improve, and then checking you have done it
- ensuring that those of you who join the school with high Key Stage 2 levels all achieve the very highest grades in your examinations.

You can help your teachers by responding positively to their probing questions and acting on their feedback to improve the quality of your work in lessons.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hill  
Lead inspector

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