

St Thomas More RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118055
Local Authority	Kingston upon Hull City of
Inspection number	358254
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Dodd

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	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Louise Dyas
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Wass
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 14 lessons involving eight teachers. The inspectors held discussions with staff, groups of pupils, members of the governing body, and parents and carers. The inspectors observed the school's work and reviewed documentation, including improvement plans, the systems for tracking pupils' progress, the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and a sample of pupils' work. The inspectors analysed 70 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 99 from pupils and 17 from staff.

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

- Whether pupils of varying abilities make consistently good progress, particularly in mathematics.
- The consistency of the quality of teaching, particularly how well pupils are involved in understanding what they are learning and how they are getting on.
- Whether the curriculum is adapted well to enable pupils to develop their basic skills, particularly in reading, numeracy and in information and communication technology (ICT).
- How effectively leaders and the governing body review information of pupils' progress and use it to influence their monitoring activities and to inform their evaluation of the school's effectiveness.

Information about the school

The large majority of pupils at this average-sized primary school are White British. Although the remaining pupils come from an increasingly diverse range of minority ethnic backgrounds, most are of Asian or Asian British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to eligible for free school meals is average, as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has been accredited with Activemark, the Royal Horticultural Society Silver Award and has achieved Healthy School and Eco-School status. Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes of staff, including senior leaders, teaching, support and administrative staff.

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

This is a satisfactory school. In this friendly, safe and welcoming setting, pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning and behave well. The quality of care, guidance and support is good and pupils' welfare is continually kept in firm view. This is why, for example, staff at all levels take good account of the arrangements to safeguard pupils. As a result, pupils say they feel very safe. Pupils are eager to contribute positively towards their school. From a young age, they enjoy taking on opportunities for making their school a safer, healthier and happier place to learn. The school works effectively in partnership with others, including with parents and carers. The large majority of parents and carers are happy with the quality of education on offer. They say that this is a 'very caring and family orientated place for children to learn' and they particularly appreciate the approachability of staff.

Learning gets off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where children make good progress from usually below average starting points. Between Years 1 and 6, progress is satisfactory. Pupils' attainment by Year 6 is broadly average. This reflects the satisfactory quality of teaching and the curriculum. Learning moves forward at a good rate in lessons where teachers make effective use of assessment information to provide activities and to tailor their questions to respond to pupils' varying needs. They explain clearly to pupils what they are expected to learn, involve them in understanding how they are getting on and what they need to do to reach their learning targets. These good practices are not yet consistently well applied across all classes. In mathematics, achievement is sometimes held back because curriculum planning does not always allow pupils' skills to build securely on their previous learning. Opportunities for pupils to engage in practical, active, exciting and challenging activities to develop their numeracy skills are sometimes overlooked.

The headteacher provides a clear and effective steer. She has evaluated accurately the school's performance, pinpointing appropriate improvement priorities and there is a sensible and realistic view of the way forward. Despite many recent challenges resulting from several changes in staff and membership of the governing body, together with further budgetary constraints, the school is improving steadily. Parents and carers also acknowledge that the school is 'changing for the better'. Pupils' attainment is rising and progress is starting to accelerate. Since the previous inspection, attendance has improved and is now above average. Similarly, improved systems to track pupils' progress are helping to pinpoint more precisely variances in pupils' performance. However, the capacity to improve further remains satisfactory because, at present, the headteacher takes on much of the responsibility for reviewing the pupils' performance information, for monitoring the quality of provision and improvement planning. This is because the skills of subject leaders and the governing body are not yet fully developed in these areas.

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Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress between Years 1 and 6 to a consistently good rate, particularly in mathematics by:
 - - making improved use of assessment information so as to provide work, and match teachers' questioning, to meet pupils' varying learning needs.
 - - making sure pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn, understand how they are getting on and know their learning targets
 - - providing more opportunities for pupils to use, apply and develop mathematical skills through practical, active and challenging activities.
- Strengthen the capacity of the school to improve at a good rate by:
 - - ensuring that subject leaders and the governing body have the necessary skills to review the pupils' performance and use the information effectively
 - - improving the rigour with which the quality of provision is monitored
 - - ensuring that the responsibility for monitoring the school's work is shared more equitably.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Achievement is satisfactory. In lessons, pupils behave well. They generally enjoy their learning. In most lessons they are attentive, keen to learn and respond well to teachers' questions. Pupils' concentration occasionally drifts when they sit for too long listening to their teacher or when activities are insufficiently challenging, especially when they work independently. Even so, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those of varying ethnic backgrounds make satisfactory progress. At present, progress across the year groups is inconsistent and, although for some, it is good, it remains satisfactory overall. However, pupils' progress is starting to speed up, particularly the proportion of pupils making the expected levels of progress between Years 3 and 6 in English. It is also accelerating in mathematics, albeit at a steadier rate.

Pupils learn together in a warm and friendly community. Pupils of varying ethnic backgrounds learn together harmoniously. They show respect and sensitivity for one another's similarities and differences. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in their eagerness to raise funds for others less fortunate around the world and in their concern for one another's welfare, such as, when welcoming new pupils. Pupils take part with enthusiasm in physical activities, such as 'Skip, Hop Day'. They make healthy choices at lunchtime and encourage one another to clean their teeth afterwards on the 'brush bus'. Pupils make an effective contribution to the smooth running of school and in decision making, for example, by being school councillors, as playground buddies or monitors. Opportunities for pupils to influence decisions about what and how they learn are, however, still developing. Similarly opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills are not yet fully developed. Nevertheless, pupils' above average

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attendance, average attainment, coupled with their good behaviour and personal skills prepare them soundly for their future.

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?

Good organisation, teachers' enthusiasm, positive relationships and pupils' good behaviour make a good contribution to learning. In good lessons, such as, in Year 2 and 6, teachers' planning takes good account of pupils' varying needs. This can be seen in the tailored questioning of individuals that keeps them on their toes and in a good range of practical activities that challenge pupils' thinking. Learning sometimes slows as pupils work independently when the activities provided are insufficiently challenging or stimulating. Marking of work is effective, particularly in literacy, when teachers indicate precisely what pupils need to do to improve and where it presents pupils with opportunities to challenge their thinking even further. These opportunities are often overlooked however in mathematics.

Pupils' enjoyment of school is enhanced by a good range of activities beyond the classroom which broaden their life experiences, especially in sport. The curriculum offers an effective range of additional support programmes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the progress of these pupils is satisfactory rather than good because when they learn alongside their peers in the classroom, they are not always provided with work that meets their individual needs. Recent adaptations to the curriculum

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in reading are helping to accelerate progress. In mathematics however, opportunities to move learning forward at a good rate are hampered when pupils complete too many uninspiring worksheets, particularly in Year 1.

The way in which every child is cared for is seen in the warmth that radiates from staff and in their commitment to completing 'welfare logs' that help to quickly identify any welfare concerns. Close partnerships with external support agencies, along with effective support from the chaplaincy worker underpin the school's commitment to helping pupils with additional needs and in supporting families. Good efforts to improve attendance pay dividends. Well thought through arrangements for pupils transferring to secondary school and for welcoming new pupils ensure their transition into a new environment is smooth and effective.

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?

Leaders place a good emphasis on the inclusion of pupils in everything the school has to offer. Pupil's welfare and encouragement of their participation are a high priority. However, leaders are yet to fully address the inconsistent rates of pupil progress through the year groups. Despite the good efforts of the headteacher to move the school forward, progress has been hampered by several staff changes and budgetary constraints. Subject leaders do not yet make a fully effective contribution to self-evaluation and to driving improvement forward rigorously because their skills in reviewing pupil performance and checking the quality of provision are still developing. Safeguarding procedures, particularly the arrangements to ensure staff are well trained and to ensure pupils know how to keep safe, are good. Leaders forge effective partnerships beyond the school to extend the curriculum, for example, in sport. Professional development opportunities are used effectively in order to share good practice amongst staff, for example, to promote achievement in reading. Leaders value highly the support received from other Catholic schools nearby during a period of significant staff turnover, and say this has contributed significantly to the continued smooth running of the school. Leaders also successfully enlist the support of parents and carers. The 'Learning Links' worker for example, provides a good range of opportunities for them to find out how to support children's learning at home.

The governing body makes a satisfactory contribution. Despite several recent changes in membership, they are clear about the school's strengths, weaknesses and improvement priorities. They are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about how to hold the school to account. They know that training is needed so that they can take their next steps in

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strengthening their contribution to reviewing pupil performance information and in supporting efforts to monitor the quality of provision with greater rigour. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. As a result of their efforts, the school community is particularly harmonious and pupils have a good understanding of other faiths and social diversity. Opportunities for pupils to learn about diverse communities around the world are also good and advanced plans are now in place to further extend pupils' knowledge about the multi-ethnic nature of British society.

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	2
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

From their varying, but usually below average starting points, children make good progress. By the start of Year 1, the proportion of children reaching the expected levels of development is usually similar to that expected nationally. Warm and caring relationships between adults and children, along with a bright and welcoming learning environment ensure that children feel happy and safe. The partnership between home and school is good. As a result, children settle into school life quickly and easily. In their 'learning circles' children are encouraged to behave well, to become effective listeners and to show sensitivity toward one another's feelings. This demonstrates the good attention given to meeting children's welfare needs and, is why their personal, social and emotional development is good. Adults work closely together to assess children's progress. They record children's achievements very carefully and plan future work on this knowledge. Learning, therefore, builds effectively on what children of varying abilities can already do. Staff provide a good balance of activities between those led by adults, often in small groups, and those that children can choose for themselves, both indoors and out. Exciting activities, which are often linked through themes such as 'the gingerbread man' keep children engrossed in, and excited about learning. Children's good progress is a result of effective leadership and management. This is reflected in the increasing proportion of

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children reaching and exceeding the expected levels of development in recent times. Leaders are now focussing on extending even further opportunities to improve children's reading and writing skills, particularly for the boys during times when they play independently.

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

The very large majority of parents and carers, including those that held discussions with inspectors, express their support for most aspects of the school's work. They overwhelmingly agree that children enjoy school, are kept safe and that they are encouraged to lead a healthy lifestyle. A very small minority of those who returned questionnaires disagreed that the school takes into account their suggestions and concerns. Even so, those who talked with inspectors indicated that they find staff approachable and when concerns are raised, these are dealt with individually. A very small minority indicated that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not always get the support they needed to make good progress. Inspectors found the progress of this group of pupils to be satisfactory. Opportunities to move their learning forward at a consistently good rate are sometimes overlooked because teachers do not always provided activities or direct support staff to fully reflect their individual learning needs.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Thomas More RC 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 87 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 203 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	64	27	31	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	54	62	26	30	3	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	46	53	36	41	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	52	31	36	7	8	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	42	48	40	46	3	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	45	37	43	7	8	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	53	40	46	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)	43	49	38	44	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	44	39	45	6	7	3	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	43	38	44	8	9	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	40	38	44	7	8	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	42	48	30	34	9	10	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	60	27	31	4	5	2	2

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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">■ 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.



13 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas More RC Primary School, Hull, HU4 7NP

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. We thoroughly enjoyed being part of your school and finding out about your views. You go to a satisfactory school. By Year 6, your attainment is similar to that expected for your age and you make satisfactory progress. We were pleased to see:

- children in the Reception classes making good progress and really enjoying all the exciting 'gingerbread man' themed activities
- your good behaviour and how polite and well mannered you all are
- how you feel so safe in your school and how sensitive you are towards one another's feelings, particularly when you welcome new children
- you making healthy choices at lunchtime and all the ways you keep healthy, for example, on 'Skip Hop Day' and with Irish Dancing.

So that your school becomes even better, we have asked that some improvements be made. These are to make sure that:

- you always make good progress between Years 1 and 6, particularly in mathematics, by making sure that you are always given work that is just right for you, you are clear about what you are learning and what you need to do to reach your learning targets
- you are given more chances to develop your skills in mathematics in ways that are more practical, active, exciting and challenging
- adults that have special responsibilities and the governing body improve the way they check how well you are all learning.

You can help by telling your teacher if your work is too easy or too hard, and by checking all the time what you still have to do to reach your learning targets. Finally, I send my very best wishes to you all for a very bright future.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Dodd
Lead Inspector

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