

# St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	122050
<b>Local authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	380391
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 July 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Peter Sudworth

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	210
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	William Falshaw
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mary Everington (acting)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 April 2009
<b>School address</b>	Northampton Road Kettering NN15 7JZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01536 512112
<b>Fax number</b>	01536 512112
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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	9–10 July 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	380391



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Peter Sudworth

Additional Inspector

Margaret Louisy

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 15 lessons, and saw seven teachers and also some of the group work undertaken by teaching assistants. They had discussions with pupils, staff and six governors, including the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, listened to pupils read and examined pupils' work. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at various documents, such as those relating to safeguarding and progress. The inspectors read the comments on the 123 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and also examined responses from staff and pupils.

## Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school with one class in each age group. Children begin the Reception class in the September before their fifth birthday. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very much lower than the national average. Most pupils are White British. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is around the national average, and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is just below the national average. All these pupils are competent in speaking English. The proportion of pupils who are supported by school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs is slightly above the national average.

The school has Healthy Schools status and the Activemark. It has been led by an acting headteacher for the past two years. A new headteacher has now been appointed to commence in September 2012. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

**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

<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. Good teaching ensures that pupils make good progress in their learning. The school is not yet outstanding because some inconsistencies in provision constrain pupils' achievement in spelling, handwriting and investigative science, and children's learning in Reception. The vast majority of parents and carers are pleased that their children attend the school. As one wrote, 'I am very happy with the school and all of the teaching and support staff. Thanks to them all for their time and dedication given to all the children which helps the children enjoy school and be happy.'
- All groups of pupils achieve well and attainment is above the national average by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. The staff's focused efforts to raise pupils' attainment in mathematics have resulted in significant improvements.
- Teachers plan lessons well so that work is matched closely to pupils' needs, and the content captivates their interest. Good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children achieve well, even though the amount of space available for outside activities is very restricted.
- Pupils behave well in class, when around the school and also outside at play. They get along well together. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and how to ensure the safety of others. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- During the past two years the school has been led well by the acting headteacher, who has kept it moving forward. She has been supported by an effective governing body, whose members are deeply committed and involved in the school. The leadership of teaching and the management of performance are good. Teachers have good opportunities for professional development and their performance is reviewed regularly.

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

- Improve pupils' spelling and handwriting by ensuring that:
  - teachers develop a whole-school approach to the teaching of spelling, and apply it consistently in every class
  - pupils learn the words they frequently use but spell wrongly
  - teachers convey consistently high expectations of good handwriting.
- Improve pupils' skills and the provision in science by:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to investigate in science
  - ensuring that pupils complete the recording of their work
  - encouraging the pupils to reason their predictions before they undertake investigations.
- Extend the very restricted outside space for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so they can use the outdoors more effectively as an extension to classroom learning.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children's attainment on entry to the school is around the level expected nationally for their age. The vast majority of parents and carers who completed questionnaires rightly feel that their children make good progress. Reception children make good progress and their rising attainment is now above average by the time they enter Year 1, although the cramped outdoor area reduces opportunities for their physical development. Good progress continues throughout the school. By the end of Year 6, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is securely above average. Reading is a real strength at the end of both key stages because pupils get off to a positive start through the good teaching of letter sounds, it is given considerable emphasis throughout the school and parents and carers support reading at home. Significant improvements have been made in mathematics, where a more investigative approach has stimulated pupils' interest and given them greater confidence in handling numbers. During the inspection, Year 4 pupils sought diligently and successfully to produce a formula to calculate the number of legs on different insects, and Year 3 pupils eagerly examined visual charts to find fractions that were equivalent.

Pupils display good speaking and listening skills. They are confident in speech and use a good choice of vocabulary. They listen well to one another and to their teachers. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress as a result of the early identification of their needs, effective adult support and programmes to overcome their difficulties. These include helpful speech therapy, which is conducted well by staff. Pupils who speak English as an additional language

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make equally good progress as their peers.

Although pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of scientific facts, their progress in developing scientific investigational skills is not as rapid because they have too few opportunities to organise investigations for themselves. When they do investigate, their predictions are not sufficiently well reasoned.

Pupils' handwriting varies in quality, and lacks consistency in joined script. Spelling, too, is inconsistent in quality because there is no whole-school approach to teaching it. Nevertheless, the content of writing is often good and uses a wide vocabulary. A Year 6 pupil wrote in his own interpretation of Bilbo after studying *The Hobbit*, 'Bilbo didn't know what to do so he just sat down and looked at the rough walls and then back at the abandoned lake.'

### Quality of teaching

The good quality of teaching is reflected in the views of parents and carers and also the pupils who completed questionnaires. They are almost unanimously positive. The staff's good relationships with, and management of, pupils contribute to pupils' enjoyment of learning and their very positive working attitudes. Lessons are presented well and staff make good use of resources such as information and communication technology to add interest and support the good pace of learning. Good preparation ensures good use of time. There is a good balance between the introduction to lessons and the activities pupils undertake. Reception children are keenly engaged because they have a good range of equipment to work with. Learning activities are well matched to pupils' individual needs. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils are clearly aware of the purpose of their learning and how to be successful in tasks.

Marking is good, with a balance of praise for effort and indicators of how pupils can improve their work. Progress is tracked well across the school, and accurately assessed with good evidence kept to support judgements. Activities are carefully thought through to ensure that a good level of challenge furthers pupils' progress. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils studied the text of a Greek legend and had to turn this into a play with stage directions. Pupils rose to the challenge and executed the task well.

The teaching of reading is good. Staff have good knowledge of how to teach letter sounds and blends, and this also promotes pupils' confidence in early writing skills. The teaching of spelling and handwriting is more variable. While science facts are taught well, teachers do not have as much confidence to hand over investigations for the pupils to organise, and pupils' recorded work is sometimes incomplete. Staff question the pupils well to engage them effectively and secure their interest. The wide range of visits staff organise, such as those to Sulgrave Manor in a Tudor study, and the use of visitors add to the pupils' understanding.

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## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils behave well in lessons, around the school and at playtimes. School records and the pupils themselves indicate that behaviour is also good over time. Attendance is above average. Pupils are punctual. They enjoy school and describe learning as fun. Pupils enjoy practical activities, such as dressing up as evacuees in their study of the Second World War, which brought the learning home to them. A large majority of parents and carers comment favourably about pupils' good behaviour and their awareness of safety.

Pupils are well mannered and respectful to each other's faith, culture and background. They know how to keep themselves safe, including who to turn to if they have a problem. They are confident that they will be listened to. Bullying of any form is extremely rare but pupils are confident that if any such incidents occur they are dealt with swiftly. Pupils are actively involved in their own learning and keen to participate. They enjoy taking on responsibilities such as helping in assemblies and membership of the school council, and would like more such opportunities lower down the school. Pupils relish contributing ideas to their learning when they have the opportunity, as when Year 6 pupils suggested studying knights as a learning unit, which was accepted. Pupils are happy and talk about 'having lots of friends' and they enjoy settling in any new pupils who may arrive. They work enthusiastically to raise money for charitable causes. A small group of pupils organises a weekly lunchtime prayer meeting.

## **Leadership and management**

The well-written school development plan has a clear focus on raising attainment, and focuses on the right priorities. It is reviewed regularly and is run to schedule. The good range of monitoring activities, such as examining pupils' books and observing teaching and learning, successfully links to focused training to support the continued development of teaching and learning. The governing body is well organised and has a good level of expertise among its members. This is used well for the specialist roles several governors play, for example health and safety and buildings and finance. The governing body has a good structure of committees which do a lot of background and detailed work in advance of main governing body meetings helping to streamline its work and make meetings efficient.

The curriculum is broad and balanced with a good focus on core skills. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a good balance of adult-led work and activities which the children choose for themselves. Children suggest ideas for the role play areas in the Reception class, such as the pirate ship, and also what should be included. Within this theme, they wrote letters to get back the parrot that had been stolen by a pirate, and in the practical area made treasure and listed this as part of the bargaining deal.

Good progress has been made in making the curriculum relevant and interesting to the pupils, and their ideas are increasingly sought and incorporated. In Year 4, a

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pupil's curiosity about the role of the mayor resulted in a range of work that culminated in a visit from the mayor. These developments are motivating the pupils in their studies and increasingly linking subjects together. A wide choice of extra-curricular activities ranges from the orchestra to street jazz through to various sports that support the school's awards for healthy lifestyles and the Activemark. Pupils have equal opportunities in accessing curricular activities and there is no evidence of discrimination in any aspect of school life. Visits related to the curriculum add zest to learning. The school appreciates the importance of expanding the cramped Early Years Foundation Stage outside area when finance is available to support the provision for the youngest pupils.

Safeguarding arrangements are good because policies are helpful and child protection matters and training are kept up to date. Links with parents and carers are good. Staff know the pupils' families well and quickly determine when to take active steps to put in support. The school has a good capacity to improve further, as shown by the pupils' increasing attainment, the good teaching, the commitment of the whole staff and the improvements that have already taken place.



## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.**



11 July 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Kettering, NN15 7JZ**

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school and for being so helpful when we visited. Thank you for sharing your views with us, including those some of you included in questionnaires. We thoroughly enjoyed the two days that we spent with you.

You attend a good school, where you make good progress. Your parents and carers are pleased that you attend St Thomas More and we can understand why. We were impressed with your good behaviour and politeness, and the way that you all get on so well together. The staff take good care of you and you feel safe in school. They prepare their lessons well to make them interesting for you, and you told us how much you enjoy them.

Although many things about your school are good, there are a few areas that we would like to see improved. We would like the staff to help you with your spellings and your handwriting so that these improve. You can help by writing neatly and learning how to spell words that you use a lot but are not sure about. Also, we have asked the staff to give you more investigations to do on your own in science, and more time to complete your work in the subject. There is one separate thing that we would like the school to do when it can afford it. This is to extend the outside area for the children in the Reception class, so that they have more space to carry on learning when they are outside.

Thank you once again for all your help. We trust that you will continue to work hard and do your best.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sudworth  
Lead inspector

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