

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Sheldon Road, Bexleyheath, DA7 4PH

Inspection dates 14–15 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, together with her deputy, provide strong leadership and have built a team of dedicated, committed staff.
- Pupils make good progress as they move through the school, although progress in mathematics lags behind that of reading and writing.
- By the time they leave in Year 6, pupils reach standards which are above average in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good across the school because teachers match activities well to the needs of different groups of pupils. Pupils respond well to the good guidance they receive on how to improve.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Adults are good role models and so pupils are polite and well behaved. There is a real sense of mutual respect within the school.
- Leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, have been effective in securing improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the last inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils are not making sufficiently rapid progress in mathematics. This is because pupils do not have enough opportunities to deepen their understanding of mathematical ideas using real-life examples.
- On occasions lessons are too teacher led, with pupils missing opportunities to work independently and collaboratively.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons, of which four were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They looked at the work pupils were doing in their books and listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 45 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) received during the inspection.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents including the school's improvement plan, the headteacher's reports to the governing body, data on pupil performance and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Joanna Toulson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Sutherland-Harper

Additional Inspector

Lucia Devine

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Thomas More is larger than the average-sized primary school. The school is expanding year on year and there are currently two classes in each year group in Reception and Years 1 and 2. There is one class per year group in Key Stage 2 and two mixed-age classes.
- There are 9% of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government), which is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The largest group of pupils are White British with the next largest group being of African heritage.
- The school meets the current floor standards which set the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school offers a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress pupils make in mathematics by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to real-life problems, in order to deepen their learning and understanding.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - pupils are able to make a full contribution during teacher-directed parts of lessons
 - pupils have opportunities to work independently and to work collaboratively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school in Reception with levels of skills and understanding that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. Achievement has improved since the previous inspection and is now good, with pupils reaching above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because group activities are well planned and allow children to practise skills taught in the whole class session, such as writing a list of food to take on a picnic.
- The additional support provided for pupils who have particular needs, including those supported by the pupil premium funding, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, allows them to make good progress and the gaps in the attainment of these groups, compared with others in the school, are closing.
- Reading is well taught. The teaching of phonics (the linking of letters with the sounds they make) is effective. The reading test in Year 1 shows that nearly three quarters of pupils are working at the required standard and this is well above the proportion found nationally. In 2012, the number of Year 6 pupils achieving the higher levels in the national reading test was high.
- There has been an effective drive to improve pupils' achievement in writing since the last inspection and all groups of pupils are now making good progress as they move through the school. This is because pupils have good opportunities to write at length, not only in their English lessons, but in other lessons too, such as history and geography. The school is now developing ways to enable pupils to achieve even higher levels in writing, for example by working with a visiting author.
- Since the last inspection, assessment procedures for checking pupils' progress have improved. Assessments to clarify how well pupils are doing are recorded every half term and discussions take place between teachers and senior leaders about what needs to be done to support or to provide additional challenge to individual pupils. As a result of this careful monitoring, all groups of pupils, including those from different ethnic backgrounds, achieve well.
- Although pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection, it is not yet outstanding because learning in mathematics lags behind that in English. This is because pupils have too few opportunities to apply their skills to real-life situations and so deepen their understanding about mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils benefit from teaching which is usually good. The positive learning atmosphere in lessons is based on very strong relationships at all levels.
- Classrooms are bright and inviting with displays which value pupils' work and prompts which help pupils' learning.
- Following the previous inspection, the quality of marking has improved significantly and is now consistently strong. It regularly identifies how pupils can improve their work, with pupils given opportunities to respond to teachers' comments. This good guidance is contributing very effectively to pupils' good progress.
- Pupils know their next step targets well. These are regularly reviewed and pupils have frequent opportunities to assess their own work.
- Teachers use starting points that interest and motivate pupils to read and write, for example thinking about what they can hear if they wake in the night, deciding why a child in a story should stop playing on her bicycle when tea is ready or writing about their Olympic experience. These give good opportunities for pupils to apply their reading and writing skills in ways which are meaningful, as well as promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The teaching of mathematics is less effective because the curriculum does not provide sufficient

opportunities for pupils to use their skills in real-life situations.

- Teaching assistants provide good additional support to pupils, both in class and in small groups.
- Sometimes teachers do too much of the talking and this limits the time pupils have to think problems through for themselves. On these occasions there are too few opportunities for pupils to discuss their work, or to work independently or collaboratively. Teachers' questioning is not always probing enough to encourage all to participate and articulate thoughtful answers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils from all backgrounds, including those from different ethnic heritages, get on well with each other and this view is strongly endorsed by pupils themselves. They play well together in the playground and are kind to each other.
- Pupils are friendly and welcoming and speak highly of their teachers and of the experiences that the school offers. Those parents and carers who submitted a response on Parent View were unanimous that their child is happy at school.
- As a result of effective teaching in class and assemblies, pupils understand about the different types of bullying, including cyber bullying. Staff and pupils agree that if there are incidents of bullying or misbehaviour they are quickly dealt with.
- Pupils know that staff care about them and this creates a secure environment in which pupils feel safe. Attendance and punctuality are good as a result of a determined drive by the school to work closely with parents and carers to ensure that as many pupils as possible benefit from the good education the school provides.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs provide safe, fun places for pupils to play with their friends and are well supervised.
- Documentary evidence and the positive views of pupils, staff, parents and carers indicate that good behaviour is typical over time.
- Pupils are attentive in lessons and keen to work hard. However, behaviour and safety are not outstanding because pupils' attitudes to learning could be further improved by encouraging them to take an active part in lessons and find out things for themselves, rather than, on occasions, being told by the teacher.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a real presence in the school. She is well respected by staff, parents and carers and pupils. Her hard work is appreciated and, as one teacher said, 'She would never ask you to do anything she would not do herself.' She has successfully created a team which is determined to secure excellence in all areas.
- Effective systems have been put in place to secure improvements, including in pupils' achievement and in the quality of teaching, and to enable the school to build on its success.
- The very evident care that the school has for every pupil is reflected in the success of the school's promotion of equal opportunities. There is no discrimination of any kind.
- The performance of teachers is managed effectively. Teachers understand what is expected of them, depending on where they are on the salary scale. Senior leaders check the quality of teaching frequently and give extra support where it is needed. Newly qualified teachers are given good support and so rapidly become effective. The school now recognises the need to develop clear programmes for support for those in their second year of teaching, so that their practice can quickly become outstanding.
- The school has used the pupil premium funding to employ an additional teacher for a day and a half to work with identified pupils. Although the progress of each pupil in the school is evaluated twice a term, the precise impact of the use of the additional support provided by this additional

funding is not yet evaluated as sharply as it could be.

- Leaders have good strategies to work with families and recognise that there is more to be done to reach those who find working with school difficult.
 - The curriculum is good and promotes pupils' personal skills well through a wide range of enrichment activities. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use practical resources to develop their deeper understanding of mathematics.
 - The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.
 - The local authority has provided appropriate support for the school and believes the school is on track to improve further.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body shares the headteacher's high expectations for every pupil and receives appropriate training so that governors can support and challenge the school effectively. They understand the strengths of the school, including the quality of teaching, and how the performance of the school compares with others. They ensure that the performance of teachers and of the headteacher is managed in a way that brings about improvement in how well pupils achieve and is linked to where teachers are on the salary scale and the level of their responsibilities in the school. Governors know the school well because they visit regularly and so are able to check out for themselves what policies look like in practice. They manage the budget effectively and now recognise the need to evaluate the impact of the spending of the pupil premium funding even more closely.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	101459
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	404760

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	356
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Jones
Headteacher	Colette Doran Hannon
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 September 2010
Telephone number	020 83038322
Fax number	020 83038322
Email address	head@st-thomasmore.bexley.sch.uk

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