

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Horse Shoes Lane, Sheldon, Birmingham, B26 3HU

Inspection dates 27–28 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage at Reception with levels of skill below those normally expected for their age and leave Year 6 with above-average standards.
- Progress is consistent throughout the school. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make as much progress as other pupils.
- Teaching is consistently good with some outstanding teaching.
- Pupils' different abilities are catered for in all classes and pupils work at the right levels. 'Challenge' activities are also provided for all levels of difficulty.
- Teachers use questioning well to help pupils deepen their understanding of their work.
- Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are very sensible in lessons, in corridors and in the playground. Pupils say they feel very safe in school.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent.
- The school is well led. The headteacher knows her school well and all senior leaders and governors play a full part in making improvements. They pursue excellence.
- Leaders have improved teaching so that any teaching that previously required improvement is now good or better.
- Leaders have specifically made a difference to pupils' progress in mathematics at Key Stage 2 recently.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- More-able pupils are not always challenged right from the start of lessons.
- Pupils do not have enough chance to learn by themselves or have exciting practical tasks in all subjects.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop their own interests, creativity or self-expression.
- Pupils do not often use computer technology in their classrooms.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes. A total of 14 lessons were observed, including one seen together with the headteacher and one with the deputy headteacher. Two extra teaching groups were also seen being taught. In addition, short classroom visits were made to observe pupils at work.
- Inspectors had discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors including the Roman Catholic parish priest. A representative from the local authority, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other members of the school leadership team, teachers and two groups of pupils were also interviewed.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents including the school’s tracking of pupils’ progress, documents relating to safeguarding and special educational needs, case studies of individual pupils, and also the school’s self-evaluation document and its improvement priorities.
- A wide range of pupils’ work was reviewed across different subjects, and inspectors heard pupils of different ages reading.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 23 parents recorded on the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also took into account 188 responses to the school’s own survey of parents undertaken this year. Inspectors met informally with a number of parents at the start of the school day and two phone calls were also received.

Inspection team

Kathryn Skan, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Taylor	Additional Inspector
Edgar Hastings	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who come from various minority ethnic backgrounds is average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is average. In this school it currently applies to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Move good teaching to outstanding by making sure that:
 - more-able pupils are challenged right from the start of every lesson
 - pupils have regular well-planned opportunities in all subjects to work on their own and with others without relying on the teacher's direct guidance, so they can develop their independent learning skills
 - teachers provide exciting practical tasks in all subjects
 - pupils have the chance to develop their interests, creativity and self-expression.
- Develop pupils' use of computer technology in classrooms as well as in the computer suite.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' progress is consistently good across the school. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make equally good progress.
- Children enter Reception with levels of skills that are mostly below those expected for their age. They make good progress and leave the early Years Foundation Stage at broadly average levels.
- Pupils move through Key Stage 1 also making good progress. The results of the Year 1 national reading check on pupils' phonics knowledge (their understanding of letters and the sounds they make) were average last year and have increased this year.
- Pupils leave Key Stage 1 with levels of attainment that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The small gap that existed between those pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium and those who are not in Key Stage 1 has closed this year, particularly in reading and writing.
- Pupils also make good progress in Key Stage 2. They typically reach above-average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. The reasons for a dip in the school's mathematics results due to a small number of more-able girls narrowly missing the higher grade at Key Stage 2 last year were identified and have been addressed. Standards in mathematics have returned to above average this year and are on an upward trajectory.
- The proportion of pupils exceeding expected progress at Key Stage 2 has risen sharply this year to considerably above the national average, particularly in reading and mathematics. Some pupils have again reached the new high Level 6 in mathematics this year and some have also reached Level 6 in reading.
- Pupils from different ethnic minority groups including those who speak English as an additional language make good progress in line with other pupils.
- In 2012, the Year 6 pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium made good progress and reached standards that were one term behind their classmates in English and similar progress in mathematics. Funding is used to provide one-to-one learning support for these pupils and social skills support is made available where necessary. Attendance projects have also been funded for pupils causing concern. These measures have helped pupils to make good progress. Expectations are that pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium will achieve similarly to other pupils this year. There is no pattern of underachievement.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good. There are some examples of outstanding teaching within the school, most particularly in extra teaching groups and the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Communication skills are strong. Teachers make good use of 'talk-partners' in all key stages so that pupils can discuss their learning together.
- Pupils are effectively developing and applying a range of skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics. A focus on boys' reading, on stories at bedtime and on home

reading has borne fruit since the previous inspection along with a focus on reading within classrooms.

- Teachers consistently hold high expectations of the pupils. Pupils are cooperative and try to fulfil those expectations. Pupils are clear on the learning intentions for every lesson and pupils know what they need to do to succeed. Pupils are good at deciding whether they have or have not learned what was expected, often using other pupils to check their work to see if they agree.
- Teachers cater well for the pupils' different abilities throughout the key stages. Work is planned at the right level for the different ability groups, including extra challenge activities. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well catered for. However, more-able pupils are not always consistently challenged right from the very start of every lesson.
- Teaching assistants are very effective. They are well trained and play a full and important part in the pupils' education, including those who are disabled, those who have special educational needs and the more-able pupils. Teachers consistently deploy teaching assistants in lessons well for maximum impact on pupils' learning.
- A clear strength across the school is teachers' use of questioning to help pupils deepen their understanding and increase their knowledge. Most teachers then mark pupils' work to support them to improve by telling them what to do next. However, sometimes teachers dominate lessons too much. Pupils are then unable to develop their skills in learning independently, follow their own interests, express their ideas creatively, or enjoy fun, practical activities in a range of subjects.
- Teachers' use of interactive technology to deliver lessons is very good and teachers also use technology well to share pupils' work. Pupils have the opportunity to use computers when they are timetabled for the computer suite. However, pupils' use of technology within their classes is not yet a feature of the school and pupils themselves are keen to see this improve. Wireless and up-to-date technology for pupils' use in classrooms is currently being reviewed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding. Pupils enjoy coming to school because it is a happy place where teachers care about them. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent.
- Behaviour around school is exceptional. Children are respectful and move about the building sensibly.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View and the school's questionnaire say that the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved. They all also say that pupils are kept safe. Pupils regulate their own behaviour and do not need to be overseen by adults to make the right choices.
- Incidents of bullying are very rare. Pupils understand about different types of bullying and say they know what they should do if ever they have a concern. Pupils of all ages play very well together in the playground and care for each other very well.
- Pupils show enthusiasm, respect and good manners towards each other and adults. They say 'please' and 'thank you'. Pupils are mature and socially advanced due to the exceptional promotion of moral attitudes and social values within the spiritual context of the school.

- Attendance is broadly average. Persistent absence has improved over the last three years and is now average due to the school's hard work. A core group of families still do not always arrive on time and the school continues to work with them.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led by the headteacher who knows her school well. Leaders have improved teaching so that it is now at least good across the whole of the school. All senior leaders are fully involved in making improvements.
- Monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress is well planned and robust. Leaders know what they need to improve and how to do it. They have made good use of educational consultants to help them with their work.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics at Key Stage 2, which has risen sharply in the last twelve months, is due mainly to effective leadership by the newly appointed subject leader who has been well supported by the other leaders in his role.
- Performance management is effective. Experienced teachers support other teachers who are in turn well supported by senior leaders. Teachers are helped to improve their practice.
- Pupils' learning of subjects are well organised to build up their skills systematically, particularly in reading, writing, communication and mathematics. A well-planned programme of visitors and visits away from the school enriches learning and helps to make it interesting and enjoyable. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well provided for.
- Parent partnerships are mostly very good. Workshops are provided after school and the new home-school reading diaries are making a difference to the amount of reading pupils do at home. Pupils coming into school in their pyjamas and reading bedtime stories with their parents helped trigger an interest in reading a few years ago. This is bearing fruit now.
- The school takes equal opportunities very seriously and is effective in giving pupils from all backgrounds an equal opportunity to succeed. It does not tolerate discrimination of any kind.
- The local authority regards the school as 'light-touch'. It carries out data monitoring from a distance and undertakes assessments on the school's performance. It supports the school's partnerships with other schools in the consortium and the moderation of teacher assessments that take place to ensure consistency across the group of schools.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are fully involved in school life including the many church-based community functions. They provide effective support and challenge to the leadership team and use information about the school's performance to challenge leaders. They have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement compared with schools nationally. They know what the school is doing to improve pupils' learning. They make sure finances are used in a way that supports pupils' progress and know how the pupil premium is being spent and how it is has raised standards for eligible pupils. They use their knowledge to make decisions about staffing and are clear about linking pay to performance and know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance. They make sure health and safety are given a high priority and that procedures are clearly established. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet current national requirements.

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	103441
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	412221

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	329
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Henry
Headteacher	Sister Susan Collins
Date of previous school inspection	13 July 2010
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