

St Thomas More Roman Catholic Primary School

Erith Grove, Easterside, Middlesbrough, North Yorkshire, TS4 3QH

Inspection dates 26–27 November 2013

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.

- Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils make good progress. Standards have risen in Year 6 and most pupils in Key Stage 2 now have attainment which is in line with the expectations for their age.
- Teaching is good overall and outstanding in Year 6.
- Teachers plan lessons which have interesting topics and a range of activities. They use questions very well and check pupils' understanding as lessons progress.
- Teaching assistants are very skilled at teaching and supporting pupils' learning.
- The curriculum offers pupils many stimulating opportunities to see the links between subjects and develop their skills in writing, reading and mathematics.
- The school offers excellent care and support and provides extremely well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They care very well for one another and say they feel extremely safe.
- The excellent leadership of the headteacher has inspired subject leaders and all teachers to embrace rigorous targets. As a result, teaching has improved and pupils' progress has speeded up.
- The headteacher and the governing body have an extremely clear understanding of the school's strengths and relative weaknesses.
- The governing body has made an outstanding contribution to school improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Too few pupils achieve standards that are above the expectations for their age at the end of Year 2.
- In some instances, when teachers mark work, they do not give clear advice about how pupils can improve their work or time to act upon that advice.
- The school does not yet make the most of opportunities to share the outstanding practice of some teachers with all teachers.
- While teachers plan lessons to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, work is not always well-matched to the level at which individual pupils are working.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and the Chair, vice-chair and other members of the Governing Body. The inspectors also met with the school's local authority education development partner.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including the school's improvement plan; the school's data relating to pupils' progress; the work in pupils' books and the school's documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 12 lessons taught by eight teachers. They listened to groups of pupils in Year 2 and 6 read. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons.
- The lead inspector conducted two observations jointly with the headteacher. The lead inspector also observed the headteacher reporting back to the teachers on her findings regarding the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' achievement in the lesson.
- The inspectors took into account the 20 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), spoke informally to parents and analysed the school's own survey of parents' views.
- Seventeen staff completed questionnaires and the responses were analysed.

Inspection team

Gordon Potter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lesley Richardson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. However, there is a small but significant number of pupils from a range of other ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after.)
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is well-below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well-above average.
- There is a breakfast club, and lunch-time and after-school clubs which are managed by the governing body and run by school staff and external coaches.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding, to further raise standards and rates of pupils' progress, especially for the most-able pupils in Key Stage 1, by:
 - sharing the outstanding practice that is already in school
 - improving consistency in the quality of marking so that pupils know clearly how to make their work better and have time to act upon advice given to them by their teachers
 - using teachers' understanding of the level at which pupils are working to plan work that is specifically linked to the skills and abilities of individual pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The abilities of different year groups vary in this small school. However, most children start school with skills that are well-below those typically expected for their age. Teaching that is good and often inspiring helps children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Further good teaching in Key Stage 1 helps pupils reach standards that are typically slightly below average at the end of Year 2.
- In recent years, too few pupils at the end of Year 2 have reached standards that are above those expected for their age. However, the impact of improved teaching and extremely focussed tracking of their progress is helping more pupils currently in Year 2 to be on track to reach standards that are above average.
- In the past three years, standards at the end of Year 6 have risen more quickly than standards nationally. In 2013, attainment in writing was average; in mathematics it was slightly above average and in reading it was well above average. More pupils than has been the case in recent years achieved standards that were above the expectations for their age. Pupils had made good progress in English and mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to attain standards that are above the expectations for their age. This is as a result of improved teaching in Years 3, 4 and 5 and outstanding teaching in Year 6. Teaching in Year 6 is extremely clearly focused on enabling pupils to understand and use their skills in English and mathematics and helps them make rapid progress.
- In 2013 the pupils who were known to be eligible for free school meals and for the pupil premium made similar good progress to other pupils in school in English and mathematics. The attainment of those pupils was two terms ahead of other pupils in the school in mathematics and writing and in line with other pupils in reading.
- Likewise, those pupils who have special educational needs make good progress. Teachers and teaching assistants are very skilful at teaching and supporting these pupils in their learning so they can make similar good progress to other pupils in the school.
- Very few pupils who are not White British have taken the national assessments at the end of Year 6 in the past three years. As a consequence, it is not possible to make any meaningful comparisons about their attainment with similar groups nationally. Those pupils currently in school make similar good progress as other pupils in school in English and mathematics.
- These improvements in standards and the rates at which pupils make progress clearly show the school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination.
- Inspection evidence shows that progress in reading is good and more pupils are achieving the standards that are above those expected of them by the end of Year 6 than has been the case in the recent past. There is a consistent focus on reading across the school. Pupils have a very clear understanding of how letters are linked to sounds and this helps them to read words they are not used to.
- Pupils speak enthusiastically about the books and authors they enjoy when reading in school and at home and about the 'Reading Champions' scheme which encourages them to read regularly.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good overall, with some outstanding teaching of mathematics and English in Year 6. All lessons have interesting topics and a range of stimulating activities that engage pupils and allow them to see the links between subjects. Teachers question pupils well and encourage them to talk through ideas and solve problems with their partners.
- Teachers are very skilful at explaining what pupils are to learn and leading them through ways to do tasks. Teachers are good at identifying where pupils have misunderstandings and adapting their lessons to help them as work proceeds. On such occasions, teaching assistants are very

well-used to support and teach all groups of pupils.

- All of these approaches were seen in outstanding teaching of mathematics in a lesson for pupils in Year 6. The teacher offered pupils a range of challenging activities appropriate to their abilities in solving number problems and then in plotting co-ordinates. Pupils used their mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding to investigate different approaches and test their answers. Pupils were engaged by the task and determined to succeed. The teacher ensured that the pace of the lesson was balanced between opportunities to think quickly and time to experiment, think and reflect. As a result, pupils made outstanding progress in investigating and problem-solving techniques.
- However, there are not enough examples of excellent teaching to result in outstanding progress for pupils. Although work is very well-matched to the learning needs of different groups of pupils, it is not always so well-directed or targeted specifically enough to each individual pupil's level.
- Pupils have target sheets which help them know the level of their work. However, they are not always so clear about what they need to do to reach the next level. While pupils' work is regularly marked, teachers do not always make it clear to pupils how they can improve their work or give pupils time to act upon any advice that is given.
- Teachers use pupils' reading, their visits and the many exciting topics they cover in a range of subjects, such as World War Two, The Great Fire of London or work about space and the planets, as the starting point for writing activities and progress in writing is good.
- This good approach was seen in a lesson for pupils in Year 1 where their interest in owls and the story *Whatever Next* was used both as the basis for their learning how sounds and letters link together and as a stimulus for their writing. Pupils' written work showed how the most-able pupils were encouraged to write independently and develop their sentences using capital letters and full-stops. Accordingly, pupils made good progress in their writing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils say that behaviour is good in their lessons and around the school. Indeed, good behaviour was evident in lessons during the inspection. In lessons where pupils were fully engaged in their work, their behaviour was outstanding. Any minor misbehaviour, such as some distractions among some immature boys when the pace of learning drops in their lessons, is quickly dealt with by their teachers.
- The needs of a very small number of pupils who have significant behavioural problems are very well managed by the school. There are clear expectations and a consistent system of rules and rewards which help pupils have a very clear understanding of how to behave well. While the school has used fixed term exclusions when necessary, these are few in number and their use has decreased.
- Pupils feel very safe and are aware of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying or racism. They say that there is no bullying because the school council has listened to pupils' concerns and helped all pupils understand how to get on well together. If any minor problems occur, pupils are able to solve them between themselves.
- Good behaviour is also a result of the outstanding, sensitive care pupils receive from adults in the school, including the Parent Support Adviser who has made a significant contribution to improvements in behaviour and attendance.
- These improvements are also the result of the school's determination to involve parents more in their children's education. As a result, parents are very happy that their children are safe and enjoy school.
- Clear initiatives introduced by the school to encourage pupils to attend regularly and on time have been successful. Attendance has improved and is average. It has also improved because pupils are excited by the many interesting topics they learn about and enjoy school.
- Pupils are very polite to adults, extremely keen to talk about their school, respect one another and work and play well together. They develop social skills well through involvement in the

breakfast, lunch-time and after-school clubs. The school council organises the Playground Champions scheme, offers ideas to improve the playground and has helped to design the Prayer Garden.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has very high aspirations and expectations for her staff and pupils, and an extremely clear understanding of the school's strengths and relative weaknesses. She offers excellent leadership and encourages leaders at all levels to be accountable for their areas of responsibility.
- Accordingly, they are well-informed about how to analyse data, the quality of teaching and pupils' work. They are eager to share their expertise and training is effectively managed and conducted by school leaders. Leadership across school is good and all teachers welcome and thrive upon the responsibility and accountability offered to them.
- The headteacher has clear expertise in using data to measure pupils' progress. The school improvement plan has appropriate areas for development and clear processes to check that it is having an impact. The measures for pupils' progress are extremely rigorous and they have helped pupils make good progress. They have not yet had time to ensure that progress is outstanding.
- Performance management targets for teachers are equally rigorous. Teachers have embraced the challenge involved and are eager to improve their teaching further to meet these targets. They are very clear that they will only be rewarded when their pupils have done as well as, or better than, they should have done.
- The headteacher regularly monitors the quality of teaching, clearly understands what constitutes good teaching and judges it accurately. She is extremely clear in her feedback to teachers who respect and welcome her advice and act upon it. As a result, teaching across the school has improved and standards have risen rapidly.
- Funding to support the learning of those pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium has been used to provide additional staffing to offer support to develop their basic skills. It has also been used to purchase information technology packages and offer pupils cultural opportunities through visits and extra-curricular activities. As a result, they make the same good progress as other pupils in the school.
- The new primary school sports funding has been used effectively to develop competitive sports with other primary schools and to enhance sporting links with the local secondary school. It has been used to introduce new sports such as rugby and wheelchair basketball. Some specialist activities such as gymnastics are currently taught by external coaches so that teachers can learn and develop their own skills. These are contributing well to pupils' physical development and well-being.
- The curriculum is very exciting and contributes strongly to pupils' extremely well-developed spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. While it is focused on developing pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics, it also provides very many opportunities for pupils to develop their love of history, art, music, science and geography. It is particularly good at helping pupils to see the links between subjects, practise their writing skills in all subjects and, increasingly, apply their mathematical skills in real-life problem-solving activities.
- The school welcomes the support and advice it receives from the local authority and its education development advisers who have helped the school to improve teaching. The school welcomes the advice of a specialist leader for education who has helped to improve the teaching of writing and is supporting the development of some staff who are relatively new to teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body offers highly effective support and rigorous challenge to the school and has made an outstanding contribution to the school's improvement. The Chair and vice-chair offer excellent leadership and all governors are extremely knowledgeable about the school. They have clear systems to monitor teachers' performance management, the achievement of

pupils and the quality of teaching and the curriculum. They receive clear information about how the new primary school sports funding and pupil premium funding are allocated and are very knowledgeable about their impact. They ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities for safeguarding. All staff have been vetted and are trained appropriately to keep pupils safe and free from harm. The budget in this very small school is extremely well managed and governors are well-informed about future budget projections.

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	111704
Local authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	425797

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Cane
Headteacher	Jane Apolloni
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2012
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