

St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive School

Footscray Road, London, SE9 2SU

Inspection dates 20–21 May 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Students attain well above average results in practically all the GCSE subjects they take. In 2013, 84% of them attained five grade C or higher GCSE passes, including in English and mathematics.
- The percentage of GCSE A*/A grades is well above average in English, mathematics, science and several other subjects.
- The most able students do very well in their examinations. Students from minority ethnic groups and those eligible for additional funding achieve at least as well as others.
- Students, including those with special educational needs, make exceptional progress during their five years at the school.
- Teaching is outstanding because teachers are experts in their subjects and learning is very well structured in all subjects.
- Regular, accurately marked assessments inform teachers and students about progress and where extra support may be needed.
- Outstanding care and support are provided for all students. Disabled students and those with special educational needs, or those who find it difficult to learn, receive sensitive help.
- The executive headteacher, supported well by senior and middle leaders and governors, has generated a steady rise in standards and the quality of teaching. He has established an environment of high expectations for behaviour and learning in which students and staff can flourish.
- The executive headteacher, headteacher, members of the leadership team and middle leaders all lead their areas of responsibility extremely well. They know exactly which areas of school life need to improve even further.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary both in lessons and at all other times. They are keen to learn and work really hard.
- Students mature into considerate young adults, well prepared to cope with the next stage of their education and their future lives.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Religious education lessons and retreats extend their awareness of different faiths.
- Students enjoy the numerous trips, visits and additional activities that widen their horizons and understanding of different cultures.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 32 part-lessons, several of which were jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team. As GCSEs had started, members of the team observed a few revision sessions for a short time so they could see some Year 11 students at work. Inspectors observed two assemblies, form time, a reading support session in the library and extra-curricular activities.
- Inspectors held meetings with several groups of students, members of the senior leadership team, leaders in charge of subjects and other aspects of the school’s work, other staff with positions of responsibility, four members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors discussed lessons they had seen with teaching staff and examined a range of documents including the school’s own evaluation of its work, improvement plans and data about progress, standards, exclusions, attendance and behaviour. They examined safeguarding procedures and child protection arrangements.
- Inspectors looked at a range of students’ work in lessons.
- Inspectors took account of 73 parents’ responses to Ofsted’s on-line Parent View questionnaire and questionnaires completed by 19 members of staff.

Inspection team

Clare Gillies, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Patricia Barford	Additional Inspector
Caroline Drumm	Additional Inspector
Helen Neal	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- There are more boys than girls.
- About three-quarters of the students are White British with an average proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest group is of Black African heritage with very small proportions from many other heritages. A smaller than average proportion of students speak English as an additional language but none are at an early stage of learning English.
- A well below average proportion of students receive support through the pupil premium, which provides additional government funding for specific groups, including looked after children and students known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has only a very few looked after children.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also average. The most common needs relate to students needing support for speech, language and communication or for those on the autistic spectrum.
- A very small number of students are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding, which is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The school uses alternative off-site education provision for two days a week for a very few students following civil engineering and hair and beauty courses at Crown Woods School and Shooters Hill Further Education College.
- Practically all students take GCSE English and mathematics early and the most-able linguists take French or Spanish early.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school has been the Greenwich champion in technology and public speaking and the dance group has performed at Sadler's Wells and the Southbank Centre.
- Since June 2013, the school has been in a partnership arrangement leading an 11–18 Catholic school in Dover.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Support students' learning so they can make even better progress by:
 - seeking even greater consistency in the quality and regularity of marking of students' notebooks
 - promoting the recent initiative, 'Feedback and Improvement Time', energetically so that students always read and respond to the written comments teachers give them about their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The percentage of students attaining five good GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has been over 80% for the last four years. Examinations already taken, combined with accurate assessments, predict that present Year 11 students will attain an even higher figure in 2014. Standards are well above average in all years.
- In all subjects, students are given targets, based on their starting points in Year 7, which challenge them to achieve in the top 10% of their predicted levels or grades. Students respond well; GCSE results were at least above average in every single subject in 2013.
- In GCSE English, mathematics, science, drama, geography and religious studies, the percentage of A*/A grades has been significantly above average for the last two years. This reflects how well teachers cater for the most able students, all of whom attained five GCSE A*-C grades including English and mathematics and a very high percentage of top grades in 2013. Over 80% of the most able Year 11 students attained A*/A grades in their GCSEs.
- Girls attain slightly better at GCSE than boys but by a much smaller margin than is seen nationally. Students eligible for additional funding did slightly less well than others in English and mathematics in 2012 but did better than others in their year in 2013; a higher percentage of them attained the EBacc qualification (the English Baccalaureate includes five subjects, namely, English, mathematics, and a subject from science, languages and humanities).
- The percentage of students making far more progress than is seen nationally is very high. In 2013, at least half the students, including those receiving additional funding, made much better progress than expected in English and mathematics. In all years, current students are forging ahead equally well. The school keeps a careful eye on students attending off-site provision and they make excellent progress in their courses.
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make outstanding progress. In 2013, Black African students and some with special educational needs made the best overall progress during their five years at the school. All disabled students and those with special educational needs make at least good, and often outstanding progress. The school's promotion of equal opportunities is evident in the fact that no students underachieve.
- Early entry for GCSEs does not prevent students from achieving their best as only a very small number of them do not get their very high target grades. Early entry linguists study 'express French' and the high attaining mathematicians take a free-standing qualification which prepares them well for AS mathematics.
- The school analyses its progress data so carefully that any student or any subject not doing really well receives support and checks to turn things round. Standards in French and Spanish have not been as strong as in other subjects. Changes to staffing, combined with more students learning just one language, are already moving these subjects forward.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is consistently effective in all years and in all subjects. It is complemented by students' enthusiasm and hard work. Starting in Year 7, the school sets students really high targets and they all strive to meet them.
- A key factor contributing to students' outstanding progress is that they always know how well they are doing and how they could do better. If they find a subject difficult, they are helped, for example by being taught in small classes. Many teachers stay after school to support students who want a bit of extra help.
- When students get stuck, teachers provide well-considered help, for example in avoiding telling them the right answer or exactly what to do. Instead they give them just enough guidance to solve problems by themselves. This contributes to outstanding learning.

- Knowing their students extremely well, teachers use very effective ways to help them learn, such as devising seating plans, which bring out the best in each of them. So, for example, when they work in pairs or small groups, students help each other to learn by sharing and discussing their knowledge and understanding. Teachers take care to ask questions which make students think hard.
- Activities often capture students' interest with, for example, the use of visual material. They include paintings of the Black Death in history and clips of comic sketches in drama, a bayonet charge linked to war poetry in English or a sea captain calculating bearings in mathematics.
- Students know they must use technical language correctly and write in full sentences when answering questions. These skills, along with good quality writing and spelling, are promoted from Year 7 in all subjects.
- Teachers occasionally miss opportunities to promote students' reading and speaking. For example, teachers may read out information which could be read aloud by students to encourage them in speaking clearly and confidently. Nevertheless, students generally read well and the beautifully laid out library has a wide range of books for them to enjoy. Outstanding standards in mathematics mean that students have excellent numeracy skills, which teachers, particularly in subjects such as technology and geography, develop well when needed.
- Students complete assessment tasks regularly. Teachers mark these accurately and thoroughly with crisp guidance about how answers could be improved. They also give students much helpful advice and individual feedback during lessons.
- Some notebooks are marked just as well as the assessments students do but not as consistently well by all teachers. Occasionally, this means that students do not immediately correct errors or respond to teachers' comments. The school has recently introduced an initiative to ensure students read and respond to what teachers write in their books.
- Learning support assistants contribute much to help students with special educational needs with their learning. They skilfully judge how best to help, for example when to intervene or when to stand back because a student is coping well without help. They have much relevant expertise in subject knowledge or in helping those with specific learning needs to improve students' progress and boost their confidence.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Feeling privileged to attend the school, they quickly absorb its very high standards of behaviour and work. They take pride in dressing smartly in their uniform. They join in all the school has to offer enthusiastically. Students' high attendance, punctuality, self-motivation, concentration and hard work contribute to their outstanding learning.
- Students' outstanding personal development is nurtured in many ways: in assemblies and form time and in personal, social, and health education sessions. The latter cover many important citizenship topics and preparation for students' future lives, as well as tackling issues such as drugs, mental health or bullying. Students feel happy and safe at school.
- Students are adamant that bullying hardly ever happens but are just as confident that any incidents are taken seriously and resolved fast. They learn about bullying linked to different lifestyles and beliefs and understand the potential dangers of social websites and texting. Students know that discrimination is not tolerated at all.
- The highlight of students' form time is the weekly quiz day when they face fascinating questions such as 'Why are politicians whose names start with A, B or C more successful?' Students observed that 'It's easy to cheat if you watch the news!'
- Students relish taking on positions of responsibility and helping others. Several Year 10 students hear younger ones read and help with their progress enormously. Those hoping to achieve the Duke of Edinburgh's awards work in the community. All students fundraise generously for charities at home and overseas.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. If they have personal issues

students find the school counsellor very helpful; an art psychotherapist has also proved successful. All staff go out of their way to make sure students are happy and well cared for.

- By Year 11, students mature into thoughtful, reflective and kind young adults. They say they feel 'absolutely ready for the future', confirming the school's effective careers advice and guidance. All students moved on into further education or employment in 2013.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The strength of the executive headteacher's, headteacher's and senior leaders' outstanding leadership is not adversely affected by the school's partnership work. The headteacher at Dover, the executive headteacher at St Thomas More and all members of the extended leadership team have clear roles and responsibilities. The executive headteacher and headteacher oversee developments and progress at both schools successfully.
- When students arrive in Year 7, they quickly assimilate the school's values. This happens because all staff treat them respectfully, teach them well and have their best interests at heart. Year 11 students articulate how much they appreciate what the school has done for them.
- Staff morale is high, which contributes to the excellent community spirit and fostering of good relationships. Whether a newly qualified teacher or an experienced middle leader, all staff accept that they are accountable for their performance and that this will have an impact on their salaries. They feel well supported and value the high-quality training they receive.
- Middle leaders organise their subject staff efficiently and attribute their success to stability (in several subjects), a consistent approach, shared resources and the meticulous checks that are made on students' progress by regular assessments.
- Senior leaders assess the quality of teaching and learning accurately and use this information, along with an analysis of students' progress, to prepare a realistic yet challenging plan for the future. The school has an accurate view of how well it is doing. The executive headteacher welcomes and values the 'light touch' support given by the local authority and the diocese.
- A strength underlying the school's performance is the regular meetings between different combinations of senior, subject and pastoral leaders. They consider any student who, for any reason, is underachieving. Pooling their insight on how well individuals are doing, they identify specific actions required.
- The curriculum includes astronomy, Latin and psychology, particularly for gifted and talented students. The school has close links with an Oxford college and King's College, London which these students visit each year. Students who excel in sports, music or drama have many opportunities to improve their skills.
- On the school's most informative website, a helpful page guides parents to sources of information about many useful and relevant sites. Parents' responses to the school's own questionnaires are very positive. The very small number of parents who responded to the online Ofsted questionnaire were not quite so positive: inspectors found this surprising considering the school's outstanding performance.
- Safeguarding policies are reviewed regularly and procedures are followed precisely. Child protection has a high profile and is thoughtful and sensitive. Records do not automatically include cross-referencing to notes kept in other files.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors attribute the school's success to their, and senior leaders' careful checks on students' progress and to making it clear to students, from day one, that they must 'listen and not muck about in lessons'; students do listen and they never 'muck about' in lessons!
 - Checking how well additional funds are used is a standing item on their agenda; governors know, for example, that small classes for some of these students have made a huge difference.
 - Governors value presentations made by staff, which contribute to their good knowledge about the quality of teaching. They know how to analyse performance data and relate it to national figures. They keep a sharp eye on finances and have approved the new staff appraisal

structures in place for September 2014. They support all staffing decisions made by the executive headteacher. They are astute about arrangements with the partnership school, and have strategies in place to review the arrangements regularly and include updates to parents in their weekly newsletter to keep them fully informed

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	100196
Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	444370
Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	620
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gerald Peters
Headteacher	Markus Ryan
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 July 2010
Telephone number	020 8850 6700
Fax number	020 8249 1855
Email address	enquiries@stmcomprehensive.org

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

