

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Huthill Lane, Great Wyrley, Walsall, WS6 6PG

Inspection dates 3–4 July 2014

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.

- Decisive leadership, management and governance are ensuring good outcomes for all groups of pupils.
- Staff appraisal and rigorous tracking of pupil progress have resulted in all teachers understanding the part they play in ensuring that all groups of pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
- By the end of Year 6 standards are above the national average in reading and in writing.
- Teaching and learning have improved and are good overtime. Support staff make a strong contribution to pupils' learning.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a strong start and generally make good progress.
- Gaps in achievement between pupils eligible for additional funding and other pupils have closed.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through exciting learning opportunities, which contribute to their good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough consistently outstanding teaching across the school.
- Teachers have only just started learning from best practice in the school and are not yet fully implementing strategies learnt in their classrooms.
- Key Stage 2 pupils do not always apply what they have learnt in mathematics lessons to practical investigations.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation stage and Key Stage 1 do not always form their letters and numbers correctly and spelling is a weakness.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 10 lessons taught by seven teachers.
- Documentation was analysed, including that related to teachers' planning, safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, the school's systems for improving teaching and learning, and how the money allocated for pupil premium and sports funding is spent.
- The inspectors took account of 16 responses to the online Parent View survey and emails from parents. Responses to an inspection questionnaire from 16 members of staff were analysed.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, a representative from the local authority, the Chair of the Governing Body, pupils and parents.
- During the inspection several classes were out of school on school trips.

Inspection team

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Peter Lawley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There is a well below-average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- A well below-average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority).
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and further accelerate pupils' progress in all lessons by:
 - continuing to provide more opportunities for all teachers to learn from the best practice in the school and implement strategies learnt in their classrooms
 - ensuring children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 form their letters and numbers correctly and learn the correct spelling of subject specific and key words
 - making sure pupils apply the skills that they have learnt in mathematics lessons to undertake their own mathematical investigations.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The achievement of pupils is good with all groups of pupils making good progress in relation to their prior attainment.
- Detailed information presented by the school provided firm evidence to show that all groups of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics are now making good progress across all year groups. By the end of Year 6 standards over time are at least in line with national average in all subject and, in reading and writing are above average.
- Pupils' mathematical investigation skills are not as well developed as they could be. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' books shows that too few pupils to apply what they have learnt in mathematics lessons to their other subjects.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 are average in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents good progress in relation to their various starting points.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation stage with skills that are typical for their age. They achieve a good level of development and achieve well in all the areas of learning. However they struggle to form their letters and numbers correctly and this has a knock on effect in Key Stage 1 where incorrectly formed letters lead to spelling mistakes and untidy presentation in their mathematics books.
- All pupils did well in their phonics screen (linking letters to sounds) and performed above the pass level, an improvement on the results of 2013.
- By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are good readers and have a love of books. They read with expression and enthusiasm and they demonstrate secure skills of comprehension.
- More able pupils are achieving well as they are consistently challenged in lessons and are given harder work to complete once they have grasped the objective of the lesson.
- The school has successfully closed the gap between pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. Due to well thought out interventions these pupils outperformed their peers in the Key Stage 1 phonics screen.
- The school's commitment to equal opportunities is demonstrated by how well disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported throughout their time in school. Identification of their individual needs is swift and additional expertise and support is arranged as required.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good due to rigorous monitoring, regular appraisal and well-focused training.
- Teachers know their pupils well and have highly enabling relationships with them, valuing their uniqueness and learning styles. Teachers' marking of pupils' work helps them understand what they have done well and where they need to improve. Pupils know what to do when they get

stuck and the classrooms are full of prompts and reminders of what steps to follow. This provides confidence in tackling problems and trying out new ideas.

- Teachers use time effectively and the consistent use of technology helps pupils understand the key concepts that they are learning.
- Scrutiny of pupils' books showed that the breadth and depth of writing is of good quality and pupils can write well-structured recounts using ambitious vocabulary and well-punctuated paragraphs. Pupils' input into having a say in what should constitute an effective marking policy is paying dividends as they eagerly do their corrections.
- Teachers are skilled at developing writing in other subjects. In Year 5, pupils wrote detailed descriptions of what it would be like to live in Ancient Greece capturing the imagination of the reader by using well-chosen words to keep the reader interested.
- Teachers promote the pupils' spiritual moral social and cultural development effectively in all subjects and this contributes to their high interest levels in learning.
- Support staff make a valid contribution to learning. They ably assist teachers and take their responsibilities seriously in helping pupils overcome any misconceptions.
- The use of questioning to make pupils explain their thinking on how they arrived at an answer is a strong feature of teaching and helps them develop their thinking skills. In the younger classes, learning is held back because pupils are not always encouraged to spell correctly or to record their work using correctly formed letters and numbers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in and around the school and are tolerant of one another's differences. They demonstrate good attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons and around the school. Parents, carers and staff agree that behaviour is good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and enjoy school.
- Consistency in application of the behaviour code is apparent throughout the school. This ensures that pupils feel safe because they know what is expected of them. The emphasis on good behaviour starts in the Early Years Foundation Stage and is reinforced throughout the school through the use of sanctions and rewards and visibly displayed behaviour code in every class.
- Pupils spoken to say that they enjoy school and that their teachers and support staff are always there to help them whenever they get stuck in their work or need to have someone to talk to.
- Attendance is improving and is now average with a reduction in persistent absenteeism. There have been no exclusions and parents are seeing the value of not taking holidays during term time.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe in the school and are confident that adults will look after them well if they have any concerns.
- Pupils understand different types of bullying including cyber-bullying. Name calling is rare and pupils are confident that should any issues arise they will be dealt with.

- Pupils relish taking on responsibility. Through their roles as school councillors and their citizenship activities they raise money for those less fortunate than themselves and they develop self-confidence and make a positive contribution to the community.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because in the few lessons that do too little to inspire pupils, a small number of pupils, to the intense annoyance of the others, can engage in some silly, inappropriate behaviour.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher supported by senior staff, governors and the local authority advisor has driven school improvement. Accurate identification of strengths and areas for development provide the basis for a well-constructed school development plan that sets a clear agenda for improvement and is regularly monitored and evaluated by all staff.
- Accurate monitoring of teaching and learning and managing teachers performance has been expertly conducted. Teachers have clear targets for improvement linked to the progress of different groups of pupils. The careful checking of each pupil's individual progress and allocation of support if required is contributing to the rise in achievement.
- The headteacher has developed successful partnerships with an outstanding school so that a range of strategies can be implemented to raise standards. This has been successful in improving the rates of progress for higher achieving pupils and raising standards in reading and writing.
- Subject leaders have well defined areas of responsibility and are given good quality support to ensure that they are able to check pupils' progress, such as undertaking book trawls. They are fully involved in all aspects of school evaluation.
- The curriculum is tailor-made to meet the needs and interest levels of pupils and contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils participate in a good range of clubs, and have many opportunities for visits outside school and visitors who come into school help broaden pupils' outlook, raise aspirations and develop their self-confidence.
- Good leadership of Early Years Foundation Stage as well as that of pupils with disabilities and special educational needs ensure that effective links are made with parents and carers. Parents are appreciative of the open door policy and that they are seen as partners in learning.
- Additional sports funding is used to employ specialist staff and widen the range of activities the school offers. This is having an impact on pupils' participation in inter school sports activities and improving staffs expertise in teaching physical education.
- The school is effectively supported by the local authority advisor who has helped develop staff's skills of self evaluation and moderated standards within the school as well as commissioning good quality opportunities for staffs' continuous professional development
- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because there is not enough outstanding teaching within the school and teachers have not yet had sufficient opportunity to learn from the best practice of their colleagues
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The school benefits from the support of an effective governing body. Governors attend training events and are up to date with all recent developments. Governors evaluate the work

of the school thoroughly and have undertaken lesson observations. They understand how pupils' attainment and progress compare with similar schools and they hold the staff to account for the standards that pupils attain. They set and review the headteacher's targets for raising attainment and are aware of how additional spending is used to accelerate achievement of all groups of pupils. Governors are well informed of the quality of teaching and they ensure that pay and promotion are justified by the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and achievement. Governors fulfil their statutory duties including those relating to child protection and safeguarding.

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	124376
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	442560

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	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Georgina Keeling
Headteacher	Stephanie Hewitt
Date of previous school inspection	04 December 2012
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Email address	headteacher@st-thomasmore.staffs.sch.uk

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