

St Thomas A Becket Catholic Infant School

3 Tutts Barn Lane, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN22 8XT

Inspection dates

8–9 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment substantially since the previous inspection.
- Good-quality teaching ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their learning by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils make better progress than at the time of the previous inspection. They make good progress in writing, mathematics and science. They make particularly good progress in reading.
- Well-planned support ensures that pupils who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress and achieve well.
- Leaders have maintained good-quality teaching, learning and assessment in early years. Caring relationships, consistent routines and clear expectations ensure that children are happy and settled.
- The governing body has strengthened its role in checking the school's work and in holding leaders to account.
- The school is a friendly, welcoming and outward-looking community.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour contribute to the school's happy, hard-working atmosphere. Pupils attend well and feel safe and secure.
- The school's religious values underpin its work, providing pupils and staff with a positive, supportive and secure framework for school life.
- The most able, including those who are disadvantaged, make slower progress in writing and mathematics than they do in reading. This is because teaching does not consistently challenge and extend the most able pupils sufficiently in these subjects.
- Subject leaders' roles are at an early stage of development. They do not have a sufficiently sharp focus on the key aspects of teaching and learning which need to be developed to secure the highest levels of achievement.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching consistently challenges the most able pupils in writing and mathematics, including those who are disadvantaged, so that pupils achieve their full potential in these subjects.
- Make sure that subject leaders have a clear view of the priorities for development in their curriculum areas of responsibility so that they make a stronger contribution to the school's development.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher, senior leaders and governors have developed strong links between the infant and junior school since the previous inspection, which have contributed well to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. For example, teachers benefit from the sharing of subject expertise present in both schools to improve their practice.
- Senior leaders know pupils very well. They regularly check that all groups of pupils are making sufficiently rapid progress by visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work books and discussing pupils' progress with teachers. Leaders use checks effectively to identify staff training needs and to improve the quality of teaching. For example, training provided for teaching assistants since the previous inspection has ensured that they make a stronger contribution to the teaching of phonics.
- Senior leaders have high aspirations for themselves, their colleagues and pupils. They have increased teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' work. Staff morale is high.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and engaging. A wide range of events, trips and clubs enhance pupils' enjoyment of school and contribute to their regular attendance. Leaders have improved the way subjects such as mathematics and phonics are taught so that learning builds more effectively as pupils move up through the year groups.
- Learning contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and ensures that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, events such as theatre group visits, African drumming demonstrations and performances of Indian dancing develop pupils' appreciation of different cultures. Assemblies are happy occasions, bringing pupils and staff together to worship and to celebrate pupils' achievements.
- The school successfully promotes British values such as tolerance and understanding. For example, leaders and teachers speak about world religions with respect. Pupils of all ages emulate their teachers' positive attitudes and speak about different beliefs and cultures with interest.
- The school's strongly inclusive atmosphere ensures that all pupils and families are equally valued, regardless of background or belief. One parent commented, 'There is no feeling here that anyone is different.'
- Leaders use primary sport funding to support pupils' enjoyment and achievement in physical education. For example, leaders have purchased resources to increase the range of sports available in school, while teachers regularly participate in training to ensure that they teach physical education skills confidently.
- Local authority training has contributed well to improvements in teaching since the previous inspection. Local authority representatives have regularly worked with school leaders to confirm the accuracy and reliability of teachers' assessments. The reducing levels of support over the past year reflect the local authority's confidence in the school's capacity to secure further improvements.

- Leaders make good use of pupil premium to support disadvantaged pupils. However, they recognise that some of the most able could make even better progress in writing and mathematics.
- The recently appointed subject leaders work enthusiastically alongside their colleagues. However, their roles in the school's development are at an early stage. While they are well informed about pupils' progress, they are less confident about which aspects of teaching need to improve to secure the highest levels of achievement. Senior leaders have already identified the need to strengthen subject leadership and have appropriate plans in place to develop this aspect of the school's leadership.

Governance of the school

- The governing body commissioned a review of its work shortly after the previous inspection. Governors used the outcomes and recommendations of the audit to improve their roles in holding school leaders to account for pupils' learning.
- Governors visit lessons with the headteacher and other senior leaders more frequently than at the time of the previous inspection. This means that they can see developments in the school's work for themselves.
- Governors keep a close eye on how well different groups of pupils are learning, including disadvantaged pupils. They ask leaders searching questions about pupils' achievement and about the extent to which additional funds make a difference to pupils' learning.
- Governors have a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities than at the time of the previous inspection. They employ a wide range of skills and expertise to support senior leaders and work together effectively as a team.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding leaders, staff and governors are well qualified. They make good use of the most recent national safeguarding guidance to ensure pupils' safety.
- Staff consistently follow school policies and are confident about what to do if they have any concerns. For example, leaders log incidents of misbehaviour conscientiously and use this information to identify any recurrence of challenging behaviour. The school's success in supporting pupils' personal development is reflected in its hard-working atmosphere, pupils' good behaviour and parents' confidence in the school.
- School records and discussions with senior leaders indicate the high priority given to safeguarding issues. Leaders follow up any queries or incidents promptly and thoroughly, including contacting parents to discuss concerns where needed, so that pupils are secure. Leaders maintain close links with agencies and make good use of specialist advice whenever necessary.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Changes in phonics teaching since the previous inspection have secured substantial improvements in pupils' early reading skills, resulting in a three-year rising trend in the results of the Year 1 phonics check.
- A consistent approach to mathematics teaching in all classes ensures that pupils make better progress in this subject than at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers and teaching assistants use equipment such as cubes and counters to good effect to support pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts and techniques. For example, during the inspection, a group of pupils in Year 1 used cubes and whiteboards to help them to add amounts, while Year 2 pupils used resources to help them to subtract numbers.
- Teachers have high expectations of those pupils who speak English as an additional language. Teaching focuses on making sure that pupils new to the English language can understand and use key vocabulary successfully. This ensures that pupils quickly settle into school life and rapidly grow in confidence.
- Teaching assistants contribute increasingly well to pupils' learning. Training during the past two years has ensured that they are more confident about teaching aspects of the curriculum, such as phonics and mathematics. As a result, they identify and address pupils' needs effectively, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning well to explore and develop pupils' understanding. Teachers use this approach particularly well to extend the most able pupils' reading skills by, for example, asking searching questions about text. However, teaching is less effective in challenging and deepening the most able pupils' understanding in writing and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are kind and friendly. They look very smart in their school uniform. They like to talk to visitors about their school and do so politely and sensibly.
- Positive relationships between staff and pupils ensure that pupils feel valued and secure. Pupils from different cultures and backgrounds get on very well together.
- Pupils feel safe. They know what to do if they are worried and say that adults are helpful. Lessons and events in school help pupils to learn about the steps they can take to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils in Year 2 understand that medicines can be harmful if not used properly and know that the label shows the dosage.
- Pupils know what bullying is and are confident that it rarely occurs. School records confirm this view.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs provide a relaxed and secure environment for pupils at the start and end of the school day.

- Almost all parents who completed Ofsted’s online questionnaire feel that pupils are happy, safe and well behaved.
- While most pupils are attentive and hard-working in lessons, occasionally some do not demonstrate the same positive attitude as their classmates and lose focus.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons and when moving around school.
- Pupils attend school regularly and punctually. Attendance rates are consistently in line with the national average. Persistent absenteeism is uncommon.
- Leaders work positively with parents and agencies to support those pupils who attend less well. Leaders can point to substantial improvements in individual pupils’ attendance as a result.
- Pupils behave well during playtimes. However, occasionally the boisterous behaviour of a small number of pupils detracts from the positive atmosphere. Leaders are already aware that this can be the case and are considering how best to use playground areas to ensure that all pupils behave equally well. Pupils who spoke with inspectors say that teachers successfully sort out any problems so that they feel safe.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress in a wide range of subjects. In 2016, standards at the end of key stage 1 were above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- Pupils achieve very well in reading. Pupils regularly read at home and in school and so quickly build secure, reliable reading skills. They say that they have lots of books to choose from in school and frequently change their books.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make very good progress in reading. They read confidently and fluently and learn how to use more sophisticated reading skills to read at a deeper level of understanding.
- Pupils of all abilities, including the least able, use phonics and other strategies successfully to support their reading. The results of the Year 1 phonics check have been above the national average for the past three years. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving at least expected levels in the phonics check in 2016 was much higher than at the time of the previous inspection.
- Increased expectations of pupils’ written work and a more consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting have improved the quality of pupils’ writing over the past two years. Pupils develop secure punctuation and grammar skills so that they can organise their writing effectively. They learn how to use language and vocabulary increasingly well for different purposes and audiences.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics. Pupils of all abilities work confidently on mathematics tasks. They develop secure and reliable strategies to solve calculations. Pupils in Year 2 told inspectors that they enjoy mathematics and feel that they are doing well. The work in their books illustrates pupils’ good progress.
- Pupils make good progress in science, learning about a range of topics in meaningful

and engaging ways. For example, pupils in Year 2 learn about how they can make choices about exercise and diet which will help them to stay healthy. Pupils use mathematics skills to record and present the results of investigations in different ways.

- The numbers of pupils eligible to receive support provided by pupil premium vary each year and, in some year groups, there are very few. As a result, published information about their progress does not always give a full picture of pupils' learning. However, discussions with pupils and the work in their books indicate that they make good progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make better progress from their starting points than at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers and leaders are quick to recognise pupils' needs as they arise and swiftly put support in place where pupils need extra help. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make very rapid progress.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language make the same rapid progress as other pupils.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make slower progress in writing and mathematics than they do in reading. As a result, they do not achieve their full potential in these subjects.

Early years provision

Good

- Children cheerfully participate in a wide range of activities in the classrooms and outdoor area. For example, during the inspection, two children happily shared letter beads with each other as they threaded beads to make a necklace.
- Good relationships ensure that children are comfortable and relaxed in school. Children are friendly and well behaved. Adults quickly sort out occasional disagreements without fuss.
- Teachers swiftly and accurately identify children's needs when they start school. Adults provide good-quality support for children who need extra help to achieve well, including those who speak English as an additional language. As a result, children settle well and learn quickly.
- Leaders have improved links with parents during the past year. They meet parents to discuss children's interests and needs when children start school and regularly speak with parents about their children's progress. In the past year, leaders have introduced 'home learning' books which provide useful advice and guidance about how parents can help their children to learn at home.
- Adults use resources effectively to support children's learning. For example, during the inspection, teachers helped children to use number lines to practise counting and toy snakes and modelling clay to compare lengths.
- Children make good progress from their different starting points in all aspects of learning. This ensures that children are equipped with the key knowledge and skills needed to learn well in key stage 1. The proportions of children achieving expected levels at the end of Reception Year are consistently in line with national averages.
- The small numbers of disadvantaged children make the same good progress as other

children.

- Teaching introduces children to a range of world religions, such as Hinduism and Judaism, as well as Christianity, so that they develop an appreciation that people have different beliefs. For example, during the inspection, children talked with interest about Diwali when explaining how they recently made paper lanterns.
- Leaders and teachers ensure that children are safe. Adults are well qualified and knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures. Well-organised classrooms, both indoors and out, provide children with attractive and secure places to learn.
- The most able children make rapid progress in developing reading skills. However, as with other pupils in the school, the most able children do not always achieve their full potential in other subjects because teaching does not extend their learning sufficiently.

School details

Unique reference number	114577
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10019872

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John McManus
Headteacher	Rachel Turner
Telephone number	01323 726004
Website	www.stthomasbecketcatholicschool.co.uk
Email address	office@stthomasbecket-inf.e-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–17 October 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized infant school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is lower than that found in most schools.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The school provides full-time early years provision in two Reception classes.
- The school federated with the junior school on the same site in 2010. The headteacher and governing body oversee both schools.

- The school has a breakfast club and an after-school club on site, both of which are managed by the governing body and were visited during this inspection.
- There is a privately run nursery on site, which was not included in this inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning in 13 lessons or part lessons, including three observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors had discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, a local authority representative, teachers, members of staff, parents and pupils. A meeting also took place with the chair of the governing body and two other governors.
- The inspection team took account of the 26 staff responses to the online questionnaire. In addition, they considered the views expressed in the 56 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. They also considered the views expressed by parents who spoke with them informally during the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and considered a range of documents, including the improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and attendance, and safeguarding policies.
- The inspection team looked at a sample of pupils' work provided by the school, as well as looking at pupils' work in lessons. They also listened to pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 reading.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Marcia Goodwin

Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
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