

Thomas More Catholic School

Russell Hill Road, Purley, Surrey CR8 2XP

Inspection dates

13–14 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Senior leaders do not have an accurate understanding of the school's performance. Consequently, improvements have not been secured quickly enough in some areas such as languages and humanities.
- Leaders do not evaluate assessment information well enough to ensure that there are no groups of pupils that underperform. During the inspection, leaders were unable to explain how well groups of current pupils were performing.
- Over time leaders have not provided governors with up-to-date, accurate assessment information about the progress of current pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils made significantly less progress in languages and humanities than other pupils nationally in 2016.
- Some teachers do not use assessment information well enough to help them plan appropriate activities. This means that pupils sometimes find the work too easy or too difficult and this slows their progress.
- The achievement of middle-ability pupils in humanities and languages was significantly below that of other pupils nationally in 2016.
- The school website did not meet requirements at the start of the inspection.
- Attendance has been very low over time, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, girls and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' attendance and punctuality have improved this academic year as a result of better parental engagement and new systems which follow up absence quickly.
- The sixth form is good. A new leader has been instrumental in the recent improvements in examination results.
- Leaders have made some improvements since the previous inspection and have acted on the additional advice from the local authority and the diocese. As a result, in 2016 there were improvements in English and mathematics outcomes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and governors should ensure that:
 - they have an accurate understanding of the areas in the school which are not yet good and use this information to plan systematically in order to secure rapid improvement
 - they use current assessment information to check the performance of pupils and groups of pupils so that in all subjects pupils make progress at least in line with that of others nationally
 - they analyse the impact of the pupil premium funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils nationally across all subjects
 - the school website complies with requirements by publishing all the statutory documentation
 - they continue to ensure that the current improvements in attendance are sustained so that, for all groups, it is at least comparable with the national average.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - making sure that teachers use accurate assessment information to support their planning so that they meet the needs of all pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders' evaluation of their own performance is not precise or accurate enough. Consequently, they have not secured improvements quickly in identified areas such as languages and humanities.
- The school's assessment system is not used well by leaders. During the inspection leaders were not able to provide inspectors with clear information about the performance of current pupils.
- Leaders have not, over time, provided governors with sufficiently detailed information about the progress of current pupils. As a result, governors have not held leaders to account sharply enough. However, governors are familiar with published data, and in other respects they know the school well.
- Leaders do not provide clear assessment information for teachers in order to support them in their planning. Consequently, activities do not always challenge pupils, particularly middle-ability pupils, who do not do as well as others nationally.
- Leaders have made changes in staffing and have raised the degree of challenge for middle leaders, which has contributed to some improvements in key areas such as English and mathematics. However, leaders' actions have not yet secured consistently strong outcomes for all groups of pupils, particularly in subjects such as languages and humanities.
- Leaders have not analysed in enough detail the impact of pupil premium spending on the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, this group does not make as much progress as pupils nationally, particularly in languages and humanities.
- At the start of the inspection the school website did not contain all of the information that the school is required to publish. During the inspection leaders updated some of the information, including the most recent safeguarding policy. However, the information about governor interests, analysis of the pupil premium funding and information about catch-up funding did not meet requirements by the end of the inspection.
- The diocese has provided intensive weekly support to leaders. This support means that middle leaders are able to show evidence of the impact of their actions through clear priorities for further improvement in their subject area and early evidence that these priorities are steadily being achieved.
- Leaders have taken action to adapt the curriculum and create clear pupil pathways which make sure that all pupils have an equal opportunity for success via whichever route they choose to follow. For example, the school no longer offers German where teaching, over time, has not been strong enough. Leaders have instead focused on providing one modern foreign language, French, and on ensuring that teaching in that subject is strong.
- Leaders have made some improvements since the previous inspection. For example, mathematics was identified as an area for development as results were too low in 2014. There is now new leadership in this area and teaching has improved considerably. As a result, in 2016 pupils' progress in mathematics was significantly higher than that of others nationally.

- Leaders have taken action where teaching is not yet good enough. Training opportunities and a peer mentoring programme to share best practice have been established. This has led to very recent improvements in the languages and humanities departments.
- Leaders carefully check the quality of alternative provision. They make regular visits to each provider to ensure that pupils' needs are met and that they are safe.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported by the school. There is a tightly structured phonics programme that begins in Year 7 and continues through to Year 10 for those pupils who continue to need it. This programme is very well led and has enabled these pupils to make rapid progress in English.
- Performance management is used well to support and challenge teachers. Staff receive good-quality training that enables them to work towards achieving their targets and further improve their teaching skills.
- Leaders actively tackle discrimination and promote good relationships throughout the school.
- The curriculum, assemblies and tutor times help pupils to understand and respect other cultures and religions. Pupils learn about fundamental British values, for example democracy and tolerance.
- Pupils benefit from a range of enrichment activities. These encourage collaboration, reflection and the development of skills that are aimed at creating opportunities for pupils to broaden their experiences.
- The school works closely with parents to support their children and the online survey Parent View shows that the majority of parents would recommend this school to others.
- The school promotes spiritual, moral and social understanding well across the school in a variety of ways including during assemblies, through the curriculum and during enrichment. The impact of how well the school promotes this area was seen particularly in lessons and in discussion with pupils. For instance, inspectors listened during a debating session as students confidently and sensitively debated topical issues.

Governance of the school

- Governors' understanding of the school's development and their challenge to school leaders has improved since the previous inspection. Following a recommendation, governors have undertaken an external review and have been reconstituted. They have received intensive support and training and are now an effective governing body which offers a combination of challenge and support to school leaders.
- Governors have developed their skills in order to understand the assessment information leaders give to them. However, this information focuses on the positives and therefore does not drive improvement in the outcomes for current pupils across all subjects. Governors' ability to review this information effectively is limited, as leaders do not always provide them with enough information, particularly about the performance of groups of pupils currently within the school.
- Governors understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They visit the school regularly and have received the appropriate safeguarding training to fulfil their roles.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Systems for securing the safety of pupils are supported by detailed policies and procedures that staff use effectively and consistently.
- Leaders and governors have undertaken appropriate safer recruitment training. All staff have received training on themes such as the 'Prevent' duty, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation, enhancing their ability to support pupils' well-being.
- Well-documented records are kept and the school makes referrals in a timely and appropriate manner. The school works well with external agencies to keep children safe.
- Pupils say they feel safe and know which adults to speak to if they have concerns. The Thomas More inclusion centre is an additional safe haven which provides effective support for parents and pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good across all subjects. Consequently, pupils' outcomes over time, and currently, are variable. In particular, disadvantaged and middle-ability pupils make less progress than other pupils nationally in subjects such as languages and humanities.
- Teachers do not use assessment information about what pupils already know, understand and can do, to plan work that is sufficiently challenging. In some lessons this leads to tasks being set which are not suitable. When this happens, some pupils become disengaged and make too little progress over time.
- Too often, pupils of all abilities are given the same work to do. The most able pupils find the work too easy and so do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Some teachers offer regular feedback in line with the school policy. However, time is often not given to enable pupils to act on the advice so that they can revise and improve their work. As a result, progress in some subjects is too slow.
- In some lessons and in books scrutinised by inspectors, such as in English and mathematics, we saw high levels of challenge for all pupils, and as a result, pupils made good progress.
- Some teachers use questioning skilfully to provide high challenge. This makes pupils think hard and helps them to consolidate their understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. Most pupils work hard and try their best.
- The Thomas More Inclusion (TMI) provision supports a small group of pupils who find managing their own behaviour difficult. A range of small-group provision and counselling allows these pupils the opportunity to break down barriers to learning and rejoin the main cohort quickly. The TMI provision has also enabled the school to reduce the number of exclusions.

- Some pupils attend alternative provision at which they are dual registered. Leaders carefully check that pupils' attendance and behaviour at these centres is of the same high quality as that of other pupils at the school.
- Pupils show good understanding of what constitute potentially dangerous situations and how to deal with them or avoid them. They have a clear understanding of the potential risks of using the internet and social networking sites. However, pupils are less clear about extremism and radicalisation. While teachers have been trained in this area, leaders now need to consider how best to incorporate these aspects into the curriculum.
- The number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and have been excluded has been well above the national average for the past three years. Attendance for this group of pupils is also low. This has impacted significantly on their attainment.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils around school and in lessons is good. The school building is a difficult one to negotiate, with tight corridors and narrow, winding staircases. Despite this, pupils manage the spaces well and are considerate, calm and orderly when moving around the school.
- In lessons, pupils show that they want to learn and remain responsive even when their work is not challenging enough.
- Pupils enjoy school and, as a result, attendance has recently improved. The vast majority of students now attend regularly. Punctuality to school has improved rapidly because leaders have taken a tougher stance and have stressed successfully the importance of punctuality to students and parents.
- Pupils report that incidents of bullying are rare and they say there is very little, if any, offensive racist language or name-calling. Where incidents or disputes occur they are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The previous inspection reported that the achievement of pupils was variable over time and that pupils did not make good progress across a range of subjects, particularly in humanities and modern foreign languages. This remains the case.
- Pupils who choose to study languages and humanities at GCSE do not make good enough progress when compared to other pupils nationally. The achievement of middle-ability and disadvantaged pupils in these subjects was significantly below that of others nationally.
- Most pupils join the school with average prior attainment. In 2016, the proportion of pupils overall who made good progress was above the national average, including in English and mathematics. However, the progress that disadvantaged pupils made in English and mathematics was below the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve well enough. Compared to other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils do not make good progress from their starting points. In 2016 too few of the disadvantaged pupils attained the EBacc qualification. For example, in languages, science and humanities the number of disadvantaged pupils of average ability gaining the pass grade at GCSE is well below the national average. This means that leaders do not evaluate the impact of the pupil premium funding well enough in order to ensure that these pupils reach their full potential.

- The school does not use its current assessment information well enough to ensure that all groups of pupils make progress in line with others nationally. Leaders were unable to explain which groups of pupils, in which subjects, were making expected progress or exceeding it and which pupils needed additional support.
- During the inspection it was found that too many pupils did not understand their academic targets or what they would need to do in order to achieve them. Evidence of work in pupils' books showed variable progress over time in a range of subjects.
- Over time, White British pupils and those of mixed White and Black Caribbean heritage do not make as much progress in English as their peers.
- Girls, low prior attaining pupils and those low prior attaining pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made significantly good progress in English and were in the top 10% nationally in 2016.
- In 2016 middle- and high-ability pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities attained in line with others nationally in English, and just below the national figure in mathematics.
- The school has a higher than average proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school offers an effective programme of support to these pupils. Consequently, these pupils make good progress from their starting points, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used well so that most of those who enter the school below nationally expected levels in literacy and mathematics make good progress. For example, in order to support these pupils, the school provides an effective phonics programme. When listening to readers, phonic strategies were used well by these pupils and their reading was fluent.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- At the time of the previous inspection there was a large variability between the performance of subjects, and the overall progress made by students following academic courses was well below the national average. The sixth form is now well led and managed and this is no longer the case.
- The new leader has high expectations and has undertaken rapid, comprehensive and accurate evaluation of the 16–19 study programmes. Clear plans are now in place to build on strengths and quickly tackle any weakness. For instance, the tracking of students' progress and monitoring of the quality of teaching are now rigorous.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form are now of a consistently high quality. Consequently, outcomes are improving rapidly.
- In 2015, there was very wide variation in the achievement of students from similar starting points at AS level and A level across a range of subjects. The school's analysis shows that students had been allowed to study courses for which they were not suited or properly prepared, leading to poor retention and low achievement.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Students enter the sixth form with below-average starting points, shown in their prior GCSE results. During their time in the sixth form they make rapid progress and their achievement in 2015 and 2016 was in line with that of others nationally.

- Students' attendance in the sixth form has improved and is now well above the national average. New signing in systems have meant that leaders can quickly follow up any absence.
- Careers guidance is of a high quality and prepares pupils well for their next steps. This guidance begins early in the school and becomes more focused in Years 9 and 10 and throughout the sixth form. As a result, the quality of current students' work and their rates of progress have improved this year, particularly for those currently in Year 12. The majority of pupils go on to further education. Those who choose not to go to university find employment or go on to apprenticeships.
- Numbers in the sixth form are low. Leaders are working to encourage current Year 11 pupils to progress into the sixth form as well as attracting external students by offering an improved range of courses.

School details

Unique reference number	101821
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	10019660

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	831
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter McFall
Headteacher	Margaret Mulchrone
Telephone number	020 8668 6251
Website	http://www.tmore.org.uk/
Email address	schooloffice@tmore.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 November 2014

Information about this school

- Thomas More is a smaller-than-average Catholic secondary school in the borough of Croydon.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations set for pupils' GCSE attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of specified information on its website, including governor interests, analysis of pupil premium funding and information about Year 7 catch-up funding.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The school uses two alternative providers for a small number of pupils – 'Road to Success' and 'Educational Excellence'.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 45 parts of lessons in order to gather evidence about teaching, learning and attitudes to learning. Some of these observations were conducted jointly and evaluated with a member of the school’s leadership team. In addition, inspectors observed activities during the enrichment period.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the senior and middle leadership teams, members of the governing body including the chair, the diocese and the local authority. Several meetings were held with pupils in addition to informal discussions during the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, including 48 responses to Parent View, and inspection survey replies by 34 members of staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including: the leaders’ evaluation of the school’s performance and development planning; behaviour and attendance; policy and procedures, including the school’s single central record of checks made on staff; teachers’ performance management; safety and child protection; pupils’ achievement and a wide range of work completed by pupils.

Inspection team

Claire Majumdar, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Laurence King	Ofsted Inspector
Diana Osagie	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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