

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Sheldon Road, Bexleyheath, Kent DA7 4PH

Inspection dates

21–22 March 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leadership and management are outstanding because the headteacher, ably supported by other leaders, is highly ambitious for every pupil at the school.
- Leaders and governors have an excellent impact on teaching and the pupils' outcomes. They are ensuring that the school continues to improve rapidly.
- The leaders' high expectations for pupils and members of staff are evident in all they do. They fully promote their school motto 'Do more, be more...'
- The extensive curriculum supports learning exceptionally well and provides excellent opportunities for pupils to learn and practise skills across a wide range of motivating topics.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development pervades all aspects of the school's work. Displays of pupils' work show how much this underpins their learning.
- Teaching is extremely successful in promoting fast learning for pupils of all levels of ability. Teachers make excellent use of the information they collect on how well the pupils are doing to plan subsequent work.
- Members of staff support pupils very well academically and emotionally. They ensure that activities motivate pupils to try hard and to succeed.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are exemplary. Pupils are proud of their school and extremely enthusiastic about learning.
- Pupils feel very safe at school and have a thorough knowledge of how to stay safe.
- Pupils' outcomes are outstanding. Pupils make rapid progress across the school and attainment is above average by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children make an excellent start to their education in the early years provision. They learn very quickly because they access an extremely wide range of activities that promote successful learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all opportunities are taken to maximise pupils' learning by correcting mistakes quickly and adapting work as necessary.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Dynamic and determined leadership and management are at the heart of the success of the school. Leaders and governors are committed fully to providing the best possible education for all pupils and are constantly striving for more.
- The headteacher provides effective support and challenge for other schools in the local area and diocese. Leaders have managed the expansion of their own school successfully at the same time as helping others.
- Leaders base their school improvements on methods that research shows have a proven track record. Every action taken is purposeful and evaluations are accurate and rigorous. The school is improving and all aspects of the school are better than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' improved motivation and responsibility for their own learning have an especially positive impact on their learning.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are highly ambitious for every pupil and member of staff. Consequently, an exceptionally strong learning culture is evident in all the school sets out to do and achieve. Subject leaders monitor teaching and learning very thoroughly. They use assessment information to adapt the curriculum so that areas of comparative weakness are tackled successfully. For example, additional arithmetic teaching supports pupils' resilience in this subject, especially in their knowledge of the multiplication of fractions.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning and the performance management of teachers is highly rigorous. Members of staff benefit from strong coaching within the school and additional training enabling them to refine their work and do their best for pupils.
- Leaders track how well the pupils are doing and analyse assessment information for various groups of pupils and individuals meticulously. Any pupils at risk of not doing as well as they should are detected early and support is provided as needed.
- The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used wisely. High-quality staffing provides focused support academically and socially. Leaders hold meetings to discuss the progress of these pupils every two weeks to ensure that they are doing as well as they can.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is spent very successfully. The specific needs of these pupils are identified and their progress monitored with great care.
- Specific funding for sports and physical education has been used successfully. A specialist teacher has supported other staff in improving the pupils' skills and interest in sport. The school is highly successful in sporting competitions in the local area.
- The curriculum is highly effective in delivering core literacy and numeracy skills in a breadth of interesting and purposeful contexts and topics. The curriculum is enriched by many varied extra-curricular activities. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 1 benefited from a visit from several farm animals and the school choir was taking part in a local competition. The school prepares pupils exceptionally well for life in modern Britain because they receive a well-rounded education.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very effectively. Displays

of work around the school show how these aspects of school life are part of everything the school does. British values are covered fully. Several pupils support others across the school in their roles as spiritual leaders or ambassadors for developing knowledge about rights and responsibilities.

- Parents are very positive about the school and are especially keen to support their children with their reading in the 'reading café' and at home. They make positive comments about the school such as 'They value each of the children and push them to succeed' and 'It's a wonderful school'.

Governance

- Governance is highly effective.
- Governors share the passion of the senior leaders and other staff for ensuring that the pupils receive the best possible education.
- They are very well informed about what is being developed at the school and why.
- They monitor the work of the school rigorously and have a clear knowledge of how effectively pupils learn.
- Governors ensure that they keep up to date with their training so that they can provide the right challenge and support for school leaders.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school ensures that the pupils feel safe and are kept safe. High levels of pastoral and emotional care support the pupils very well.
- All staff are trained fully in keeping pupils safe and are clear about what they should do if any concerns arise.
- Leaders make sure that rigorous checks are made on all those who work with the pupils so that safety is maintained.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs enable pupils to be looked after safely at the start and end of the school day. Disadvantaged pupils have free access to these.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers are very clear about what they want pupils to learn and share their strong subject knowledge in a highly effective way. For example, pupils in key stage 1 developed an excellent understanding of science in their work on magnets, circuits and electricity.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make very good use of high-quality resources to support the pupils in their learning. For example, in mathematics in Year 6, effective use was made of a video clip to show the pupils how to calculate angles in various quadrilateral shapes.
- Members of staff have excellent relationships with the pupils, enabling them to manage behaviour with ease.
- Teachers make excellent use of assessment information to provide work pitched at the

right level for all groups of pupils. They provide equally well for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the disadvantaged and the most able pupils. Teachers have high expectations for all pupils and ask challenging questions that help to deepen their knowledge and understanding. For example, in mathematics, pupils are expected to give accurate explanations for their problem solving so that their level of understanding can be checked.

- The school's culture enables pupils to be very confident and highly motivated to learn and succeed. As one pupil proudly stated about her work, 'It's not hard, because that would be a fixed mindset.'
- Teachers make effective use of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills to support learning in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 4 were seen reading instructions for their handball games, pupils in Year 5 wrote persuasively in their letters from Richard II to his subjects and disadvantaged pupils used problem solving to plan a film night for other pupils. Across the school, pupils' topic books show vast opportunities for high-quality extended writing.
- Very occasionally, teachers do not check quickly enough that pupils are not making unnecessary mistakes or are ready to move on in their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Parents are positive about the support for pupils' safety and welfare. Typical comments are, 'The teachers are very caring' and 'There is always someone to talk to if you have a problem'.
- Members of staff have an excellent awareness of each pupil's personal needs, and provide timely additional support for pupils who are going through difficulties in their lives. As a result, pupils are extremely happy and confident at school and feel very safe. Pupils' physical well-being is supported tremendously well through various sports clubs and active physical education lessons.
- Pupils report that bullying of any kind is rare and any unkind behaviour is dealt with immediately. They know that if they have any worries they should 'tell the teacher and they will sort it out'.
- The school's curriculum covers health and safety extensively, including e-safety. Pupils are quick to explain potential dangers. For example, Year 1 pupils preparing for the farm visit made comments such as 'Keep with your partner' and 'Don't put your fingers in your mouth; you might get sick'.
- Pupils have an exceptionally thorough understanding of what is needed to be a successful learner, and respond to responsibility very well. They are keen to help others as 'buddies', 'computer technicians' and 'reading helpers'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. School records show that poor behaviour of any kind is extremely rare. Pupils are extremely positive about behaviour at the school and their parents agree that it is a strength. As one parent stated, 'The children are so well behaved.' Pupils are clear that their actions have consequences for others and they are kind and well mannered.
- Pupils are highly motivated and focus on their learning very well. They make positive comments about their work such as 'I find the tasks useful as they help me to learn more'.
- Rates of attendance are above average and pupils arrive at school punctually. There is little persistent absence and when it occurs leaders work successfully with families to put it right.
- Pupils care for each other and show respect for cultural differences. For example, pupils in Year 2 were aware of the importance of the gifts of love and kindness to support friendships.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make substantial and sustained progress from their starting points. Teachers across the school ensure that pupils are clear about what they are to learn and why. Rapid progress is evident in the pupils' workbooks in literacy, numeracy and topic work, and very little time is wasted in class.
- The majority of children are working within the expected level for their age when they join the school in the Reception classes. By the time pupils leave Year 6, their attainment has risen to above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils also excel in other subjects, with evidence of high-quality science and humanities work in their books. A particular strength is the way that pupils use and extend their literacy and numeracy skills in support of learning across the curriculum. Pupils have a deep and meaningful understanding of their science and topic work and they write about what they have learned very thoroughly.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above average. Pupils demonstrate that they make very good use of this knowledge to support their learning. Pupils who were heard reading in Years 2 and 6 were fluent and confident. They had an excellent understanding of what they were reading.
- The most able pupils, including the disadvantaged, achieve very well over time. National assessments for the most able pupils in Year 2 in 2016 did not compare favourably with other schools nationally. Work seen in school in Year 3 for these same pupils, and for the current Year 2, is of a high standard. Leaders are aware that the results they submitted in 2016 were overcautious, especially for the most able.
- Disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress and their attainment matches that of other pupils of similar ability. Numbers of disadvantaged pupils in each year group are low.

Where attainment or progress information appears less favourable, it is due to individuals having joined the school only recently or because they have additional difficulties with specific aspects of their learning. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils did well at key stage 1, but less well than other pupils in mathematics at key stage 2. The majority of disadvantaged pupils currently in school, including the most able, make accelerated progress including in mathematics. Funding to support these pupils is having a positive impact and leaders monitor effectiveness very closely.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do very well. Their specific needs are identified quickly and support is well targeted.
- Pupils' above-average attainment and exemplary behaviour and attitudes towards learning prepare them exceptionally well for the next stage of education and later life.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children make excellent progress from their starting points across all areas of learning. Attainment is above average at the end of the year, preparing the children extremely well for Year 1.
- Members of staff have high expectations for all groups of children and check up on their learning rigorously. Many children are already working beyond the levels expected for their age in writing and mathematics. For example, the most able children could write several sentences with connectives and share 12 objects three ways. There are no disadvantaged children in the current Reception Year. Funding in previous years has been used effectively to support learning.
- Teaching has a strong impact on children's outcomes. Children clearly enjoy learning and this contributes to their excellent behaviour and rapid progress. They are quick to follow instructions and are considerate and respectful.
- Children have a thorough knowledge of the importance of keeping safe. For example, they talk about the need to be careful not to slip if the floor is wet and to take care when passing sharp scissors to each other. They are confident about approaching a member of staff if they have any concerns.
- A very wide range of stimulating activities support quick learning and motivate the children. Children are keen to share their work with others. For example, one child said proudly, 'Look at our writing.'
- Extremely effective use is made of indoors and the outdoor area to extend learning and to provide purposeful activities. For example, children enjoyed using small toys to tell stories about life in the Arctic and shared pebbles between several flowerpots.
- Leaders are very clear about how provision can be developed further and are constantly refining activities so that boys are fully motivated across areas of learning. For example, during the inspection, girls and boys were selecting writing tasks linked to the farm topic with equal enthusiasm.
- Members of staff have very productive relationships with parents and external services, and consequently safeguarding is successful. Parents are involved in helping their children at home, especially with their reading.

School details

Unique reference number	101459
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	10023707

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	418
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Craig Gardner
Headteacher	Colette Doran-Hannon
Telephone number	020 8303 8322
Website	www.stm.bexley.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stm.bexley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 November 2012

Information about this school

- St Thomas More is larger than an average-sized primary school. It has expanded since the last inspection and there are now two classes in all year groups.
- Children in the early years provision are taught in two Reception classes.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher provides valued support for several other schools in the local area and diocese, especially with the development of leadership skills.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its

website.

- The school offers a breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 23 lessons, most jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteachers.
- Discussions were held with leaders, other members of staff, a member of the local authority, a member of the diocese and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors held informal discussions with a several parents and scrutinised 146 responses from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Pupils in Years 2 and 6 were heard reading.
- A range of information supplied by the school was checked, including the school's own information about how well pupils are doing, planning documents and checks on the quality of teaching. The inspectors also looked at the school development plan and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Alison Cartlidge, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Gill Bal	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Bailey	Ofsted Inspector

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