

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Horse Shoes Lane, Sheldon, Birmingham, West Midlands B26 3HU

Inspection dates

7–8 February 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders are not sufficiently focused on improving teaching, learning and assessment to improve outcomes for pupils. They have made slow progress against school improvement priorities. As a result, the school has declined since the last inspection.
- Pupils' progress requires improvement because, while there were improvements in 2017, progress in a range of subjects remains inconsistent, particularly for the most able and for disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders and teachers do not use assessment information effectively. They do not understand the system they have in place well enough. The assessment information itself is unreliable.
- While there is some very good teaching, teachers do not consistently plan work that is closely matched to the abilities of all pupils, especially for the most able.
- Leaders have not used pupil premium funding effectively. Disadvantaged pupils have not achieved as well as they should, and outcomes for these pupils require improvement.
- The curriculum does not currently meet the requirements of the national curriculum. Teachers do not develop pupils' writing skills well in different subjects.
- Senior leaders say there is no bullying, but this contradicts the views of too many pupils and parents and carers. Pupils say that, when bullying occurs, teachers deal with it well.
- Ineffective governance in the recent past has impeded improvements in the school. Newly appointed governors know what needs to improve but have not yet had sufficient time to make an impact.
- Some staff, parents and carers have lost confidence in the leadership of the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Leadership is effective in early years. The provision for children is of a high quality. As a result, children learn well and make good progress.
- Pupils achieve well in phonics. The leadership and teaching of phonics are effective.
- The school's Catholic ethos and values underpin pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The majority of pupils behave well in lessons. They are polite and courteous and demonstrate a positive attitude to their learning.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leadership at senior levels is developed in order to further strengthen the capacity to improve the school rapidly
 - subject leaders develop the skills to monitor and improve provision within their areas of responsibility effectively
 - leaders develop effective systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to gain a more accurate understanding of the school's performance
 - school improvement plans and key priorities are sharply focused, actions are precise and the intended impact is identified to set a clear strategic direction for the school
 - governors further develop their skills in holding leaders to account to secure rapid school improvement
 - assessment systems are securely embedded and understood, so that leaders and teachers make effective use of information about pupils' achievement
 - leaders make effective use of the pupil premium funding by identifying the learning needs of disadvantaged pupils more accurately and ensuring that they are addressed appropriately through teaching and additional support
 - leaders take effective action to restore staff and parents' confidence in their ability to improve the school's performance
 - leaders monitor and respond appropriately to any concerns or incidents of bullying
 - the curriculum fulfils the requirements of the national curriculum.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, especially in key stages 1 and 2, by making sure that all teachers:
 - have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and set tasks and activities, especially for the most able pupils, that are suitably challenging
 - assess accurately what pupils can do and plan work that is matched to their abilities
 - provide pupils with more opportunities to apply their writing skills in different subjects.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Senior leadership is ineffective, because school improvement lacks clear strategic direction. Leaders do not have a sufficiently focused improvement plan. Priorities and actions to improve teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for pupils are not precise. Leaders are beginning to address some priorities, but progress is too slow.
- Some leaders do not take enough responsibility for their areas of accountability to drive school improvement effectively. There is too much focus on what has happened in the past and not what needs to happen now. Teaching is not yet good and improvements, while happening, are not quick enough. Consequently, pupils are not doing as well as they might in all classes.
- Leaders do not monitor and evaluate the impact of their work effectively. Evaluation is infrequent and lacks focus. Leaders do not use the information they gather, especially about teaching, learning and assessment, to identify what needs to improve and to determine whole-school priorities. They do not help teachers to improve their practice. Therefore, teaching is not consistently good.
- Leaders do not routinely log any incidents of bullying and are unable to monitor or evaluate any specific issues.
- Leaders do not have a clear view of the progress and attainment of pupils in the school because they do not have confidence in the accuracy of the assessment information they have gathered. Leaders do not know how to make effective use of the assessment system to track the progress of current pupils. There has been too much focus on outcomes at the end of a key stage and not enough on the progress and attainment of all pupils currently in the school. This means that some pupils who fall behind in their learning are not identified quickly and, therefore, do not achieve as well as they should. However, the work in pupils' books shows that pupils are making steady progress.
- Leaders do not use pupil premium funding well enough to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The outcomes for these pupils require improvement. Leaders do not make precise checks on the progress that disadvantaged pupils are making.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not supported as well as they could be, because leaders have not identified specific strategies to meet their needs. Leaders have identified some barriers to learning but these are too generic and not specific to particular needs. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are not helped to catch up as quickly as they could.
- Leaders use the physical education (PE) and sports premium to employ specialist coaches and deliver lunchtime clubs. Leaders say there is increased participation in more out-of-school sports clubs such as football, cricket and dodgeball, but there is a lack of effective evaluation. Leaders are unclear about whether the funding is improving the opportunities for pupils to develop their sporting skills or their knowledge of keeping healthy.
- The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's parent questionnaire do not express confidence in the school's leaders. They do not believe that their concerns are

listened to by the most senior leaders, particularly in relation to bullying. Almost half of the parents who responded to the parent questionnaire would not recommend the school, and almost two thirds do not believe the school is well led.

- Since the last inspection, leaders have ensured that there are more creative learning opportunities for pupils. The curriculum is enhanced by visits, which pupils enjoy, to places such as Cadbury World and The Sea Life Centre and to Symphony Hall to learn about sound. Pupils in Year 4 learn music through the fife and flute. Pupils take part in extra-curricular activities such as choir, badminton and craft making, but opportunities to take part in a range of activities outside of lessons are limited. In the past, pupils have learned French across the school but currently they do not learn a modern foreign language in key stage 2. Pupils learn about British values and can talk about democracy, tolerance and respect. However, they show less understanding of how laws are made.
- The newly appointed assistant headteachers have begun to have a positive impact on improving teaching and learning and on outcomes for pupils. However, they do not yet have enough well-planned opportunities to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning, share effective practice and drive improvement.
- Leadership in the early years is strong, because the early years leader knows what needs to be done to improve outcomes for children. She takes prompt and effective action to develop the early years provision so that it meets the needs of children well. However, this is not replicated across the school in all aspects of leadership.
- The leadership of special educational needs (SEN) is effective. The special educational needs coordinator supports teachers and teaching assistants well so that they can provide effective support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. She rigorously checks pupils' progress and regularly reviews their targets. She now takes a more measured approach to the identification and assessment of pupils who may have additional needs before placing them on the SEN register. Staff work closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils' needs are accurately identified so they get the right support.
- Pupils' spiritual development is a strength of the school. Pupils know a great deal about their own faith and show an understanding of the school's values. They learn about other faiths and reflect on their experiences such as their visits to other places of worship. Pupils exhibit a clear understanding of right and wrong and have a strong sense of fairness and equality.
- The local authority has recently made more frequent visits to the school to work with senior leaders and staff. The local authority has brokered additional support through a teaching school alliance. Teachers welcome the additional support, as there is now a clear strategic vision and more opportunities for them to develop. The newly appointed assistant headteachers are equally responsive to this support and, although they need more time, they are already making an impact on improving some aspects of the school.

Governance of the school

- Governance had deteriorated due to an ineffective governing body that did not act in the best interests of the school. Following a skills audit and a review of governance,

the school now has a governing body that is fit for purpose. Governors have a greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are increasingly holding leaders to account. These significant but recent changes have ensured that the culture of governance is now more open and transparent. Governors have a far more realistic view of the school. They have not yet had sufficient time to establish themselves and demonstrate an impact on pupils' outcomes but they are well placed to offer the level of support and challenge that the school requires.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's arrangements fulfil statutory requirements. Safeguarding policies and procedures reflect the latest guidance. Staff have received updated training, although some governor training is yet to be completed. Staff understand their responsibilities to protect pupils and know what procedures to follow if they have a concern. They are well trained to spot the risks and take prompt action.
- Appropriate systems are in place for the recruitment of staff, and risk assessments are completed for educational visits. Daily checks take place if pupils do not attend school.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and parents agree, despite some concerns about bullying. The majority of parents who responded to the parent questionnaire said their children were happy, safe and well looked after at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable in key stages 1 and 2. There is some very effective teaching but also teaching that requires improvement. Teachers do not consistently plan work that is closely matched to pupils' abilities. Sometimes, pupils are given work that is too hard for them, or too easy for them. Too often, pupils are given the same work, regardless of their differing learning needs.
- Teachers do not give the most able pupils activities that stretch them enough and, as a result, these pupils do not reach the higher standards of work of which they are capable. Pupils' current work in books also shows that the level of challenge for the most able pupils is not consistently high enough, especially in Years 3 and 5. Pupils have completed some challenging activities in mathematics, but this appears to be a very recent introduction and is not typical of pupils' work.
- On occasions, pupils do not achieve as well as they might because they are unclear about what they are learning and why.
- In the wider curriculum, teachers do not have the same expectations for pupils' writing as they do in English lessons. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to apply their writing skills and to write at length in different subjects.
- Where teaching is effective, teachers plan work that makes pupils think and deepens their understanding. They use effective questioning to move pupils' learning forward. Pupils make good use of the resources that teachers provide for them.
- The quality of teaching in Years 2 and 6 is particularly effective, because teachers have high expectations and strong subject knowledge. Pupils write for a purpose and have

opportunities to develop their understanding through problem-solving in mathematics.

- Phonics is taught well. The most able pupils work at a good pace, and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported with appropriate resources. Teachers build on previous learning and address misconceptions quickly. Work is well matched to pupils' abilities and, as a result, pupils make good progress.
- Pupils say they enjoy reading. Pupils read accurately and make effective use of phonic skills to read unfamiliar words. Pupils who do not read at home have extra support to help them make progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Consequently, these pupils are well engaged in their learning and helped to make good progress towards their targets.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- During the inspection, several pupils and parents raised concerns that bullying is not dealt with effectively by senior leaders. However, pupils also said that when bullying does occur teachers deal with it well. Some parents and pupils also felt that senior leaders were dismissive of their concerns. Consequently, confidence in the school's welfare arrangements has declined.
- In lessons, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They work well together and take a pride in their work. Work is well presented and neatly written. Most pupils say that they enjoy most of their learning.
- There are a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding. For example, pupils can join the 'Catholic Life Group' to explore their faith. The school also has links with a local special school, and pupils work alongside other pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of e-safety. They know not to share personal information. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and can talk to an adult if something is worrying them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- While there are some parental concerns about the school's response to allegations of bullying, all the available inspection evidence indicates that pupils' general conduct is good.
- Pupils are polite, well-mannered and courteous. They treat each other with respect and are kind to one another. Pupils told the inspectors: 'We support the school and each other.'
- At break and lunchtimes, pupils generally play together well. Pupils move around

school calmly and sensibly. The school is orderly, and pupils generally respond quickly to directions from staff.

- In lessons, pupils are attentive and listen to the teachers. Most pupils continue to behave well, even when their work is not particularly inspiring or challenging.
- Attendance has been below the national average but has improved. Leaders continue to work on this area to further improve pupils' attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over time, pupils' progress has not been good. Current progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school is variable. Some pupils are making good or better progress, but other pupils' progress, while not inadequate, requires improvement.
- This is as a result of the inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Evidence in books showed that pupils also make variable progress in different subjects such as science, geography and history, because some teachers have low expectations of what pupils can and should do.
- At the end of each key stage, too few pupils achieve a high standard in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because some teachers do not have a secure understanding of where pupils are in their learning and consequently do not provide work that is sufficiently challenging.
- Most pupils make steady progress but they could do better, especially in Years 3 and 5. This is particularly true for disadvantaged pupils. Work in books shows that disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils in the school but they do not make enough rapid progress to catch up with other pupils nationally.
- In 2017, pupils left key stage 2 having made progress in reading, writing and mathematics which was broadly average. Progress in writing and mathematics was stronger than it had been for the 2016 Year 6 cohort, but progress in reading was weaker. The proportion of Year 6 pupils who attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was below the national average in 2017, and lower than it had been in 2016.
- The proportion of Year 6 pupils achieving a higher standard in English grammar, punctuation and spelling was above national expectations in 2017. This is because teachers place a strong emphasis on this aspect of teaching.
- Although attainment in reading and mathematics was in line with the national average at the end of key stage 1 in 2017, standards have declined since 2015, particularly in writing. The proportions of pupils achieving a greater depth in all subjects was below the national average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who attained the expected standard in each subject was below the proportion of other pupils in the school.
- Pupils achieve above the national average in the Year 1 phonics screening check. This is because phonics teaching is well planned and the subject is well taught.
- Pupils with SEN and/or disabilities make good progress towards their targets because they receive the right support and teachers check and evaluate their progress carefully.

Early years provision

Good

- Outcomes at the end of Reception have continued to improve, and children now achieve a good level of development in line with the national average. Children make good progress, often from low starting points, and some children make rapid progress.
- Adults have a good understanding of each child's development and learning. They assess children's progress accurately and plan appropriate next steps. Teachers identify the needs of children who have SEN and/or disabilities well and use additional support effectively to ensure that children can learn and make good progress from their starting points. Disadvantaged children are equally well supported and make good progress.
- The early years leader ensures that the provision in Reception is well planned to meet the needs of all groups of children. She has accurately identified areas for development and introduced specific language programmes to support communication and the development of vocabulary. Adults take every opportunity to promote language and develop children's early reading and writing skills. In the role-play areas, children are encouraged to write. Staff have provided specific activities that are designed to encourage boys to start writing. Outdoors, for example, children were designing and painting a wallpaper with animals from their winter theme and then labelling them well.
- The learning environment is highly stimulating both indoors and outdoors. The current theme is 'winter'. The environment is rich with learning opportunities through play, child-led activities and adult-led activities. Staff use resources well to motivate and engage children. Children enjoy using the outdoor reading garden, which promotes a love of reading.
- Relationships between children, and between adults and children, are extremely positive. Adults support children well and children respond well to adults. Children learn and play well together. The environment fosters children's own efforts and independence. As a result, they are confident and self-assured.
- Staff invite parents to contribute to their children's work through 'celebration mornings'. Parents who spoke with inspectors said their children have settled quickly, are well supported and have made good progress.

School details

Unique reference number	103441
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10045507

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	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	363
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Keene
Headteacher	Sister Susan Collins
Telephone number	0121 743 3289
Website	www.sttomor.bham.sch.uk
Email address	enquiry@sttomor.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the pupil premium and the PE and sports premium on its website.
- St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is larger than an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at

the end of key stage 2.

- The school is currently receiving support from two other schools through a local teaching school alliance.
- The school is currently in the process of joining a new academy trust but this is yet to be finalised.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes, spoke to pupils and looked at their work. A joint learning walk was carried out with the headteacher.
- Inspectors observed pupils on the playground, in the dining room and during assembly. Inspectors talked to groups of pupils and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the two assistant headteachers and other staff. Discussions were held with the leaders responsible for safeguarding, SEN, English, mathematics, assessment, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors met with governors, a representative from the local authority and a representative from the diocese.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day and took into account the 62 responses to Parent View, including the 50 written comments. The 23 responses to the staff questionnaire and 57 responses to the pupil survey were also considered.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including: the school's own evaluation of its performance; the school improvement plan; information on pupils' progress and attainment; records of behaviour and attendance; monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, including continuing professional development; safeguarding information and minutes of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Sue Cameron, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Appleby	Ofsted Inspector
Dawn White	Ofsted Inspector
Adam Hewett	Her Majesty's Inspector

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

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.

Parent View

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.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

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, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

© Crown copyright 2018