

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Northampton Road, Kettering, Northamptonshire NN15 7JZ

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2018

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors accurately evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development. They take effective action to raise standards.
- Leaders and governors have developed a strong mission statement for the school. They have made sure that it is adopted across the school community.
- Extra funding for disadvantaged pupils and sport is used effectively to raise standards and overcome barriers to progress.
- The trustees and the school's governors are skilled in challenging and supporting leaders.
- Teachers often use what pupils have learned previously to make links between different areas of the curriculum. This strengthens pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers are developing pupils' writing skills increasingly effectively. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Teachers consistently promote equality of opportunity. Pupils feel included in the school community.
- The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils engage in a wide variety of charity work. Staff support pupils to make moral choices.
- Pupils treat each other and staff with respect and consideration. They play and learn with others well. Pupils take part in discussions, volunteer their thoughts and listen to others attentively.
- The attainment and progress of pupils currently in the school are in line with or above the national expectations for their age.
- Children leave the early years well prepared for Year 1. A high proportion of children make rapid progress in English and mathematics and achieve a good level of development.
- The most able pupils are not consistently challenged and provided with work that stretches their understanding.
- Disadvantaged pupils rarely attain the higher standards at the end of key stages.
- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities do not make progress that is as rapid as other pupils in the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Teachers must consistently ensure that there is sufficient challenge for the most able across all key stages and subject areas.
- Teachers must ensure that more disadvantaged pupils achieve the higher standards in key stages 1 and 2 by:
 - consistently providing them with sufficiently challenging tasks
 - rapidly identifying and removing obstacles to progress.
- Leaders and teachers must ensure that pupils with SEN and/or disabilities make sufficient progress by:
 - clearly identifying barriers to progress and ensuring that they are communicated to teachers and teaching assistants
 - providing appropriate and timely support.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors renewed the school's vision and values with staff this year. Parents and carers commented on the recent improvements and increased effectiveness. One said, 'It feels as though there has been a significant strengthening of leadership.' Leaders at all levels set high expectations for themselves, for staff and for pupils.
- Leaders' evaluations of the school's strengths and areas for development are accurate. They challenge and support teachers to improve the effectiveness of their teaching. Leaders have taken steps to raise standards since the beginning of the school year. Their actions have had an increasingly positive impact on pupils' work.
- Regular peer reviews between the trust's member schools have helped the headteacher to establish an accurate evaluation of the school's work. These reviews have further strengthened the leadership of the school.
- Leaders have rapidly developed a climate of trust among staff. Asking for help is not seen as a weakness. One teacher commented, 'If you need help you get it.' The trust provides many opportunities for professional development, including training in the curriculum, leadership and safeguarding. These support teachers well in improving their practice.
- Leaders place a strong emphasis on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the school. Pupils engage in a wide variety of charity work. Teachers and other adults support them to make moral choices through their personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils show a great deal of mutual respect. They experience democracy through voting for representatives from each class to serve on the school council.
- The school's curriculum supports pupils to develop a strong moral sense and understanding of a range of cultures. Pupils develop their social skills and knowledge of British values across the full curriculum, through team and individual sports, science, humanities and arts.
- The school's curriculum is developing, and recent changes to support teaching have led to substantial improvements in outcomes, particularly in writing.
- The pupil premium and primary physical education and sport premium have been spent effectively. Leaders have identified very clearly the specific barriers to learning, the actions that will be taken to overcome the barriers and how leaders will know they have been successful. Leaders evaluate the impact of the extra funding for sport effectively. It has supported increased participation in sport and provided training for staff to run additional breaktime and lunchtime activities.
- The school's equality policy is comprehensive. Leaders have created a very positive culture where diversity is welcomed. Pupils described how they feel valued, no matter what their background, faith or ethnicity.

Governance of the school

- The trustees and governors of the school are skilled in challenging school leaders about the quality of education and the performance of the school. The trust and governing body also hold leaders to account for their financial management of the school. The trust judged that significant changes in leadership and staffing were necessary and reshaped the staffing structure. The trust's pre-emptive actions to minimise the impact of a period of instability were successful.
- The trust's chief executive officer has worked with the headteacher to develop robust performance management procedures, including for the headteacher. The trust's support has helped the school to improve rapidly following the period of instability.
- The governing body supports leaders to prepare for future challenges. For example, it has ensured that leaders thoroughly assess the risks when preparing for changes. Governors bring a very wide set of skills to the service of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding training provided for staff is relevant and up to date. Staff have a secure understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities, including the prevention of radicalisation. Staff know what their statutory duties are and how to carry them out.
- The safeguarding culture of the school is particularly evident in its pastoral care. Leaders have recently strengthened this. The ethos of the school was praised by a parent, who described how staff supported their children when there was a serious illness in the family.
- The designated safeguarding lead is fully aware of the duties of the school in relation to pupils with a child protection plan. Relevant training means that staff are confident in reporting any concerns they may have about a pupil's welfare.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have a broad understanding of subjects across the curriculum. Teachers often use what pupils have learned previously to make links between different areas of the curriculum. As a result, pupils are increasingly confident in their learning and draw on many sources to express their ideas.
- Teachers often create several challenges that vary in difficulty. They direct pupils to the best one for them. In mathematics lessons, for example, teachers frequently set a range of activities aimed at challenging all the pupils in the class. Pupils attempt these targeted activities with enthusiasm.
- Teachers are developing pupils' writing skills increasingly effectively. High expectations and a very structured approach to consolidating skills led to exceptional results at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. Pupils' writing, particularly in Years 5 and 6, is successfully building on the changes the school has adopted over recent years.
- Teachers increasingly provide effective feedback to parents about the progress of their

children. Leaders are successfully tackling the disruption to this process brought about by a high turnover of staff in the last few years.

- Teachers consistently ensure that most pupils consolidate their learning in mathematics by using it in other subjects. Pupils are confident that teachers will help them with areas of mathematics they find difficult. As a result, they readily tackle new problems that deepen their mathematical understanding.
- Many pupils enjoy reading and read with confidence and understanding, using phonics skills to read more complex and unfamiliar words. Pupils like the choice of books that the school provides. Some very able readers, however, are ready to try more challenging books before teachers make them available.
- Teachers consistently promote equality of opportunity. They challenge gender and race stereotypes rigorously. Pupils from many backgrounds confidently described how they feel included in the school community.
- In a minority of lessons, the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. In these situations, these pupils repeatedly show that they have acquired knowledge, but teachers do not provide them with tasks that extend, broaden or deepen their understanding. Pupils do not make sufficient progress in these instances.
- Teachers do not consistently ensure that they identify and remove the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. This means that these pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils consistently treat each other and staff with respect and consideration. They are eager to take part in discussions, volunteer their thoughts and listen to others. As a result, they are open to trying new approaches and exploring new ideas. This increases their confidence as learners.
- Pupils show pride in their work and respond well to the high expectations set by nearly all teachers. Most pupils take great care to present their work well and try their best. Their positive attitudes reflect the views expressed by a very high proportion of parents about the school, its ethos and pupils' learning.
- Pupils are kept safe in the school, physically and emotionally. They are confident that they can keep themselves safe online, are aware of the potential dangers of the internet and know how to respond to them.
- Pupils understand that there are different forms of bullying. They know what to do if they feel they are being bullied. The school has worked hard to create an ethos where bullying is not acceptable. Pupils are confident that bullying is rare and is dealt with successfully when it occurs. This is confirmed by the school's records.
- Pupils play and learn with others cooperatively. Leaders have successfully fostered a very caring community ethos in the school. This is recognised by a very large proportion of the parents. One said about their children, 'They are well cared for, feel

safe and confident. All staff are approachable and have the welfare of my children at heart.'

- The learning barriers for some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are not yet fully addressed. Some are not yet as confident or self-assured as learners as they could be.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct throughout the day is of a very high standard. Many pupils say they enjoy their breaktimes and lunchtimes. They take part in physical activities like football and clapping games, as well as using the time to talk together and explore the environment around them. For example, a group of children continued their study of earthworms onto the playground during a breaktime. School leaders and staff have successfully promoted high standards of conduct for all members of the school community.
- Pupils' learning is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils respond well to tasks and activities that are set at the right level of challenge. There is very little low-level disruption in lessons. There has been one one-day exclusion in the past three years.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average and persistent absence is lower than average. Leaders monitor attendance closely. They get to understand the reasons for absence for every child and take appropriate actions in each case. Pupils and parents value the education that the school provides.
- On occasion, when the learning needs of pupils are not being fully met by the teacher, some pupils exhibit off-task behaviour. This slows their progress.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2017, pupils' attainment and progress at the end of each key stage substantially improved on that of the previous two years. Their overall progress in reading, writing and mathematics was at least in line with the national average at the end of both key stages. The attainment and progress of current pupils is at least in line with the national expectations for their age.
- A high proportion of pupils reach the expected standards in the phonics screening check in Year 1. Improved teaching of phonics has supported this improvement. Pupils' progress in reading and writing is increasingly secure as a result.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress throughout the school, with very few exceptions. They generally have good English language skills when they join the school. Leaders carefully monitor their progress, intervening effectively when they identify barriers to learning. These pupils consistently achieve highly.
- The most able pupils make increasingly strong progress overall, although some inconsistencies remain in the level of challenge they receive in different classes.
- Pupils make strong progress across the curriculum. They take pride in the work they do

across a range of subjects. All pupils take part in broader curriculum experiences, visits and activities that enrich their understanding of the world.

- Pupils are well prepared by the end of each key stage for the next phase of their education.
- Very few disadvantaged pupils achieve, or are on track to achieve, the higher standards at the end of the year or key stage. This is because teachers do not always provide these pupils with sufficient challenge or ensure that the barriers to their achievement are identified and removed.
- Pupils with SEN and/or disabilities do not make consistently strong progress. Their learning is not as secure as that of their peers. Barriers to learning have not been overcome sufficiently well in the past.

Early years provision

Good

- The headteacher and staff from the trust work closely with early years teachers to evaluate the quality of the provision. The trust's priority to moderate assessments across early years settings has supported accurate assessments of children's attainment. Teachers receive well-targeted professional development.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced with spiritual, moral, cultural and social development a high priority. Children have many opportunities to study, play and explore. For example, a member of the school community brought her baby in to meet the children. They asked about the baby's development, which they found very interesting. Children enjoy the outdoor environment. At breaktime, they play well with pupils in key stage 1.
- Links between the staff and parents are strong and include home visits, coffee mornings and meetings about phonics and the curriculum. Families feel confident that they can come in and share any anxieties they have, knowing that these will be dealt with quickly.
- The arrangements for safeguarding children are effective. Adults monitor children effectively, and risk assessments for the outside environment are in place.
- Teachers and teaching assistants support children with SEN and/or disabilities well. Accurate initial assessments mean that teaching assistants are focused and provide strong support. These children make progress in line with their peers.
- Children are motivated and eager to learn. They contribute to discussions and listen carefully and respectfully to their peers. Children respond well to the praise and encouragement they get from all the staff in the early years.
- Children leave the early years well prepared for Year 1. Phonics is taught effectively. Children develop their ability to recognise and make sounds together. A high proportion of children achieve a good level of development and make rapid progress in English and mathematics. Disadvantaged children make progress in line with their peers.
- Challenge for the most able children is improving. However, the transition arrangements for the most able children do not ensure that teaching in Year 1 consistently builds on their early achievements.

School details

Unique reference number	141635
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10041578

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	215
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Rob Hill
Headteacher	Fraser Donald
Telephone number	01536 512112
Website	www.stthomasmorekettering.co.uk/
Email address	stmoffice@st-luke-at.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Thomas More Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy school on 1 March 2015. When its predecessor school, also called St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- The school is part of the St Luke Academies Trust. The board of trustees has overall responsibility for the school and delegates some powers to the local governing body.
- The school is an average-size primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- No pupils attend alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 11 lessons, many of which were visited jointly with a senior leader. During visits to lessons, inspectors sampled pupils' books and talked with pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. Inspectors also made short visits to lessons throughout the school, focusing these on the early years and foundation stage.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils at breaktime, lunchtime and as pupils moved around the school.
- Inspectors held a number of meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of St Luke Academies Trust.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from all year groups in meetings, in lessons and around the school at breaktime and lunchtime.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of the school's documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and its plan for development. They considered data on pupils' attainment and progress, attendance and bullying and looked at behaviour records, safeguarding procedures and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of 62 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and responses from parents to the Ofsted free-text service. The 12 responses to the online questionnaire for staff and the one response to the questionnaire for pupils were also considered.

Inspection team

Clive Worrall, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jay Virk

Ofsted Inspector

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