

Thomas More Catholic School

Russell Hill Road, Purley, Surrey CR8 2XP

Inspection dates

30 April–1 May 2019

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
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have successfully created a positive and aspirational culture that staff and pupils have embraced. The recently appointed headteacher has led this improvement with determination.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to engage pupils in their learning.
- Subject leadership is a strength. Leaders play a full role in securing effective teaching and pupils' good progress.
- Well-identified professional development for staff has resulted in good teaching and good leadership.
- Typically, standards are high. Pupils' progress and attainment, particularly in mathematics and English, by the end of Year 11 are above the national averages. However, disadvantaged pupils do not attain as well as other pupils nationally. This reflects below average progress from their starting points.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from learning in a wide range of subjects. The curriculum for personal development is effectively delivered.
- Careers information and guidance are well developed. Pupils receive timely and impartial advice that guides their next steps successfully. As a result, pupils stay in education, employment or training.
- Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations. They conduct themselves well, and work hard in lessons. An atmosphere of respect and courtesy is evident through the school.
- Pupils are safe in school. Safeguarding is effective. Staff know pupils and their needs. Pupils are well looked after.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. However, some do not attend school as often as they should. This affects their progress.
- The sixth form requires improvement. It has strengths, but outcomes on academic courses are variable. Teaching does not routinely ensure that students, especially the most able, make the progress of which they are capable. Attendance is too low, particularly in Year 13.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve provision in the sixth form by ensuring that:
 - attendance improves rapidly
 - teachers use assessment information to plan work that challenges students to make strong progress, particularly the most able students.

- Build on leaders' current work with disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND so that:
 - these pupils attend school as regularly as other pupils
 - disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Year 11 match those of their non-disadvantaged peers nationally
 - pupils with SEND make strong progress and are helped to catch up with their peers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The recently appointed headteacher, well supported by governors and leaders, has a strong and clear vision for the school. Leaders have a realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They understand the priorities for improvement and have strong capacity to further improve the school.
- Leaders have engendered a strong ethos of high expectations for pupils' behaviour and academic progress. Consequently, the school provides a calm and orderly environment for learning.
- Leaders have established a culture where teachers reflect upon and improve their teaching. Leaders offer support when it is required. Training is well planned and implemented. It supports newly and recently qualified staff and has resulted in stronger teaching from established staff. As a result, senior leaders have ensured that good-quality teaching is the norm in this school.
- The quality of subject leadership across the school is strong. A number of heads of department are relatively new to their posts. They are supported by more experienced senior leaders. Subject leaders have a clear understanding of their department's strengths and areas for improvement. They monitor and evaluate the pupils' progress and take swift action to support any pupils who are falling behind.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum matches the pupils' interests. The school offers a range of GCSE courses, and includes vocational options, such as the BTEC in health and social care. Opportunities for learning and experiences beyond the taught curriculum are many and varied. For example, pupils from Year 9 and Year 10 visit Oxford University to raise their aspirations.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively promoted through the school's values, which are 'to care, to learn, (and) to achieve'. Pupils demonstrate secure understanding of British values, including, for example, mutual respect and individual liberty. They relish opportunities to develop their leadership skills, for example through participation in Combined Cadet Force activities.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is used appropriately. Leaders understand pupils' needs well. Nonetheless, the impact of this funding on pupils' academic progress is not routinely strong over time. Some make very good progress, others less so.
- Actions taken are effective to support those with below average levels of literacy and numeracy to catch up by the end of Year 7.
- Parents and carers who shared their views about the school using Ofsted's online parent survey were generally positive about the school and its work.

Governance of the school

- Governance of the school is effective.
- Governors are kept well informed by senior leaders and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Relationships are positive,

constructive and fully supportive of the actions taken by the headteacher. Governors visit the school regularly to support of the school's development priorities, and to fulfil their responsibilities for pupils' safeguarding.

- Governors hold senior leaders to account for the educational provision and performance of the school and its leaders. They have clear and effective structures in place to support and challenge leaders. Systems are thorough. This means that questions do not go unanswered, and actions are undertaken, as agreed.

Safeguarding

- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Records of who is safe to work with pupils are completed and well maintained. All necessary checks are made when recruiting staff to work with pupils.
- Leaders are aware of the risks which pupils face, including outside school. Staff are trained to identify potential risks to pupils. This includes risks of drug- and gang-related crime, child sexual exploitation, extremism and radicalisation. Staff take the time to know pupils well, and provide for their safety and well-being effectively. They are clear about how to report their concerns, should any arise.
- Senior leaders take appropriate steps when they have concerns about a pupil's welfare. They contact external agencies when required, and follow up their concerns to check that agreed actions have been taken.
- Pupils said they feel safe and trust staff to support them when they need help. Pupils know who to go to if they have a problem. Pupils said that the support they are given is one of the things they most value about their school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders' actions since the last inspection have greatly improved the quality of teaching. As a result, pupils benefit from good teaching across a range of subjects and year groups, including in art, French, English and mathematics. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to engage pupils in challenging and interesting activities. This means that pupils make good progress.
- Leaders are aware that the quality of teaching in geography, history and science is not as routinely strong as it is in other subjects. Senior leaders have strengthened subject leadership to secure more consistency in these areas. An effective professional development programme for teachers means that the quality of teaching in geography, history and science is improving.
- Throughout the school, the environment is conducive to learning. Pupils work hard and respond well to teachers' high expectations of their behaviour and engagement. Consequently, time in lessons is used productively.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' progress is carefully monitored, and appropriate support is put in place to help pupils, where necessary. Consequently, pupils' work has improved.
- Teachers use assessment information about pupils' learning well to set work that matches their needs. As a result, pupils of all abilities learn effectively.

- Teachers are skilled at asking questions to check pupils' understanding. Typically, teachers give effective feedback in lessons and in pupils' books. As a result, pupils know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.
- Additional adults in classrooms provide good-quality support for teachers and pupils. They are active in lessons in ensuring that pupils stay on task. They prompt pupils where needed and know when to step back and let the pupils do the work. This support is particularly effective in helping pupils with SEND to make good progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The atmosphere in the school is harmonious because staff work tirelessly to foster positive relationships with and between pupils. As a result, pupils are safe and well cared for. If bullying does happen, pupils know whom to go to report concerns. They said that leaders sort out any problems swiftly and effectively. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online.
- The pastoral team works effectively to support pupils' welfare. Members communicate well as a team to ensure that pupils are safe and thriving. The team reviews pupils' progress frequently, so that pupils receive timely intervention when needed. Vulnerable pupils are particularly well cared for.
- Pupils are proud of their school and are smart in their appearance. They take pride in their work, and presentation is of a high standard. Pupils show respect to each other and to adults. As one pupil said, 'pupils here are warm-hearted enough to look out for each other'. This chimed with inspectors' views.
- Pupils said that staff are approachable and considerate of pupils' emotional and physical well-being. The support services provided by leaders are wide ranging and meet pupils' needs.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the curriculum. Their learning, including through the Catholic ethos and the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum, explores a range of issues. This helps pupils to develop a mature approach to relationships, responsibilities and to their role in modern Britain.
- A very small number of pupils are educated off-site in alternative provision. Leaders match placements closely to pupils' social, emotional and learning needs. Pupils' behaviour, attendance and progress are monitored closely.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The headteacher and leaders set high expectations. As a result, pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Behaviour is typically calm and considerate, and disruption to learning is rare. When it does occur, it is well managed.
- Pupils are well-mannered, courteous and respectful when speaking to staff and visitors. This contributes strongly to the calm and orderly environment in school.

- Leaders and teachers' high expectations of behaviour have resulted in higher than average levels of exclusions. However, there is a downward trend in the number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions, which reflects improved behaviour.
- Pupils attend school regularly. Nevertheless, despite leaders' efforts, persistence absence for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND remains above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' progress and attainment in 2018, across the curriculum, were in line with the national averages. In English and mathematics, attainment and progress of Year 11 pupils were above the national averages.
- GCSE results in 2018 showed that progress of disadvantaged pupils was below that of other pupils nationally. Evidence from pupils' work and the school's assessment information of current pupils show that disadvantaged pupils make good progress. This is because leaders' use of the additional funding successfully helps these pupils to learn well.
- In 2017 and 2018, pupils' progress in geography was weak. As a result of professional development for teachers, and improved subject leadership, work in pupils' books shows that progress is improving.
- Most-able pupils are given suitable work to challenge them, and they are able to attempt more difficult tasks. For example, in mathematics, pupils wrestle with harder concepts that deepen their understanding. As a result, most-able pupils make good progress.
- Currently, the progress of pupils with SEND is improving, and is closer to average than in the past. Leaders identify the needs of this group of pupils much better than in the past, and there is good support to help them to engage in learning.
- Pupils who need to catch up in English and mathematics make good progress throughout Year 7 as a result of the additional help that they receive.
- Pupils are well prepared for the future. Effective support and guidance help pupils to secure appropriate places for their next steps in education, work or training.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Over the past two years, students' progress in academic courses has been below average. Progress in applied courses has varied from below average, in 2017, to average, in 2018. Current students make better progress than in previous years, in both academic and applied courses.
- The quality of teaching is improving in the sixth form. It requires further improvement to be good. Teaching does not routinely promote good progress, particularly for the most able students.
- Leaders have organised professional development to support teachers in planning work to challenge students effectively, and increase rates of progress. As a result, there are signs of improving challenge for students.

- The provision for students who have not gained suitable English and mathematics qualifications prior to joining the sixth form is not effective. Some students need to resit examinations several times before they complete their sixth-form studies. Not all are successful.
- Students' attendance is poor, particularly in Year 13. This is because leaders do not chase up absences with the rigour that they do in key stages 3 and 4. Students' absence is a major factor in underachievement.
- There is good practice in A-level mathematics, sociology, religious education, biology and physics. Good relationships between students and teachers, detailed subject knowledge and effective questioning stimulate students' learning and progress. In these subjects, teachers enable students to work independently and develop a good range of study skills. Students' work is well organised, complete and contains good-quality written feedback about how to improve their work. Teachers make good use of exemplar materials to model effective planning and writing of assignments.
- Students benefit from a wider curriculum that prepares them well for life beyond school. Work experience is tailored to students' career aspirations. Students are expected and encouraged to play a visible part in the life of the school. For example, they act as student ambassadors and mentors to younger pupils.
- Strong, impartial careers advice helps students to choose appropriate courses for their sixth-form study. As a result, retention in the sixth form has started to improve. There are strong links with universities, employers and apprenticeship providers. Work with high-quality companies supports students and increases their aspirations. In almost all cases, students move on to their choice of higher education, training or employment.

School details

Unique reference number	101821
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	10088874

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	761
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	97
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Mushens
Headteacher	Nathan Walters
Telephone number	020 8668 6251
Website	www.tmore.org.uk/
Email address	schooloffice@tmore.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 December 2016

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2018.
- The designated religious character of the school is Roman Catholic. The school was inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 on 21–22 November 2017.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is below the national

average.

- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils at Sporting Chances, Carshalton, and Saffron Valley Collegiate, KS4 North.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and other members of staff. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work across a broad range of subjects.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils, and spoke to others in lessons and during breaktimes. Inspectors observed pupils' conduct throughout the school day and as they left at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors examined a range of the school's documentation, such as the school's self-evaluation document and development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, assessment information, the pupil premium strategy, attendance, bullying and behaviour records, and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors analysed the 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents (Parent View). They also considered the 27 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Carolyn Dickinson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jenny Gaylor	Ofsted Inspector
Dr Okolo-Angus	Ofsted Inspector
James Whiting	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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