

# Inspection of a good school: St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

Dartmouth Avenue, Coalpool, Walsall, West Midlands WS3 1SP

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Inspection dates:

11–12 December 2019

## **Outcome**

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School is one big happy family where pupils and parents are made to feel welcome. Pupils' eyes light up when they describe their school. They are proud to be part of a school that encourages them to be creative and showcase their talents. Leaders, staff and governors expect pupils to achieve well and to be confident. By the time pupils leave the school, they achieve well, and the standard of their work is high.

Parents find staff approachable. They appreciate the way staff care for their children. All the parents who responded to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents, said they would recommend the school to others.

Pupils behave well. They are polite and respectful. In lessons, pupils listen carefully to adults and each other. Breaktimes are calm. Pupils play together considerately and share playground equipment. Bullying incidents are rare. Staff sort out any problems quickly and effectively.

Pupils of all ages enjoy taking part in art, reading, music and sports clubs after school. Many pupils compete in and win sports competitions. Pupils also enjoy singing and playing musical instruments at local events.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Children in the Nursery and Reception Years benefit from their parents being actively involved in their education. Every spring, parents and their children take part in a reading challenge. Parents and children who read together regularly receive certificates and prizes. Staff have made changes to the way they teach in the early years. This is because in 2019 children did not do as well in reading, writing and mathematics as they did in other areas of learning. Activities are now carefully planned so that children have more opportunities to get better at these aspects. Children in Reception count and group objects, read simple words, and attempt to write labels with confidence.

Pupils of all ages love to read at home and school. In addition to their reading book, pupils like to take home books about themes that interest them. Books about pirates and animals are particularly popular in Year 2. The teaching of phonics is well planned. The youngest children use the sounds they have learned to help them read. Pupils who struggle with reading receive extra help so that they can catch up quickly. Pupils learn to read words and phrases with confidence. However, some pupils do not always understand fully what they are reading.

Leaders and staff make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive the support they need in most subjects. This ensures that pupils with SEND achieve well in many areas of learning by the time they leave the school. Further improvements are required in a few subjects, such as geography. In geography, not all teachers make sure that pupils, and especially pupils with SEND, develop a deep enough understanding of the subject. Pupils in some classes were not able to talk confidently about the places they were studying or had studied.

Teachers plan lessons carefully. They consider what pupils already know and can do. For example, in art pupils learn about the techniques used by different artists and then apply these techniques skilfully to their own work. Similarly, in design and technology pupils learn the skills to make a range of products. Year 1 pupils spoke confidently about how they used levers to make moving story books.

Pupils enjoy mathematics. Teachers carefully plan what they want pupils to learn. They help pupils to link what they already know to new learning. They also give pupils the chance to review previous learning. This helps pupils to learn more and remember more. If pupils are stuck teachers show them different ways of working. They also show them how to use mathematics equipment correctly. In some lessons the most able pupils are not challenged enough to deepen their understanding and they find their work too easy.

Pupils' personal and social development is a notable aspect of the school's work. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Taking part in sporting and musical activities helps pupils learn to work in a team, to be resilient and to believe in themselves. Pupils told me that 'performances and competitions teach us not to be scared and to be confident'.

The headteacher, other leaders, staff and governors work together as a strong team. Staff appreciate how leaders take care of their well-being and are mindful of their workload.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils learn how to keep safe, including when using computers and the internet. They understand the importance of reporting any worries to an adult and of not sharing personal information. Keeping pupils safe is a high priority for all staff. They know the pupils well. Staff take appropriate action in response to any concerns they may have. Leaders work well with external agencies and families to make sure pupils are kept safe from harm. Governors visit the school regularly to check that the arrangements for

keeping pupils safe are up to date.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The way in which phonics is taught helps younger pupils learn to read words and phrases well. Not all pupils understand what these words and phrases mean. This limits pupils' comprehension of the text they are reading. Leaders and teachers should ensure that pupils understand the meaning behind the words they are reading.
- In a few subjects, such as geography, the curriculum is not planned as well as it is in other subjects. The curriculum is not planned in a way that enables teachers consistently consider the needs of pupils when they plan. Consequently, some pupils, including those with SEND, do not learn as much as they should. Leaders and teachers should ensure that the curriculum in all subjects is planned in a way that teachers consider the needs of pupils with SEND when they plan.
- In mathematics most pupils achieve well by the time they leave Year 6. However, in some year groups the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Pupils' work and discussions with pupils confirm that on occasions their work is too easy. Therefore, leaders and teachers should ensure that the most able pupils are challenged sufficiently in mathematics so that they deepen their mathematical understanding.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 23–24 February 2016.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school. If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	104236
<b>Local authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	10111808
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	282
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Michael Quinn
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jean Richmond
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-thomas.walsall.sch.uk">www.st-thomas.walsall.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	23–24 February 2016

## Information about this school

- St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School is federated with St Patrick’s Catholic Primary School in Walsall. Mrs Richmond is the executive headteacher of both schools.

## Information about this inspection

- I met with the headteacher, assistant headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator, the early years leader and subject leaders. I met with the chair of the governing body and one other governor. Discussions were held with teachers and pupils.
- I met with a representative of the local authority and had a telephone conversation with a representative of the Archdiocese of Birmingham.
- I spoke with pupils and staff about behaviour and safety. I also met with two designated safeguarding leads and reviewed documentation.
- I focused on reading, mathematics and geography. I visited lessons, looked at pupils’ work, reviewed planning and talked to staff and leaders about these subjects. I also spoke with pupils about their learning, looked at work and visited lessons from other subjects.
- I took account of 37 responses to Ofsted Parent View and the free-text responses. I

spoke informally with parents at the start of the day.

### **Inspection team**

Usha Devi, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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