

Inspection of a good school: St Thomas More Voluntary Catholic Academy

St Thomas More Road, Hull HU4 7NP

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 February 2022

Outcome

St Thomas More Voluntary Catholic Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Thomas More say they aspire to 'be all you can be!'. They want to achieve and feel that staff help them to reach their goals. Pupils speak highly of the school. There are warm and caring relationships between staff and pupils.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave in the 'St Thomas way'. They enjoy the rewards they receive, such as hot chocolate, when they 'get it right'. Pupils follow the school principles 'safe, respected and learn'. As a result, pupils feel safe in school.

Pupils say there are plenty of opportunities for them to be responsible citizens such as reading ambassadors, school councillors, digital leaders, sports leaders, chaplaincy team leaders and playground monitors. Pupil anti-bullying ambassadors help other pupils to sort out any friendship issues if they need it. Pupils trust staff and know that if they have a problem the staff will listen and help. As a result, pupils say there is no bullying.

Parents appreciate the support that they receive from the school. One parent commented that the school helped their child to be 'happier and calmer' by 'offering help and encouragement' after they struggled with anxiety because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

Leaders have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum that sets out the key knowledge that they want pupils to learn. Subject leaders work with the trust's secondary school to ensure that the curriculum prepares pupils in Year 6 for their next stage of learning. Leaders think carefully about the order in which teachers deliver the knowledge. For example, in mathematics, pupils learn about perimeter before area. However, the early years curriculum does not set out the precise knowledge children need to learn in the wider curriculum areas to prepare them for Year 1.

Throughout the curriculum, teachers revisit previous learning through 'flashbacks'. Teachers have an accurate view of what pupils know and revisit learning when pupils

struggle to remember. For example, in history, pupils in Year 6 can explain what they learned last year about the Greek empire. They can describe the differences between the Greek and Roman empires and compare this to their current learning about how civilisations have evolved over time from the stone age. Younger pupils remember that the Great Fire of London started in 1666 on Pudding Lane and why this happened.

Leaders quickly identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and ensure that they receive effective support to access the curriculum.

Pupils love to read. Their excitement to know what happens next in a book that teachers read to them is infectious. Leaders spark children's passion for reading from the early years through 'hooks'. For example, children enjoy visits from live owls to introduce the book 'The Owl Babies'. Children in Reception learn to read as soon as they start school. Staff quickly identify pupils who are not keeping up. However, some staff do not have the knowledge to deliver effective support to these pupils. As a result, pupils who struggle with reading do not catch up quickly enough.

Leaders in the early years have identified the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's personal, social and emotional development. They have adapted the curriculum to limit these effects. Leaders ensure children access support to develop their communication and increase their vocabulary.

Pupils enjoy their 'wholeness' lessons that support their personal development well. They enjoy learning about friendships and how to keep themselves healthy. They know about other faiths and cultures but do not understand what fundamental British values are. Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities that the school provides, such as arts and crafts club, choir and curiosity club. They are happy that these clubs are resuming. Leaders have been creative in adapting their normal practice during the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders plan full days of learning a particular skill, such as 'sketching days' with a local artist, to provide experiences that pupils have missed.

Leaders, including trust leaders, know the school well. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Trust leaders support staff to improve their expertise. Staff say this develops their confidence and knowledge in different curriculum areas. Staff feel supported to take risks and try new things while being able to ask for assistance if they need it. As a result, teachers are knowledgeable and deliver the curriculum well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff receive regular safeguarding training so that they are up to date and knowledgeable. Staff know what the local safeguarding risks are and the potential risks to pupils. They know how to respond, record and report any incidents.

The 'wholeness' curriculum teaches pupils how to stay safe. Leaders invite visitors to talk to pupils, for example about the importance of telling parents where they are going. More

recently, leaders have invited visitors to talk to pupils about 'respectful relationships' and staying safe. As a result, pupils can describe how they stay safe in a variety of situations.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders plan a broad and balanced 'wholeness' curriculum to develop pupils as responsible and active citizens. However, leaders have not thought carefully enough about what pupils should learn about British values. As a result, pupils are unsure about democracy and the rule of law. Leaders should revise the curriculum content to ensure that teachers know exactly what knowledge pupils must learn in relation to British values and becoming good citizens.
- Leaders have identified and sequenced the most important knowledge that they want pupils to remember in the foundation subjects from Year 1 to Year 6. However, they have not identified the most important knowledge children need to learn in the early years so that they are ready to learn foundation subjects in Year 1. Leaders should ensure that they identify and sequence the precise knowledge that they want children to remember in the early years so that children are well prepared for their next stage of learning in Year 1.
- Some pupils who find learning to read difficult do not always receive the appropriate support to help them to catch up quickly. This hampers their ability to read with fluency and confidence. Leaders should ensure that staff receive the appropriate training in phonics so that they are able to support pupils who struggle to read effectively. This will ensure that pupils develop quickly as fluent, confident readers.

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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Thomas More RC Primary, to be good in June 2015.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View

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 are the school and you are 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

Unique reference number	144101
Local authority	Kingston Upon Hull City Council
Inspection number	10212091
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	185
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Fearnley
Headteacher	Gary Shaw
Website	www.stmhull.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school became an academy in October 2017. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed from within the school. The school currently has an acting assistant headteacher.
- As the school is designated as having a religious character, it is inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, most recently in May 2019.
- The school has a Nursery class.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with representatives from the trust, including the chief executive officer, the director of school improvement and the director of teaching and learning.

- The inspector spoke with a representative from the Diocese.
- The inspector met with the leaders in the school, including the executive headteacher and headteacher.
- The inspector met with groups of pupils, spoke with pupils during breaktimes and lunchtimes and considered pupils' responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. This included meeting with subject leaders, visiting lessons and speaking with teachers. The inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult, considered curriculum plans and scrutinised samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector spoke with parents at the end of the school day. The inspector considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. She also took into consideration the responses to the staff survey.
- The inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the actions taken to keep children safe. She reviewed a range of documents, including the school's single central record.

Inspection team

Jenny Thomas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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