

Inspection of Saint Thomas More Language College

Cadogan Street, London SW3 2QS

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 May 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Outstanding
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This school was last inspected nine years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils typically described the school as a 'close community'. They are happy and safe and value the friendships they form over time. Parents and carers generally made a point of expressing their appreciation for the support that leaders provided their children when they joined the school in Year 7.

Leaders have high expectations of all pupils. The curriculum is built around the school's motto 'Serving God, Striving for Excellence'. Leaders aim to encourage all pupils to try their best. Pupils behave well and any low-level disruption, should it occur, is not tolerated by staff. Staff work with pupils to resolve any problems, including bullying issues, and provide support.

Leaders organise a range of extra-curricular clubs, including debating and gardening clubs, to enrich pupils' opportunities beyond the curriculum. Pupils also have access to a number of extra-curricular sporting clubs. Leaders are promoting these clubs to increase pupils' uptake. Educational visits, linked to the curriculum, help to develop pupils' curriculum knowledge further. For instance, theatre outings extend pupils' understanding of the dramatic texts they study in English.

Leaders and pupils work together to create a safe space for pupils to express their views, for example through the College Council and the 'Committee for Change'. The groups discuss contemporary issues and present their ideas to leaders.

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

Leaders ensure that pupils study a broad curriculum throughout their time at school. Pupils in Year 7 experience studying French and Spanish before choosing the language that they will continue to study for GCSE.

Leaders ensure that the majority of subjects are coherently sequenced so that pupils build up their knowledge and skills over time. For instance, in art and design, pupils start by learning about techniques linked to tone and colour. They apply this knowledge in making their own drawings. Leaders check that pupils have the chance to revisit significant concepts, such as imagery in English. Through studying a range of diverse literature, pupils develop a deeper understanding of imagery and writers' intentions. However, this clear thinking is not as established in all subjects across the curriculum. Where leaders have not considered the important knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember over time, pupils' progression is hampered.

Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. They ensure that pupils recap important terminology and subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils use subject-specific language confidently. Leaders promote structured opportunities for pupils to talk and discuss their learning in class which promotes pupils' oracy. This is an ongoing priority following the COVID-19 pandemic. Pupils achieve well.

Generally, teachers use formal assessment to check what pupils have learned and remembered from the curriculum. However, occasionally, teachers do not check as systematically what pupils understand. When this happens, teachers do not have a full picture of what pupils know and where there may be gaps or misunderstandings before they move on to teach new content.

Pupils behave well. They are largely respectful to their peers and other adults. They listen carefully in lessons and act considerately towards others. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported in lessons. Teachers and other adults make appropriate adaptations so that they can access the curriculum.

Through the school's structured reading programme, pupils are encouraged to read widely and often. Weaker readers have time to practise reading in order to develop fluency. Leaders are working on further strengthening this process to help weaker readers catch up quickly.

Leaders arrange formal opportunities for pupils to champion ideas and express their own individual opinions. For instance, pupils recently presented their views on changes to the school's uniform policy to governors. Pupils are taught about other cultures that are different to their own through a number of events linked to the study of modern foreign languages, including 'teach a friend a language', an international evening and cooking. Pupils engage with democratic processes by electing members to the College Council. They receive helpful careers education, information and guidance to inform their next steps.

Leaders and governors engage well with staff. Staff feel supported. They expressed appreciation for the opportunities that leaders provide systematically for their professional development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that all staff receive up-to-date safeguarding training. All staff understand the steps to follow should they need to make any safeguarding referral. Leaders work carefully with external agencies to help and manage the needs of any potentially vulnerable pupils.

Leaders understand the school's potential contextual risks. They take steps to encourage pupils to keep themselves safe, including online and when using public transport. Leaders work with external authorities, such as the police force, to help to deliver messages to pupils about managing personal safety.

Through the curriculum, leaders teach pupils the importance of heeding safeguarding advice and guidance. These include the importance of giving consent and managing healthy relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A very few curriculum subjects are not planned coherently and securely. This means that it is difficult for pupils to build and expand their knowledge and skills in these subject areas over time. Leaders should make sure that the curriculum in all subjects is carefully designed and delivered coherently so pupils develop and deepen their knowledge over time.
- Sometimes, teachers do not use appropriate strategies to check pupils' understanding of key content systematically in the classroom. As a result, in these circumstances, teachers do not have an accurate picture of what pupils know and remember from previous curriculum learning before introducing new content. Leaders must ensure that all staff use a range of purposeful assessment strategies to check the key knowledge that pupils remember, and identify and address any gaps, before moving forward in their teaching.

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	100502
Local authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	10206289
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	641
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Pierre Lecat
Headteacher	Trevor Papworth
Website	www.stmlc.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	10 and 11 October 2013

Information about this school

- The school is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic school within the Archdiocese of Westminster. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in 2018.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the associate headteacher, other senior leaders, a representative of the local authority and members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.

- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, art and design and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects and visited a sample of lessons in other subject areas.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' priorities for school improvement.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at the start of the day and lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at the effectiveness of the school's work on safeguarding by reviewing the record of pre-employment checks for staff, speaking to staff, governors and pupils and meeting with the safeguarding team.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including the free-text comments, as well as responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Lucy Bruce, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Daniel Burton	Ofsted Inspector
Annabel Davies	Her Majesty's Inspector
Umbar Sharif	Ofsted Inspector

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