

# Inspection of St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School

North Street, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 7DG

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Inspection dates: 15 to 16 November 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

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

The school's motto, 'Making the heart, mind and spirit soar', permeates daily routines. Attendance is excellent because pupils and children in the early years thoroughly enjoy coming to school. From the moment they start, they are surrounded by care, kindness and encouragement to aspire. As a result, they are safe, happy and confident.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. High standards are set from the early years. Even the youngest children are quickly introduced to the concept of respect for others. Pupils are kind to one another. In this very diverse school, they enjoy learning about each other's cultures and traditions. They are aware of their differences and share them with confidence. As a result, bullying is very rare.

Leaders and teachers want the very best for their pupils. They set high expectations and do everything possible to make sure that all pupils do the very best that they can. Pupils work hard. They enjoy their successes and the many rewards they can earn. They express great appreciation for the exceptionally wide range of opportunities provided to broaden their experience and understanding of the world around them. There are many leadership roles that pupils can achieve, and they aspire to do so.

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

Leaders and teachers have high ambition for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders invest a great deal of time and effort to identify the potential needs of children before they start in the early years. As a result, support is in place at the earliest possible opportunity.

Leaders have made sure that the curriculum is carefully designed and sequenced from early years through to Year 6. The key building blocks of knowledge are identified in each subject. The sequence of learning helps all pupils to work towards the planned end points. Leaders are committed to ensuring that pupils with SEND follow the same curriculum and have the same opportunities as all others.

Following a review of the curriculum, some subject curriculums have only been implemented this term, following redevelopment. In these cases, although the sequence of learning is clear, the small steps towards building skills and knowledge are not as well defined.

All teachers have good subject knowledge. They present new learning clearly. They are usually well supported by high-quality resources. However, occasionally, teachers do not know enough about what pupils have learned in previous years. This means that sometimes pupils do not learn as well as they could.

Leaders have established effective assessment routines. Teachers check that children have understood and remembered what they have learned in every lesson. Regular formal assessment identifies any pupil who may be falling behind and the additional support they may need.

Leaders strive to make sure that every child learns to read. Teachers introduce early reading behaviours, including listening to environmental sounds, as soon as children join the nursery. Phonics is taught from the beginning of Reception class. Routines are well established. Teachers and teaching assistants use them skilfully. Pupils who need additional help are identified and support is put in place quickly. Pupils enjoy learning to read and achieve well.

Reading is a high priority in this school. Classroom displays and book areas celebrate the stories, poems, rhymes and non-fiction books that pupils read. Rewards for reading at home are greatly prized. Older pupils are proud to be reading buddies to help the younger pupils. Reading is a popular choice of pastime. All pupils say that they love their daily story time.

School leaders are proud of their inclusive school. They strive to ensure that pupils know what it means to be inclusive both through the taught curriculum and the impressive range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils talk with understanding about being respectful of others and their life choices. The school abounds with displays that celebrate the opportunities offered to all pupils to develop their character, resilience and aspirations. Every class has their 'extraordinary experiences' to be completed throughout the year. Pupils can choose from a vast array of clubs and take opportunities to learn many different musical instruments. Visits and visitors are carefully planned to introduce pupils to experiences and concepts that prepare them to be responsible and respectful adults of the future.

Staff are proud to work at this school. They say that leaders listen to their concerns and take their well-being and workload into account. Parents too, are universally positive about the school and its staff.

The multi-academy company (MAC) has ensured that it is well versed in all aspects of the school's work. Together with the local governing body, the MAC provides effective support and ensures that all statutory duties are met.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is central to the school's work. Leaders know the children and families very well. They have secured an array of additional support options to supplement those available through working with external partners. Consequently, help is always at hand.

Leaders have ensured that all staff and governors receive appropriate training. All staff know when to raise a concern and how to record this. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online.

Leaders have received training in safer recruitment and make sure that all appropriate checks are completed and recorded.

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

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

- Some areas of the curriculum are at an early stage of redevelopment. Not all components of learning are clearly defined. Leaders should review and embed the new curriculums to ensure that the planned sequence of learning has the expected impact.
- Occasionally, teachers do not have a secure enough understanding of what pupils have already learned in a subject and what they will need to learn in the future. Where this is the case, pupils do not learn as much as they could. Leaders should make sure that teachers have the time and opportunity to familiarise themselves with the sequence of learning across subjects, particularly where there have been significant changes.

## **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.

## **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>	140805
<b>Local authority</b>	Stoke-on-Trent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10242359
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	238
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Gillian Regan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Shenade Moorhouse
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-thomasaquinas.stoke.sch.uk">www.st-thomasaquinas.stoke.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy in April 2014. When its predecessor school, St Thomas Aquinas Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School is a converter academy within Christ the King Catholic Collegiate.
- The school's last section 48 inspection was in July 2019. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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 assistant headteacher, curriculum leaders, the chair of the local governing committee and other governors, the chief executive officer of the trust, the chair of the board of trustees, teachers, parents and pupils.
- Deep dives in reading, mathematics, modern foreign languages and history were carried out. These included discussions with subject leaders and teachers, visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects. The lead inspector also listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the personal, social and health education curriculum and about relationships education.
- An inspector spoke to leaders about the wider development of pupils and the reasons for their review of aspects of the curriculum.
- A range of documents were reviewed, including leaders' plans to improve the school, their self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness, curriculum plans, minutes of governors' meetings and the school's website. The trust's scheme of delegation was reviewed as part of a scrutiny of the school's website.
- Inspectors also reviewed and discussed records of attendance and behaviour logs.
- As part of the inspection of safeguarding, inspectors considered the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe, the checks made to ensure safer recruitment and staff training.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning and end of the first day of inspection. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments, and responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Mel Ford, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Stephanie Peters

Ofsted Inspector

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