

Inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Voluntary Academy

Newstead Road, Leicester, Leicestershire LE2 3TA

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 November 2022

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

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Thomas More Catholic Voluntary Academy as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, 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 of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. They learn to be resilient and take challenges in their stride. Leaders have high expectations of all pupils, in particular those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and the most disadvantaged. All pupils have opportunities to experience a wide range of activities and clubs, such as netball, choir and chess. There is a strong sense of teamwork in the school. One parent said, 'This is more than a school; it is a community.'

Leaders ensure pupils are ready for their next stage of life. Regular, planned visits from professionals provide pupils with an insight into future routes into employment. Pupils actively raise money for national charities. There are opportunities for them to have responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council or chaplaincy team. They learn how to be responsible citizens and to care for others. Pupils learn how to keep themselves well, both physically and mentally.

Pupils behave well. The recently introduced behaviour policy supports pupils to learn how to take responsibility for their actions. The school mission statement, 'To love one another as I have loved you', and gospel values of respect, honesty and truth are evident throughout the school. Pupils say bullying is rare because teachers and adults stop it happening. They feel safe.

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

Pupils learn to read quickly. Staff are experts at teaching early reading and phonics. They identify when pupils fall behind and provide the right support for them to catch up quickly. Books match the reading needs of individual pupils. All staff are keen to promote reading, and ensure pupils develop a passion for it. Pupils particularly enjoy listening to their teachers read stories and bring them to life. Pupils enjoy the raffle ticket rewards for reading frequently. There are a wide range of books that pupils have access to. These are planned to match the curriculum. Pupils make good use of the library in school.

Leaders have introduced an ambitious curriculum. All subjects are well sequenced and planned. However, in a small number of subjects, leaders have not checked that these plans are being implemented consistently well. Leaders identify the most important knowledge. This enables teachers to recognise when pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Teachers check this regularly and adapt teaching to meet pupils' needs. Well-chosen resources support learning. Engaging events, such as Greek and World War Two days, develop pupils' interests and motivate them. In some subjects, some staff lack subject-specific knowledge, which can impede learning.

Children in the early years foundation stage (EYFS) get off to a good start. They quickly settle into routines because teachers have high expectations of them. Adults know children well. Key knowledge is taught in small pieces so adults can check children's learning and provide additional support where necessary. Well-planned

activities enable children to develop independence. Skilful questioning by adults guides children's learning.

Pupils with SEND are well supported. Leaders are ambitious for them to participate fully in school life and to achieve well. Staff are well trained and know how best to cater for their individual needs. Detailed pupil plans provide teachers with the necessary guidance to support individuals with SEND. Leaders ensure these pupils get the right support from external agencies.

Pupils behave well in and around school. They get on well with each other and are respectful. Pupils learn to regulate their own behaviour. The behaviour system encourages them to make the right choices and 'shine'. Classrooms and corridors are calm spaces. One pupil said: 'Everyone here is really friendly. Our teachers have high expectations of us so we want to behave well.' Because pupils enjoy school, and behave well, they attend regularly. There are effective systems in place to follow up if pupils are absent from school.

Pupils have many opportunities to develop beyond the academic curriculum. A parent said: 'St Thomas More CVA is a wonderful school that develops not only academic achievement but good character traits of pupils too.' Pupils learn about different religions and cultures. They learn to respect and value difference. There are a broad range of clubs for pupils to attend so they gain a variety of experiences. They have opportunities to perform in bands and in front of different audiences in the choir. Partnerships have developed with other schools to broaden horizons.

The school is well led. Governors have a clear understanding of their role and work closely with the trustees. Staff feel supported and leaders are considerate of workload. When needed, the trust has provided timely and appropriate support. Parents say leaders communicate effectively with them. One said: 'The school is a welcoming and inclusive place, and the staff are approachable, helpful and compassionate.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are sharply focused on keeping pupils safe. They ensure staff have the necessary training to spot any sign of risk or abuse. Leaders make regular checks on what staff know and remember about safeguarding through mini quizzes. Effective systems support the record-keeping and monitoring of any concerns raised. Leaders are quick to seek support externally if it is necessary. Regular checks ensure only appropriate adults work in the school.

Pupils feel safe. They learn how to keep themselves safe online. They know they all have a trusted adult they can talk to.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- All subjects are well sequenced and planned. However, in a small number of subjects, leaders have not checked that these plans are being implemented consistently well. Some pupils are not learning the intended knowledge in some subjects. Senior leaders should make sure that subject leaders have time to do this work to ensure the intended curriculum is being delivered effectively in all subjects.
- In some subjects, some staff lack subject disciplinary knowledge. As a consequence, not all pupils are clear on the purpose of some activities in lessons. In these subjects, subject leaders need to ensure that gaps in teachers' subject knowledge are identified and that the necessary training is provided.

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

| | |
|--|--|
| Unique reference number | 138185 |
| Local authority | Leicester |
| Inspection number | 10229035 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 280 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Sarah Noon |
| Headteacher | Charlotte Crosse |
| Website | www.st-thomasmore.leicester.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Catholic Diocese of Nottingham. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school, which is an inspection of the school's religious character, took place on 18 November 2019.
- The school is part of the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, which it joined in September 2018.
- When the predecessor school, St. Thomas More Catholic Voluntary Academy, was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2008, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school uses no alternative providers.

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 held meetings with the senior leaders, including the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, curriculum leaders and the EYFS leader.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in five subjects: reading, mathematics, science, art and geography. To do this, they met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and met with teachers and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body and trustees. He also met with representatives of the multi-academy trust.
- The inspectors took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, the pupil survey and the staff survey, along with written comments from parents. Inspectors spoke informally to parents outside the school.
- Attendance, behaviour logs and safeguarding records were scrutinised. This included the school's single central record. Inspectors also conducted meetings with leaders to discuss the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors considered pupils' behaviour at various times of day, including in lessons, around the school site and at lunchtime.

Inspection team

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Mark Anderson, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Peter Johnston | Ofsted Inspector |
| John Craig | Ofsted Inspector |

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022