

Inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive School

Footscray Road, Eltham, London SE9 2SU

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive School 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?

St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive school is a loving community which is welcoming, safe, forgiving and positive. Pupils deeply respect each other and all the staff. They relish learning and love coming to school. They are happy and safe. Bullying is extremely rare and never tolerated.

Pupils work hard to meet leaders' high expectations and achieve highly. Their behaviour in lessons as well as at social times is exemplary.

Pupils feel valued as individuals and are proud of the school's diversity. They enjoy the wealth of academic, social, creative and spiritual experiences the school provides. Pupils join in a plethora of extra-curricular activities after school and at lunchtime.

Pupils have a real voice in the school and feel that staff listen to them. Through seven different leadership committees, pupils have a say about important issues such as mental health, the environment and how the school promotes equality. All pupils are encouraged to make a positive contribution to the wider society. For example, pupils initiate various charitable activities to promote well-being.

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

Leaders are ambitious and expect all pupils to achieve well in a wide range of subjects. Leaders have revised and refined the curriculum plans in most subjects. In music, science and modern foreign languages, for example, they have thought carefully about how pupils can deepen their knowledge over time, building on strong foundations. However, in Years 7 and 8, pupils do not have the opportunity to study some subjects in depth. For example, in history, pupils do not have the chance to learn in much detail about 20th century history. Where this is the case, it affects some pupils' ability to develop secure and deep knowledge. Furthermore, leaders intend for pupils to study computing within the other subjects. But this is not coherently planned.

Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to present information clearly to pupils. In most lessons, they use assessment well to find out what pupils know and to identify gaps in their learning. In science, for example, teachers provide a range of opportunities for pupils to recall what they have learned previously. This works particularly well for enquiry-based learning. In history, teachers give pupils time to read, review and improve their work before moving on to learning new things. In most subjects, pupils achieve well and take pride in their work. Occasionally, teachers' expectations of pupils' learning are inconsistent. Sometimes, the use of assessment to check what pupils know and remember is not as effective as it could be. This affects pupils' learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. These pupils achieve highly.

Staff make the most of all opportunities to promote reading. Pupils demonstrate enthusiasm for reading. Leaders make sure that pupils who are learning to read or those who need to catch up are given extra help, including well-planned phonics sessions.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Their attendance is high and they are punctual to lessons. They are keen to learn, and they focus diligently on their work. They listen respectfully to one another and support each other's learning.

The school prepares pupils well for the next stages of their lives and learning. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development shines through in the pupils' kindness. In age-appropriate ways, pupils are taught about how to keep safe and about health and relationships. Pupils get to choose from a high number of enrichment activities. These include sports clubs, choir, cross-stitch, board games, investment, table tennis, craft club, book club and mindfulness colouring. Leaders monitor closely pupils' participation in the school's extra-curricular offer. They make sure that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND always benefit from these activities. All pupils in Year 9 participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The careers programme is comprehensive and meets all requirements.

Leaders work hard to promote their inclusive, ambitious vision. They make sure that communication with parents and carers, staff and governors is consistent and helpful. Staff, including those who are new to their careers, feel well supported and say that leaders are sensitive to their workload and well-being. Governors keep abreast of these issues and hold leaders to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding based on the idea that 'it could happen here'. Leaders promote a sense of professional curiosity about pupils' safety and well-being. Staff are vigilant about identifying pupils who might be vulnerable or at risk. Leaders take appropriate action to keep pupils safe. They work well with a range of external agencies to reinforce this. The personal development programme promotes independence and resilience and encourages pupils to take responsibility. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils do not study some subjects in key stage 3 in as much depth as other subjects. This affects how well pupils learn in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that pupils have the opportunity to study all subjects in depth across key stage 3.

- In most subjects, teachers' expectations are high, and pupils achieve well. However, sometimes, teachers' use of assessment and their expectations of pupils' learning are inconsistent. Where this is the case, it leads to some pupils having gaps in their learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers' expectations are consistently high.

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	141716
Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	10242503
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	639
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Evelyn Holdsworth
Headteacher	Stuart Sharp
Website	www.stmcomprehensive.org
Dates of previous inspection	20 and 21 May 2014, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school has a Roman Catholic religious character. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in March 2019.
- The school's provision for careers advice and guidance meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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.
- The inspection team conducted deep dives in English, history, geography, modern foreign languages, science and music. To do this, they discussed the curriculum

with leaders, visited lessons, met with groups of pupils and scrutinised samples of pupils' work.

- The inspection team held meetings with senior leaders. Meetings were also held with members of the governing body, teachers, support staff and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the 63 responses to Ofsted Parent View. They reviewed the 35 replies to the staff survey and the 562 replies to the online pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered a variety of documentation provided by leaders. These included the following: external reviews of the school's work; leaders' self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; minutes of governing body meetings; attendance and behaviour information; school policies; the single central record of pre-employment checks; and information relating to the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Anne Hudson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Vikram Gukhool	Ofsted Inspector
John Blaney	Ofsted Inspector
Olly Wimborne	His Majesty's Inspector

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