

# Inspection of an outstanding school: St Thomas' Catholic Primary School

Parklands Road, Tean, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST10 4DS

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Inspection dates:

8 and 9 February 2023

## Outcome

St Thomas' Catholic Primary School continues to be an outstanding school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have high expectations of themselves at St Thomas' Catholic Primary School. Pupils are set personal challenges. They want to be good citizens and help others. They want to do well in their learning, and enjoy coming to school. Leaders successfully establish high standards for pupils' personal achievements.

Pupils know the Catholic teachings that underpin the school. Leaders help pupils to reflect on these teachings. Pupils have weekly responsibilities to demonstrate them. Pupils show kindness and help others in the community as a result. They are proud of their achievements. They strive to be positive role models.

Behaviour is exemplary. Staff model high expectations. Pupils are polite and courteous as a result. They open doors for others. They remind each other about the school's behaviour rules. For example, prefects remind pupils to walk quietly to lessons. Pupils take pride in their school uniform. They are confident that bullying and unkind behaviour are not tolerated by staff.

Pupils' mental health is a high priority. Pupils learn about how to have good mental health. They create videos about being 'kind to your mind'. The videos are played at local public spaces. This helps people in the local community. Leaders have set up a lunchtime well-being club. Pupils visit and speak to well trained staff.

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

Leaders have put in place a well-designed and ambitious curriculum. They have thought carefully about what knowledge they want pupils to learn and in what order. This includes in the early years. Knowledge builds logically on prior learning. Leaders have identified the specific vocabulary they want pupils to know and remember in each subject.

Reading is prioritised, from early years to Year 6. Staff across the school are well trained to deliver the phonics programme. Staff teach with accuracy. Pupils are taught in small

groups. Activities are well matched to support pupils, who learn to blend new sounds quickly. Pupils read daily, either to each other, independently or to an adult. Pupils choose from a wide range of books and authors. Pupils who need extra help in reading quickly catch up with their peers. Pupils have opportunities to win books as prizes. Pupils are excited and motivated by this.

Leaders have designed an effective teaching model, based on research. Teachers receive many high-quality training opportunities. They teach each curriculum subject with expertise. The curriculum is implemented consistently. Teachers recap prior learning and check that pupils learn and remember key knowledge. As a result, teachers know accurately how well pupils are doing. New learning and key vocabulary are clear in each lesson. Pupils discuss their learning using subject-specific vocabulary. Behaviour in lessons is exemplary.

Pupils' work across the curriculum is of a high quality. Staff have high expectations for handwriting and presentation of books. Across subjects, pupils have many opportunities to write. They discuss their work with confidence. For example, in history, pupils give reasons why the Battle of Marathon was won by the Athenians. In science, pupils know the process for effective scientific investigations. For example, pupils know about prediction, fair testing, evaluating results and the importance of accuracy.

Leaders have effective systems in place to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They understand how some pupils need extra help with their work and may not have SEND. Leaders work with specialist external agencies to support them. Pupils receive specialist help quickly, some even before they have started at the school.

Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils. Each class is responsible for a charity and raises money to support it. Pupils also visit local businesses. For example, they learn how to make different flavoured milkshakes and serve customers at a local coffee shop. Pupils go to different places of worship and learn about religions different to their own. Leaders listen to and act on pupils' views, such as requests for additional dance and drama clubs. Opportunities at playtime are exceptional. Older pupils play with younger pupils. Pupils are trained to safely carry equipment such as tyres, wooden crates and tarpaulin sheets. They build imaginary shops, theatres and gardens, using the equipment. Pupils' play skills and interactions have improved as a result.

Staff's well-being and workload are taken seriously by leaders and those responsible for governance. Staff feel valued and well supported in their professional development. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer, during and after school. This includes sports, science, history and charity-focused work.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and those responsible for governance make sure pupils' safety is a priority. Staff are vigilant. They receive regular and up-to date training. Staff know how to quickly identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. They record and raise concerns promptly. Leaders act on these concerns swiftly. Leaders work with external agencies to put early help in place for families. Pre-employment checks on new staff are rigorous.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe when online. They can name adults in school whom they can trust and share their worries with. Pupils know the importance of speaking to an adult if they are concerned about the safety of others.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in June 2016.

## 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>	138726
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10229071
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	207
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Matthew Burrows
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Baxter
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-thomas-tean.staffs.sch.uk">www.st-thomas-tean.staffs.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	21 and 22 June 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- A new headteacher and chair of governors have been appointed since the last inspection.
- St Thomas' Catholic Primary School is one of 15 schools in the Painsley Catholic Academy multi-academy company.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school has a breakfast club on site. This is operated by the school.
- A section 48 of the Education Act 2005 inspection by the Archdiocese of Birmingham took place on 23 and 24 November 2016.

## 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 their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, the chief executive officer (CEO) and the vice CEO. She met the chair of governors and the chair and vice-chair of the board of directors.
- A telephone call took place with a representative from the diocese.
- The inspector held meetings with a range of leaders to discuss safeguarding, early years and provision for pupils with SEND.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, science and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also looked at additional subjects, including mathematics, English and art.
- The inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector spoke to groups of pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school.
- Safeguarding documents were reviewed, including the checks that leaders make on staff's suitability to work with children. The inspector examined how staff implement safeguarding policies and procedures effectively across the school.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, and the free-text responses received during the inspection.
- The inspector reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, academy improvement priorities, school policies, curriculum documents, SEND records and minutes of meetings and visits held by governors.

## **Inspection team**

Anna Vrahimi, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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