

Inspection of St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

High Street, Puckeridge, Ware, Hertfordshire SG11 1RZ

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 February 2023

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

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary 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?

Pupils enjoy being part of this close-knit school community. They are proud of their school. Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning and towards each other. When they join in Reception, children quickly learn, and live up to, the school's values. Older pupils look out for younger children and check that they are happy.

Pupils are cared for and well looked after. All pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are helped to achieve well and develop socially.

Pupils behave well. They are proud to talk about the school's 'golden rules' and they are kind and respectful towards others. Teachers listen and act on the views of pupils. Self-esteem and a positive, healthy mindset are nurtured at this school.

Children in Reception are encouraged to help each other socialise and learn. They learn ambitious vocabulary and enjoy sharing their learning with adults and other children. As pupils move through the school, they collaborate well and are enthusiastic about learning.

Pupils feel safe at school. They are confident that staff would deal with any rare instances of bullying immediately.

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

Pupils enjoy learning a wide range of subjects. In most subjects, leaders have clearly identified and broken down the knowledge that pupils should learn. They have organised this knowledge so that it follows on what pupils have learned previously. This helps teachers to plan lessons that build successfully on what pupils already know and can do.

In a few subjects, leaders have not ensured that curriculum plans provide enough detail about what subject knowledge pupils need to learn. Teachers sometimes do not focus on pupils having a secure understanding of the knowledge needed to tackle more complex concepts. This means that in these subjects, pupils are not learning as quickly as they might. Overall, however, pupils learn well across the curriculum.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and explain concepts clearly. They check regularly how well pupils are learning and provide pupils with help when they make mistakes or misunderstand.

Leaders have prioritised reading. Teachers adopt consistent approaches to the teaching of reading. In Reception and key stage 1, pupils learn what they need in order to become successful readers. As a result, pupils learn sounds swiftly and blend sounds to read familiar words and sentences. Teachers quickly spot pupils who find reading difficult. They ensure that pupils get the help they need to catch

up. Teachers make sure that pupils read books that are closely matched to the sounds that pupils know. This helps pupils to practise using their phonic knowledge to read familiar and new words.

Older pupils read with fluency and expression. They read texts that support their learning and develop a love for reading. Pupils are enthusiastic about reading and enjoy talking about books they have read and how reading makes them feel.

Leaders identify pupils with SEND accurately. Leaders ensure that staff have the knowledge to meet pupils' needs. Teachers adapt their teaching to ensure that pupils with SEND access the same learning as their peers. Pupils with SEND make good progress.

Pupils are given opportunities to take part in artistic, sporting and cultural activities. They learn about local and global charitable events, which broadens their understanding of the wider world. Leaders promote pupils' wider development through a thoughtfully planned personal, social and health education curriculum. There is a genuine culture of care between leaders, staff and pupils.

Staff prepare pupils well to live alongside people who have different beliefs and lifestyles. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures found in contemporary Britain. Staff provide pupils with regular opportunities to reflect on who they are and how they relate to the world around them.

Children make outstanding progress in their learning and development in early years. Staff deliberately teach ambitious vocabulary and communication strategies to all children. They use skilful questioning to further children's understanding of the world around them. Staff meticulously plan exciting and challenging activities to ignite the imagination and curiosity in children. Children are prepared exceptionally well for learning in Year 1.

Trust leaders and the local governing body provide appropriate support and challenge to leaders. They ensure that pupils benefit from any changes made. Leaders, governors and the trust know what works well and what could be even better. Staff are appreciative of the support they receive from leaders, including consideration of staff workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular training on how to keep pupils safe. Staff know their pupils well and report any concerns appropriately. Leaders ensure that they act on concerns quickly to keep pupils safe. They work well with external agencies when needed to ensure that pupils receive the support they need.

Pupils learn how to stay safe at school, at home and when online. They know how and when to report concerns.

Leaders ensure that thorough checks are made on all new members of staff. Trust leaders and members of the local governing body ensure that leaders carry out their safeguarding duties effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders' curriculum planning does not break down the knowledge into smaller steps to help pupils learn. This means that teachers do not always plan lessons that build on prior learning effectively or help pupils to understand more complex ideas. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum in each subject breaks down the most important knowledge, so that teachers are supported in planning sequences of lessons that build effectively on pupils' prior learning.

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

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| Unique reference number | 148495 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10240849 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 118 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust board | Fr Peter Harris |
| Headteacher | Michelle Keating |
| Website | www.stcanterbury.herts.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The school joined St Francis of Assisi Catholic Academy Trust on 1 September 2021. When the predecessor school, St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School, was inspected in 2007, it was graded as outstanding.
- An inspection of the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a Catholic school under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 took place in November 2017. The next section 48 inspection will take place within eight years of the previous section 48 inspection.
- The school does not use 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 held discussions with the trust’s chief executive officer, members of the local governing body, representatives from the local authority, the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, senior leaders, teachers, members of support staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, science, art and design technology. These included discussions about the curriculum with subject leaders, visiting a sample of lessons, speaking with teachers, speaking with some pupils about their learning and looking at samples of pupils’ work.
- The inspectors also looked at curriculum documents and samples of pupils’ work in some other subjects. They also reviewed a range of documents, policies and records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders and staff about safeguarding policies and practices at the school. Inspectors scrutinised the school’s single central record and met with the designated safeguarding lead. They scrutinised safeguarding records and spoke with pupils and staff.
- The 49 responses and 37 free-text comments to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, were considered. Inspectors also spoke to parents and carers over the course of the inspection. Inspectors spoke to staff and pupils to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Bridget Harrison, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Steve Mellors

His Majesty’s Inspector

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