

Inspection of St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

53 Commonside East, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 1YG

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 May 2023

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 Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to attend this welcoming and caring school. Pupils know and understand the meaning of the school's values and put these into practice. They are respectful of others and any differences and take responsibility for their actions. Pupils are kind, articulate and friendly.

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum and ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), access the same curriculum. They have high expectations for what pupils need to know and achieve. They provide a broad education that is complemented by a variety of educational experiences. Children in early years are readied successfully for their future learning.

Behaviour procedures are clear, and pupils behave well. Classrooms are calm, including in early years, and pupils learn without interruption. Leaders make sure that routines are established as soon as pupils join the school. Pupils are safe and are ready to learn. Bullying occurs rarely, and when it does, is dealt with effectively.

The school enriches pupils' personal development in a number of ways. These include taking on responsibilities such as becoming an eco-warrior or a prefect. Leaders organise educational visits in the local and wider community, including overnight stays. There are also some clubs after school, although not many pupils attend these.

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

Leaders have put in place a well-thought-through curriculum that matches the expectations of the national curriculum. They have focused on making sure that subject leaders identify the exact knowledge they want pupils to learn and when. However, in some subjects, teachers are not as clear about the essential knowledge that leaders intend them to teach. This means that pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding in these subjects. In early years, adults plan purposeful activities that help children learn important knowledge across the curriculum. The staff maximise learning opportunities for children. They do this creatively and are inspired by the children's curiosity.

Typically, teachers have secure knowledge of the subjects they teach, and subject content is explained clearly to pupils. Generally, pupils have regular opportunities to recall, revisit and practise prior learning. In some subjects, where the intended curriculum is not equally well delivered because teachers' subject expertise is not as secure, checks on pupils' understanding are not as routine. This means that sometimes, teachers do not find out exactly what pupils know and can do and where there are any gaps or misconceptions that need to be addressed. Therefore, pupils' knowledge is not built up as securely over time.

Leaders prioritise the teaching of reading. Leaders are knowledgeable about how children learn to read and work alongside phonics experts to enhance their practice.

Staff who teach early reading are well trained. They make sure that there are lots of opportunities for pupils to practise the sounds that they have been taught and learned, including by matching books to pupils' reading abilities. This helps pupils to become confident and fluent readers. Leaders have ensured that there are systems in place to identify any pupils who are falling behind. Those pupils identified are given the support that they need to catch up and keep up. Pupils have positive attitudes towards reading and want to improve.

When pupils with SEND start at the school either in early years or at any other point, leaders ensure that the right support is in place. Leaders and staff have the knowledge to identify pupils with SEND. They put appropriate measures in place, so that pupils receive the right support that is needed. Pupils with SEND are included in all aspects of the school and learn alongside their peers.

Leaders make sure that pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils are taught about healthy and unhealthy relationships. They are encouraged to think about the decisions they make and the impact of those choices. Pupils are taught about the importance of treating everyone equally and with respect. Leaders have prioritised supporting the positive mental well-being of pupils.

The governing body provides leaders with challenge and support. Governors have received training for their roles and apply this effectively. They hold leaders to account.

Staff said that leaders are supportive of their well-being and take their workload into account when making decisions. Leaders prioritise professional development. Staff felt valued and proud to work here.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is treated as a high priority by all staff. Leaders ensure that all staff and the governing body are well trained and understand their responsibilities for safeguarding. This means that they report concerns. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties, such as for the safe recruitment of staff. Leaders take action swiftly whenever concerns are raised. They work closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils and families receive the right support.

Pupils are taught about staying safe inside and outside school, including when online. Leaders know the contextual safeguarding needs of the school. Visiting experts encourage pupils to keep safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the essential knowledge that leaders want pupils to know and remember is not explicitly delivered, and pupils' understanding and recall are not checked as routinely as in other subjects. As a result, teaching does not enable pupils to build on what they already know or identify where there may be gaps or misconceptions. Leaders should ensure that all teachers have the expertise to deliver core content as intended and routinely check what pupils know and remember to identify and address any gaps or misconceptions.

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	133774
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	10227101
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	457
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Natasia Sisarello and Jeannie Walls
Headteacher	Marie Tucker
Website	www.st-thomascanterbury.merton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 and 29 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher has been in post since September 2020.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative providers.
- The school operates a breakfast club.

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 did deep dives in early reading, mathematics, geography and art. These involved discussions with senior leaders, curriculum leaders and the subject teachers. Inspectors also made visits to lessons, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning across a wide range of subjects.

- Inspectors had meetings with the headteacher and other leaders and staff, including curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff. The lead inspector met with a local authority representative and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for reading and heard pupils read.
- Inspectors met with school leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and those responsible for the school's record of pre-employment checks. Inspectors reviewed policies and documents. They also looked at the school's website.
- Inspectors explored and gathered evidence on the school's wider curriculum, the impact of pupils' behaviour and attendance on learning, and how leaders are driving improvement and supporting staff with their workload.
- Inspectors met with pupils and talked to them throughout the inspection. They asked questions to understand their views of the school. Inspectors also spoke to staff individually and in a group.
- Inspectors reviewed and considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys completed by pupils, parents and carers, and staff.

Inspection team

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