

Inspection of a good school: St Thomas More Catholic School and Sixth Form College

Greenmoor Road, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV10 7EX

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 2023

Outcome

St Thomas More Catholic School and Sixth Form College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The 'Holy Spirit' ethos and the need to 'Be kind, be calm, be ready' are at the heart of St Thomas More Catholic School and Sixth Form College. This ethos allows pupils to develop resilience, self-confidence and an awareness of the needs of others. Leaders and staff provide pupils with a supportive and caring environment. There is a climate of respect, challenge and celebration. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They are proud of their school. There is a positive working atmosphere around the school.

All staff have high expectations for pupils. Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum, which allows pupils to study a range of different subjects. Pupils have access to various extra-curricular activities. These include a creative writing club, sports clubs and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils feel valued and that their opinions can make a difference in the school.

Pupils say that staff know them well and care about them as individuals. There are high expectations for pupils' behaviour. This means that lessons are positive and purposeful, and that behaviour is calm around school. Pupils feel safe in school. They are confident that if bullying happens, staff will deal with it quickly and effectively.

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

Leaders have ensured that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have access to a broad and ambitious curriculum. The curriculum is well planned and carefully sequenced. Staff work closely with key stage 2 teachers across the trust to help ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of pupils at the start of Year 7. Leaders are clear in what they want pupils to know by the end of key stage 3 so that pupils are fully prepared for the demands of key stage 4.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They are enthusiastic about their subjects and explain new learning clearly. Teachers assess pupils' understanding effectively. They respond quickly to correct pupils' misconceptions and adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs. Leaders have introduced strategies that help pupils learn and remember important information. In lessons, pupils find the knowledge retrieval activities very useful, such as the 'back of book' exercises at the start of lessons.

Leaders have taken steps to ensure that pupils with SEND are well supported. Clear and relevant information is now shared with teachers. All subject areas adapt teaching and resources to ensure that pupils with SEND can be successful. Pupils with SEND are starting to do better in knowing more and remembering more. However, achievement across the curriculum is not yet consistently of a high quality for pupils with SEND.

Leaders prioritise reading. All teachers are teachers of reading. Pupils who need support with reading receive it from the time they join in Year 7. Whole-class and individual reading activities contribute to the school's culture of reading for pleasure. Subject teachers also support pupils in their learning of key vocabulary.

Pupils show an interest in their lessons and enjoy their learning. They move around the building in a calm and orderly manner. Teachers are consistent in applying the school's behaviour policy. Rewards for good behaviour are evident. Pupils recognise the 'Holy Spirit' ethos as a strength. One pupil said that it 'makes us feel secure', and others agreed.

Students in the sixth form choose from a broad range of subjects. Leaders prepare students for a different, deeper way of learning, where there is more independence. Students in the sixth form value their education and have respectful and trusting relationships with staff. Sixth formers play a full part in the life of the school. They have many leadership opportunities. For example, students support younger pupils as peer readers and mentors.

The personal development curriculum is comprehensive and ambitious. Pupils themselves have been instrumental in adding to this curriculum, for example with a sex and relationships education module of work. Careers education supports pupils to make informed choices about their future. All key stage 3 and 4 pupils have the chance to go on a residential experience. There are also visits to theatres, the Houses of Parliament and arts festivals. Many of the opportunities available to sixth formers involve helping others, such as the 'belonging together' project, the medical society and the acorn club.

The school is well led at all levels. Staff appreciate that senior leaders are mindful of their workload and supportive of their well-being. Governors show dedication, support and challenge. They fulfil their duties with diligence and professionalism. They know the school well and provide moral and spiritual support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at St Thomas More. Staff are trained to identify and recognise signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. Pupils know that they can go to a trusted adult if they have any concerns. In personal development lessons, they learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils learn about the risks associated with mobile technology and social media.

All necessary pre-employment checks are made on adults working at the school. Leaders work with external agencies to secure the help children need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have recently introduced new initiatives and provided training to help teachers support pupils with specific special educational needs. However, these plans are not fully established in all subjects. As a result, the work of pupils with SEND across the curriculum is not yet consistently of a high quality. Leaders need to ensure that support plans are embedded effectively so that all pupils with SEND achieve successfully and in line with their abilities.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 good in January 2018.

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	141836
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10268763
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,046
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	211
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Philip Richardson
Senior Executive Principal	Sinead Smith
Principal	Leearna Thomas
Website	http://www.st-thomas-more.net/
Date of previous inspection	10 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Holy Spirit Catholic Multi Academy Company.
- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. A Section 48 inspection of the school's religious character was carried out in November 2017.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- 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 inspectors carried out deep dives in English, geography and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector also visited a range of lessons and reviewed pupils' work for some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for behaviour, personal development, reading, the sixth form and the provision for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from key stages 3, 4 and 5.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. A range of documents related to safeguarding, including the school's single central record, were reviewed.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils during lesson visits. They observed pupils' behaviour, both in lessons and outside of lessons.
- The inspection team spoke to staff about behaviour, safeguarding and about their workload in the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.
- The lead inspector met with trustees and with members of the educational standards committee.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the results of the Ofsted staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

David Buckle, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jacqueline Newsome

Ofsted Inspector

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