

Inspection of a good school: St Thomas of Canterbury RC Primary School

Romany Road, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent ME8 6JH

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 June 2023

Outcome

St Thomas of Canterbury RC Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy, feel safe in school and enjoy their learning. Leaders ensure that pupils' well-being is paramount. Pupils show kindness and respect to each other and adults. They care for and look after each other. Pupils appreciate and celebrate differences and include everyone.

Teachers know pupils very well. Relationships between pupils and adults are very positive. Pupils know they can tell teachers about any worries that they have and that adults will help. Pupils describe the school as 'a place that makes you feel cared for and loved'. Bullying happens rarely, but when it does it is swiftly and effectively dealt with.

Pupils meet leaders' high expectations for their personal, social and academic achievements. Pupils know that teachers expect them to do their very best. Pupils behave well and are attentive to their teachers. This helps them to learn well in lessons.

Pupils are proud of their school and appreciate the atmosphere of this small school. Reflecting the views of many, one pupil said, 'We all know each other and make good friends.' Parents appreciate this culture, with one saying, 'There is an overwhelming feel of school community at the gate, in assemblies or when visiting for a 'work share' session.'

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

The curriculum is broad and balanced. It takes account of pupils' varied knowledge and experience, including those who speak English as an additional language. Leaders identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) swiftly. Staff are supported to adapt their teaching carefully so that they meet all pupils' needs successfully.

Leaders strive to ensure that the curriculum is the best it can be for all the pupils. In a few subjects, leaders have recently introduced changes to the curriculum to improve pupils' learning. Subject leaders have invested a considerable amount of time in revising

the curriculum in some subjects, identifying the key knowledge pupils need to learn. They provide effective guidance and support to colleagues to ensure that teachers have good subject knowledge. There has not been enough time for leaders to know if pupils are remembering what they have learned well enough to achieve the very best that they can over time.

Pupils enjoy learning and are fully involved in their lessons. They listen and concentrate well. Leaders ensure the school is inclusive and a place where all pupils can learn without interruption. Teachers quickly refocus any pupils who lose concentration. Teachers check pupils' understanding to inform their teaching. They address misconceptions swiftly and use carefully designed strategies to deepen pupils' understanding.

Reading is a high priority. As soon as children start in the early years, they are immersed in listening to stories and rhymes, singing songs and looking at books. These activities enrich and expand children's speech and vocabulary. Pupils learn phonic knowledge effectively through a well-structured programme. Teachers follow this programme consistently. Staff identify gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge swiftly. They provide extra support for any pupils who are at risk of falling behind so they catch up quickly. Pupils read books that match the sounds they know. This helps them learn to read with fluency and with confidence.

Reading for enjoyment is promoted throughout the school. Older pupils enjoy their reading lessons and develop as confident, fluent readers with skills to access the wider curriculum. They are enthusiastic to talk about favourite authors and to give their opinions on their reading preferences. Older and younger pupils thoroughly enjoy sharing books together, which benefits both age groups.

The school has an increasingly diverse population. Pupils are respectful and accepting of others with different beliefs, backgrounds or ways of learning. Pupils are proud of their leadership roles in the school, such as librarians, eco monitors and prefects. Older pupils provide good role models for the younger ones. Reflecting the views of many, one parent said, 'My child aspires to be like those in the older years. She sees their confidence, pride in learning and love for being at school.' Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to broaden their experiences beyond their immediate environment. These include trips, clubs and visitors to school. Parents are positive about the school's work in 'cultivating a community of responsible citizens and learners.'

Leaders, including governors, are considerate of staff workload and well-being. Staff feel supported and valued and there is a strong team spirit. Governors keep themselves well informed about the school through activities such as visiting the school and making links with a class, as well as considering information provided by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Staff receive regular training. They are quick to recognise signs that a child may be at risk of harm. Systems to

record concerns are robust and leaders take swift action to respond to them. Leaders ensure that pupils get the help and support that they need, including from external agencies when appropriate. The necessary recruitment checks are made on all adults who work in the school. Pupils learn about keeping safe, including when online. Pupils know they can speak to trusted adults and any concerns will be taken seriously.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, changes to the curriculum have been introduced relatively recently and are not yet embedded in the school. In these subjects, pupils do not currently achieve as well as they could. Leaders should continue their work to implement ambitious curriculum plans and high expectations for pupils' achievement across the curriculum.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2013.

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	118767
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10268913
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	258
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Clare Clark
Headteacher	Clare Redmond (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.stthomascanterbury.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The executive headteacher is also the executive headteacher at English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School in Rochester.
- The school is a Roman Catholic School in the Archdiocese of Southwark. The school's last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was in November 2017. The school's next section 48 inspection will take place within eight years of the date of this inspection.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator. She met with other leaders and staff.
- The inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair and the school effectiveness officer from the local authority.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, talked to some pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also looked at curriculum information in other subjects and observed some pupils reading to their teachers or teaching assistants.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector spoke with leaders, staff and pupils. She looked at the single central record of recruitment checks and safeguarding records. Throughout the inspection, the inspector considered and checked the culture of safeguarding within the school.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school development plan and the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at lunchtimes and around the school. She talked to pupils about their learning and gathered pupils' views about what behaviour is like and whether they feel safe in school.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff, pupils and parents.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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