

Inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Lewis Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL51 0HZ

Inspection dates: 14 to 15 June 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	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are at the heart of this caring and inclusive school. Leaders have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve. Their vision is reflected in the school's mission statement, which includes realising each pupil's individuality. Staff provide high-quality pastoral support. Pupils form strong relationships with each other and the adults who work alongside them.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Staff have an accurate view of the needs of individual pupils. Pupils appreciate the range of experiences and opportunities provided beyond the classroom. These include clubs for music and sports and the opportunity to go on residential trips.

Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. Behaviour across the school is typically calm and sensible. Low-level disruption is rare. As a result, the school is a purposeful place to learn. Clear routines are put in place, beginning in the early years. These support children's understanding of what is expected of them. Pupils take care of each other and manage their own feelings well.

Parents are highly complimentary about the school. They talk positively of the care and support their children receive. They say the school enables their child to grow, both academically and emotionally. One parent said, 'I would not send my child anywhere else.'

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This ambition is shared across the school community, including governors. Leaders have improved the school's curriculum. This is now having an impact on pupils' learning but is not reflected yet in published outcomes. Staff, including those new to the profession, value and appreciate the teamwork approach. They are proud to work at the school.

Leaders prioritise reading. The teaching of phonics starts in the pre-school. Staff use effective strategies to support children in developing into confident readers. Leaders ensure that books match the sounds pupils are learning. They have thought carefully about the range of quality texts they want pupils to access to develop a love of reading. Teachers check carefully pupils' phonic development. Where some pupils struggle, adults provide the help they need to catch up quickly.

Older pupils enjoy reading. They talk confidently about the range of books they have read. They enjoy the challenge of reading aloud to their peers. Pupils say reading helps them to 'expand their knowledge' and 'take them into other worlds'.

Leaders have ensured that the mathematics curriculum is designed well and builds on what pupils already know. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to revisit and

check their prior learning. Adults model the use of mathematical vocabulary effectively. This starts in the early years, where adults use repetition to secure children's understanding of new concepts. Pupils enjoy mathematics. They talk confidently about what they have been learning and how they can use what they know when learning something new.

Pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum. In modern foreign languages (MFL), leaders have defined the important knowledge pupils need to know and revisit over time. However, in some other subjects, such as history, the knowledge pupils need to know and remember is not identified clearly enough. Pupils are unable to recall their learning sufficiently well. Teachers do not check what pupils know and can do precisely enough. As a result, pupils have gaps in their historical understanding.

Pupils with SEND have access to the same curriculum as their peers. Careful identification and regular review of pupils' needs mean that learning is suitably adapted. As such, all pupils learn effectively. Leaders work well with external agencies and use relevant guidance to consider how best to support pupils' learning.

Pupils are polite and courteous. They play together well during social times. Leaders have a rigorous system in place to tackle aspects of weaker attendance. They are clear to parents about the importance of children attending school regularly. Open and honest relationships with parents have resulted in a significant reduction in the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum supports pupils to become responsible and respectful citizens. Pupils learn about equality and diversity. They talk confidently to pupils about the importance of treating others how they would like to be treated. Pupils understand difference. Leaders support pupils in becoming confident, resilient and independent learners. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves mentally and physically healthy.

Governors share the determined vision of the headteacher. They are clear in the school's direction of travel. They understand their role in keeping children safe. Governors are well informed about the school's priorities. Staff agree that leaders consider their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. There is a strong culture of vigilance. Staff receive relevant and up-to-date training. They know how to record and report concerns about children. Leaders act on concerns quickly. Staff know that their concerns are taken seriously. Staff understand the challenges within the local community. Leaders make sure that relevant checks are made on staff to ensure they are safe to work with children.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know who they can speak to if they have a concern or a worry. The curriculum supports pupils' understanding of risk. They talk confidently about how to stay safe when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not clearly identified the key component knowledge they want pupils to learn. As a result, pupils do not remember some important knowledge, and this makes it difficult for them to build their knowledge well over time. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum explicitly breaks down the subject-specific content they want pupils to know and remember.
- In subjects across the wider curriculum, assessment information is not always precise enough to check what pupils understand. As a result, teachers are not always clear on what pupils know and can do. Leaders need to ensure that systems and processes are in place so that teachers check and identify how well pupils know and learn the intended curriculum.

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	115710
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10268233
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	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Catherine Hipkiss
Headteacher	Nicola Tippen
Website	www.st-thomasmore.gloucs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Thomas More Catholic Primary is part of the Diocese of Clifton. The school has a pre-school on site. The school had its last denominational education inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in May 2017, where it was judged to be good overall.
- Since the last inspection, there have been key changes within the structure of the leadership team, with two new assistant headteachers taking up post.
- The school provides an on-site breakfast club.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.

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 met with the headteacher, the assistant headteachers with responsibility for safeguarding and the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors also met with groups of staff, a representative from the local authority, members of the local governing body and a representative from the Diocese of Clifton.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to groups of pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects, including MFL.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to a known adult.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation, including safeguarding checks carried out on staff working at the school. They reviewed how well the designated safeguarding leads act upon concerns about pupils' welfare. Inspectors talked to pupils, staff and governors about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- Inspectors considered the 11 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including five free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the views of parents at the start of the school day, and they took account of the 27 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Heather Barraclough, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Nicky McMahon	His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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