

Inspection of a good school: St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Northampton Road, Kettering, Northamptonshire NN15 7JZ

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 June 2023

Outcome

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders at St Thomas More ensure the school's core aims to 'learn, love, play and pray' are at the heart of the school. They guide the curriculum, and staff and pupils reflect on them daily. They also underpin the school's approach to ensuring pupils behave well. As one pupil explained, 'This school brings out the best in everyone.'

Pupils extend a warm welcome to visitors and enjoy finding out about them. They feel safe, happy and confident. Pupils say that if they had any concerns or worries, they would share these with staff.

Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. Leaders are ambitious that all pupils will achieve well. This includes pupils with special educational needs/and or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils welcome the opportunity to develop leadership skills and contribute to the school community as St Thomas More ambassadors, sports leaders and playground buddies. They are proud to hold these roles and 'be part of helping the school be even better'.

The school has a family feel and strong links with the local community. Parents and carers are extremely positive about the school. One comment, typical of many, is: 'St Thomas More provides a supportive, nurturing and caring environment for children to learn and grow.'

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

Leaders have constructed a broad and ambitious curriculum that is bespoke and shaped around the school's core aims. They have identified the precise knowledge that pupils will learn and the best order to teach it. Overall, pupils remember what they have learned.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. Teachers present information well. They ensure that pupils focus and engage in their learning.

There is a strong focus on oracy. Leaders want their pupils to be able to talk fluently and express ideas with confidence. Teachers encourage group work to enhance these skills. For example, in geography, they take on group roles as an 'instigator, summariser, builder or challenger'.

Teachers plan and deliver mathematics lessons that develop pupils' fluency, problem-solving and reasoning skills. Pupils discuss mathematics through the 'let's talk maths' sections of the lessons. Pupils love mathematics at St Thomas More.

There are systems for checking what precise knowledge pupils know. Teachers use assessment information well through the school's feedback and assessment sheets. They use this information to adapt their teaching. These systems are less well developed in some foundation subjects, and, on occasion, some teachers do not help pupils to address misconceptions or check on learning in their written work as effectively as they could.

Leaders have prioritised reading across the school. Children enjoy the daily reading for pleasure time and the 'Reading Shed' in the playground. The phonics programme is well sequenced. Sessions are engaging and led by experts who have been well trained. Teachers ensure that pupils 'keep up'. Reading books are well matched to the sounds pupils have been learning.

Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers. Most teachers adapt their teaching to ensure that these pupils make sufficient progress. Teachers know their pupils well, including those with SEND. They use a range of strategies to help pupils enjoy their learning and build their knowledge.

Children in early years study a curriculum that prepares them well for key stage 1. Activities develop independence, and adults work effectively to support children's learning. Staff design tasks that intrigue and engage children. They help children to gain mathematical knowledge and broaden their vocabulary. Routines are well established and commonly understood. Staff take good care of the children, and they thrive.

Pupils' behaviour is positive at the school. They behave very well in lessons and work hard. They build supportive relationships with staff and each other. Leaders train staff to model positive behaviours and create a culture of respect.

The curriculum extends beyond the academic. Leaders have a clear vision to enable their pupils to become 'citizens of the future', who will make a positive contribution to the wider world. One pupil expressed that 'everyone is respectful here'. Pupils benefit from opportunities to understand the world and how to be healthy and safe through the school's 'Healthy Me' weeks. They understand the importance of respecting differences and know that everyone is equal. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders work effectively with the trust. They work together to develop the curriculum and to ensure that staff access training and support. The school is well led and managed. Leaders are ambitious, hardworking and well thought of by teachers at the school. They consider their staff's workload and well-being. Staff feel happy and well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know pupils and their families very well. They provide strong support to vulnerable pupils. Leaders take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. There is a strong culture of safeguarding, and effective systems are in place to keep pupils safe. Leaders take prompt action in response to any concerns. Staff receive regular and appropriate training. Records are well maintained.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. This includes when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders are aware that some aspects of the curriculum need further refinement, in particular ensuring that all teachers' use of assessment consistently identifies gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge. There are occasions when some teachers do not check pupils' responses to tasks in books and some misconceptions are not addressed. Leaders need to ensure that teachers use assessment effectively to support pupils to make progress through the curriculum in all subjects.

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 March 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	141635
Local authority	North Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10298502
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Christopher Donnellan
Headteacher	Sophie Howes
Website	www.stthomasmorekettering.com
Date of previous inspection	13 and 14 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provisions.
- The school is part of Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Academies Trust.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of the governing body and trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector met 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. The inspector listened to pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 read to a member of staff.
- The inspector reviewed the school's systems for keeping pupils safe. A meeting was held with the designated safeguarding lead. The inspector scrutinised the school's

single central record.

- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site during playtime.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils and staff. The inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Dawn Ashbolt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023