

# Inspection of an outstanding school: St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Sheldon Road, Bexleyheath, Kent DA7 4PH

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Inspection dates:

3 and 4 October 2023

## Outcome

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School continues to be an outstanding school.

The head of this school is Grace Lodge. This school is part of the South East London Catholic Academy Trust (SELCAT), which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, David Garrido, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Allison Thornton.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Thomas More are well cared for and looked after. This is a school where pupils feel safe and are kept safe. Pupils understand that bullying is not tolerated. Pupils are friendly, polite and courteous. Staff know pupils extremely well. Pupils know that staff listen to any worries they might have.

All staff have consistently high expectations of the achievement and behaviour of all pupils. From Reception to Year 6, pupils rise to these expectations. They work hard and achieve well. Pupils' behaviour in their classrooms and around the school is exceptional.

Leaders are highly aspirational for all pupils. The curriculum is ambitious and prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education. Pupils can access additional activities, including coding, football, multi-skills and singing. This enables them to develop their talents and interests.

Pupils readily take on additional responsibilities in and beyond the school. For example, all pupils in Year 6 have leadership roles, such as librarians, sports leaders, house captains and prayer leaders. Pupils are responsible for looking after the school's chickens and tortoises. The 'Mini-Vinnies' help to run a soup kitchen in the local community. Pupils take part in aspiration and careers days. They are very well prepared for their future lives.

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

Pupils learn an ambitious curriculum that matches and often exceeds what is expected nationally. Leaders have identified the key knowledge and skills they expect pupils to learn in all subjects. The curriculum is well sequenced so that pupils build their knowledge

cumulatively and are well placed to tackle more complex ideas as they move through the school. For example, in mathematics, older pupils can solve multi-step problems because they have already secured their understanding of number and place value. Similarly, in history, children in early years learn about past, present and future. This foundation knowledge helps older pupils to identify the causes and effects of different events, such as the actions taken by Henry VIII in relation to the Catholic church. Teachers routinely check that pupils have understood what they have learned. This means any errors or misconceptions are swiftly identified and corrected.

The reading curriculum is highly effective. Staff have been well trained to implement the school's phonics programme as soon as children begin their Reception Year. Well-targeted catch-up sessions are provided for pupils who struggle to read confidently. A highly positive culture of reading exists across the school. Pupils read widely and often. They enjoy visiting the well-stocked school library and listening to stories. This helps pupils to develop a real love of reading. Pupils speak with confidence and enthusiasm about their favourite books and authors.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. This is because they are swiftly identified, and their needs are well understood. Interventions are effective and help pupils with SEND to access the same ambitious curriculum as their classmates. Staff ensure all pupils with SEND are fully included in the life of the school.

Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are motivated to learn, and there is almost no disruption to learning. Staff and pupils treat each other with respect. Leaders have effective systems in place to ensure pupils attend school regularly and on time.

Pupils' wider personal development is a real strength in this school. Staff provide exceptional support for all pupils so that they learn to stay physically and emotionally safe. The curriculum is designed to help pupils to understand how to be good citizens. Pupils are encouraged to demonstrate positive attitudes, such as being independent, not being afraid to make mistakes and working well with others.

Trust and school leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities moving forward. They are united in their drive and ambition that all pupils are ready for their next stage of their education. Staff feel well supported by leaders to manage their workload and well-being.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 predecessor school, St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, to be outstanding in March 2017.

## 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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	149373
<b>Local authority</b>	Bexley
<b>Inspection number</b>	10290395
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	422
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Allison Thornton
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	David Garrido
<b>Headteacher</b>	Grace Lodge
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stm.bexley.sch.uk">www.stm.bexley.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date(s) of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- St Thomas More Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy school in October 2022. When its predecessor school, St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school is part of the South East London Catholic Academy Trust (SELCAT).
- The school has a Catholic ethos. The school's last section 48 inspection was in 2023.
- The school offers a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector held meetings with the head of school and with other senior and subject leaders. Discussions were also held with representatives of the governing body, SELCAT and the Diocese of Southwark.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- The curriculum in other subjects was considered as part of the inspection.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' priorities for improvement.
- The views of staff, pupils, parents and carers were gathered through discussions and through their responses to Ofsted's online surveys. There were 130 responses from pupils to the online survey.

### **Inspection team**

Sarah Lack, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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