

Inspection of a good school: St Thomas More Catholic Primary, A Voluntary Academy

Creswick Lane, Grenoside, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S35 8NN

Inspection dates:

30 and 31 January 2024

Outcome

St Thomas More Catholic Primary, A Voluntary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Warm and caring relationships between staff, pupils and their families sit at the very heart of this happy and inclusive school. Pupils say that they feel safe. They know that adults will listen to any concerns that they have and will help them in any way that they can. Pupils value this support, as do their families.

The school has clear expectations of its pupils and has high ambition for them. Pupils meet these expectations and, as a result, the school is calm and orderly. Pupils' manners are impeccable. They show respect for each other and for the adults that they work with. Pupils know what bullying is and say that it is very rare. They know how to report bullying and know that action will be taken to address it if it occurs.

Pupils have a positive attitude to learning. They work hard and try their best. Pupils enjoy school and they are keen to attend each day. They enjoy the wide range of curriculum opportunities as well as out-of-school activities. They are proud to take part in a number of sporting competitions and represent their school.

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

The school has ensured that the subjects that it teaches are well planned and sequenced. Teachers teach and check the required knowledge well. They use assessments to reshape learning and ensure that pupils are successful in being able to know, remember and do more across all subjects. Pupils get off to a strong start in early years. They enjoy activities, such as telling each other number stories as the basis for early calculation. By the end of their time in school, across the curriculum, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils are highly engaged in their learning. As a result, they are focused on their work and are very productive. This also means that low-level disruption within classrooms is

extremely rare. Pupils' classroom learning is enhanced by visits and visitors. These create memorable learning experiences through which pupils extend their understanding. For example, the visit that Year 6 pupils have undertaken to a holocaust museum has enabled them to maturely articulate how lessons from the past can inform the future that they build.

From the early years through to the end of Year 6, the school places great importance on teaching pupils to read. Pupils appreciate the range of books that are available for them to read. They enjoy reading a range of fiction and non-fiction. Staff have received training on how to deliver the phonics programme. However, some pupils are not given enough time to apply their phonics knowledge to reading sentences. This impacts on the pupils' ability to read aloud with fluency and confidence. Teachers ensure that pupils read books that match the sounds that they are learning. Pupils who need extra support get the help they need to become more confident readers.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. The school knows the needs of these pupils very well, and ensures that teachers meet these needs. Pupils are encouraged to be independent in their lessons and are provided with a range of resources that they can use to access and support their learning. These resources are tailored to pupils' personalised support plans. A culture of inclusivity exists across all areas of school life.

Pupils' broader development is well considered. Pupils are given opportunities to ensure that they develop a good understanding of the importance of a healthy heart, body and mind. They enjoy having healthy snacks and meals and can talk knowledgeably about the importance of a balanced diet. They also enjoy taking part in a wide range of physical activity. They particularly enjoy playing games such as basketball at social times.

Pupils develop well spiritually, and the school's values run through all areas of school life. Pupils talk about equality and the need to treat everyone with kindness. Mental health champions are proud of the contribution that they make to the school. They are able to talk about the things that they have put in place to support positive mental health. Pupils on the school council can talk about the ideas that they have to improve their school. Despite this, some pupils have a limited understanding of some British values such as democracy.

Staff well-being and workload are carefully considered. Effective steps to reduce workload have been implemented. This includes more efficient ways of assessing and monitoring pupils' progress. Morale is high. Governors know the school well and monitor the impact of continuous improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The delivery of the phonics programme is not consistently effective. Some pupils are not given enough time to practise and apply their phonics knowledge to reading sentences. As a result, some pupils are not as fluent or confident as they could be when reading aloud. The school should ensure that staff plan opportunities that allow pupils to apply their knowledge beyond their decoding of individual words.
- The school does not maximise opportunities for pupils to develop a deep understanding of some key British values. As a result, pupils are not familiar with values such as democracy and the rule of law. This means that they are less prepared for taking their place in society. The school should ensure that it further develops its approach to teaching these values, and embedding opportunities for pupils to experience them within and beyond 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2019.

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

Unique reference number	142600
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10313304
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	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	April Worrall
Headteacher	Donna Faley
Website	www.st-thomasmoresheffield.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school makes use of one registered provider of alternative provision.
- The school runs its own before- and after-school provision.
- The school is part of the Catholic Diocese of Hallam. The last inspection of the school's religious character (section 48) was in May 2019. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last.

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 met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and subject leaders from the school. The inspector also met with members of the governing body and a representative from the diocese.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading and phonics, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety were evaluated during lessons and social times. The inspector spoke to pupils, teachers and leaders about their views on behaviour.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff, parents 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 met groups of pupils. The inspector also reviewed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and Ofsted's online survey responses from staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Lee Wilson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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