

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

Horseshoe Lane West, Merrow, Guildford, Surrey GU1 2SX

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 February 2024

Outcome

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

The headteacher of this school is Kate Carter. This school is part of the Xavier Catholic Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, James Kibble, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Peter O'Brien.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is 'SPACE for everyone' in this wonderfully happy and inclusive school. Pupils learn to be a good friend and help those who need it. Through the school's 10 'Golden Threads', pupils learn values such as tolerance. They learn about the impact of adversity and discrimination through reading stories about the lives of people affected by these issues. Staff help pupils explore how to take care of their mental health. In turn, pupils learn to recognise and manage their feelings. Children in Reception try to be resilient like 'Marvin the Monkey'. They learn to see mistakes as a chance to try again. Pupils are thriving in this school because dedicated staff prepare pupils for a happy and successful future.

The school's high expectations support pupils in trying their very best in lessons. Clear classroom routines help prepare pupils to be ready to learn well. Pupils take turns to listen and share their ideas with each other. Through collaboration, they learn to build towards more complicated ideas. In music, they use their impressive knowledge of playing wind instruments to compose songs that they play together. Pupils learn to regularly review and improve their work. Consequently, pupils achieve well.

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

The ambitious curriculum sets out the important knowledge and skills that pupils must know in each stage of their education. Foundational knowledge builds in logical order to make sure that pupils regularly recap and practise learning. In mathematics, children in Reception quickly learn to count to 10. They use this learning to compare length, size and number when building towers of blocks. Pupils in the older year groups build further on this learning when comparing fractions. Teachers design and organise lessons in logical

order in order to help pupils make connections between ideas. This helps pupils to remember learning over time.

The school makes sure that all staff have the training they need to teach the curriculum. Teachers design lessons to help pupils put learning into practice. Teachers regularly check what pupils can remember. However, in some lessons, some teachers do not precisely use this information to then consider where pupils are unsure of what they have previously learned. This sometimes means that pupils find it more difficult to apply their learning to new ideas and more complex ideas.

Support for reading is a strength of the school. From the moment children start school in Reception, they quickly learn to read well. They take story sacks with a book, toy and supporting resources to help them immerse themselves in reading with their families. Pupils in every class receive expert teaching that helps them become confident readers. Gaps in pupils' reading knowledge are swiftly identified and closed through additional support. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive highly specific speech and language support. This helps them to say the sounds they are learning to read. Every day, pupils across the school enjoy reading books linked to their class topics. This approach helps pupils become fluent in their reading of different texts.

Trust staff supports the strong provision in place for pupils with SEND. Most parents who responded to Ofsted's parent survey reported that their children feel well supported. The precise help that pupils with SEND need is meticulously planned and reviewed in collaboration with parents. These pupils learn successfully alongside their peers.

Clear expectations of behaviour mean that the school is calm and orderly. Pupils attend school very well because they value their learning. Many pupils report that bullying does not happen in school, because staff quickly intervene to resolve any unkindness. Pupils learn about the importance of online safety and how to report online bullying. Assemblies and 'workshops' reiterate the importance of respectful behaviour. Pupils demonstrate the 'Golden Thread' of love through acts of charity. Pupils proudly raise money for their partner school in Uganda. They see this act as a way of making the world a better place for others.

An extensive offer of opportunities nurtures pupils' interests and talents. Clubs and trips help pupils extend their learning outside of the classroom. Pupil leadership is strong and has real purpose. Pupils have a say in how they would like aspects of school, such as playtimes, to work. Pupils are confident and articulate because staff make sure that each of them has a sense of belonging in this very special school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, some teachers do not always identify and adapt teaching to close gaps in knowledge. This means some pupils do not always secure important knowledge that supports their understanding of the ambitious curriculum. The school must ensure that all staff have skills and confidence to put training into practice so that pupils achieve all of which they are capable.

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 predecessor school St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School to be good in July 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' is used to mean pupils with 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	147431
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10296454
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	425
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter O'Brien
CEO of trust	James Kibble
Headteacher	Kate Carter
Website	www.st-thomas.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the Xavier Catholic Education Trust in Sept 2019.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. The last section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in November 2019.
- 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 lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in this evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust and with the chair of the board of trustees. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the governing body.

- The lead inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and music. 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. They also listened to some pupils read aloud to familiar adults. In addition, the lead inspector sampled pupils' writing across the curriculum and visited a number of English lessons across the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead 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 lead inspector spoke with pupils about their experiences of school life. They also took account of the views of parents, carers and staff through conversations and responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Michelle Payne, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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