

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

Huthill Lane, Great Wyrley, Walsall, West Midlands WS6 6PG

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Inspection dates:

12 and 13 March 2024

## **Outcome**

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

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

St Thomas More is a school where pupils know their voice really matters. The school has created a culture of mutual respect, where warm relationships result in pupils feeling valued and happy. The school's focus on positive mental well-being and developing a sense of belonging support pupils to thrive and achieve well.

Outcomes in most subjects are good, although the ongoing work to improve the quality of pupils' writing has not yet had the intended impact. The school's curriculum, supplemented by a range of extra-curricular activities, enables pupils to develop their talents and interests. Many have a keen eye on how their learning will support them to be successful in the future.

Pupils behave with maturity and have highly positive attitudes to their learning. They know that their views really matter. They hold pupil leadership positions and are actively involved in influencing school policies. This empowers them and develops a sense of responsibility.

There is a strong sense of community at this school. Raising money for local causes is something that pupils are really proud of. They invite school neighbours to events and understand that showing such kindness is important. Pupils value the pastoral support they receive, especially the opportunity to share concerns with adults they trust to support them.

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

The school focuses its attention on what is best for pupils when identifying priorities for school improvement. The school welcomes feedback on what it can do to be even better. It has formed effective partnerships with local schools to support its improvement work. A dedicated team of staff focus on ensuring that the curriculum matches the needs of their pupils.

Staff feel well supported and know that their well-being and workload are always of consideration to leaders. The school is developing leaders at all levels by supporting them to understand how to evaluate their areas of responsibility and further improve practice. However, some of this work is at an early stage of implementation and not fully effective.

Pupils' achievement in mathematics and reading means that they have the necessary knowledge in these subjects to leave school ready for the next stage in their learning. However, the picture with writing is more variable and not all pupils achieve consistently as well. The school has recently started to address this through developments in the writing curriculum. Work to develop pupils' vocabulary, and linking the teaching of writing to high-quality texts, is beginning to improve pupils' outcomes.

Children start learning to read as soon as they enter the school. Many go on to read fluently by the time they leave key stage 1. Pupils enjoy reading and being read to by their teachers. Pupils develop a deeper understanding of their learning using books that relate to the topics they study. The school provides effective support for those who fall behind with their reading. The school's investment in high-quality resources to support the reading scheme has meant that pupils have an impressive range of books to choose from.

Children in the early years get off to a strong start. Many display a readiness for learning and enjoy attending school. They are supported by highly skilled adults who know them well and who ensure that their learning is well matched to their needs. Children demonstrate that they are ready for key stage 1; they show high levels of concentration and engagement.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are increasingly well supported. Learning needs are reflected in their individual plans and these improve pupils' access to learning. Such plans are written with the support of external agencies who work closely with the school. Most pupils can access the same curriculum as their peers.

Pupils are usually courteous and respectful. They welcome visitors and are eager to share what is special about their school. Many attend school regularly. However, despite some improvements, a significant minority of pupils miss school too often and this impacts negatively on their learning and social development.

The wider development of pupils successfully builds their resilience, independence and well-being. Pupils enjoy being active members of the parliamentary group. Being provided the opportunity to make changes to their school has fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility. Pupils feel that their school is a place where 'everyone matters' and where differences are celebrated.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's work to evaluate its improvement actions and ensure that monitoring identifies precisely what needs to be further developed is not as effective as it could be. Consequently, the school is not addressing some of its areas for development as effectively as it could. The school should continue to support leaders at all levels to identify and implement effective curriculum improvement strategies.
- The school's writing curriculum is not yet enabling pupils to build knowledge and skills progressively over time. As a result, some pupils leave the school unable to write at the expected standard. The school should ensure that the writing curriculum enables all pupils to make good progress from their relative starting points.
- Despite the school's work to improve attendance, strategies are not working as well as they should for all pupils. As a result, a significant minority of pupils miss extended periods of learning and miss out on the opportunities to develop socially. The school should work closely with the school community and outside agencies to adopt further strategies to reduce persistent absence and low attendance.

## 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 school to be good in July 2014.

## 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>	124376
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10322783
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	224
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Diane Jones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stephanie Hewitt
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stthomasmoreprimarygreatwyrley.co.uk">www.stthomasmoreprimarygreatwyrley.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This school had a section 48 inspection in September 2023.
- This school does not use 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.
- 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 met with a range of leaders, including those responsible for the curriculum, teaching and learning, behaviour, attendance, personal development and safeguarding.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, 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. The lead inspector also heard a selection of pupils read.
- The inspector also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- The inspector spoke with seven members of the school's governing body, including the chair and vice chair of the governing body.
- The inspector spoke with the diocese's school improvement adviser.
- The inspector considered the survey responses to Ofsted Parent View and the free-text comments from parents.
- The inspector considered the responses to staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Tony Bradshaw, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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