

Inspection of St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Primary School

St Mary's Avenue, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK3 5DT

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| Inspection dates: | 3 and 4 December 2024 |
| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Outstanding |
| Personal development | Outstanding |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Requires improvement |

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish in a close and supportive community atmosphere. The school's use of the quotation 'I have called you by your name; you are mine' is taken literally. Pupils feel like the school is an extended family. The sense of togetherness at break times and in classrooms is remarkably strong. Pupils understand the high expectations of their community. They consistently rise to meet these. Pupils, from the Reception class onwards, take great pride in their learning and relish feedback and improvement. As a result, they achieve well by the end of Year 6 and are more than ready for secondary school.

Pupils relish opportunities to be good citizens. Pupils feel happy and safe in the school. This comes from their trust in the impeccable behaviour of their peers and the care adults show them. The opportunities to be community leaders or the highly successful 'Eco committee' are treasured. Pupils see these opportunities not as extra work but a chance to live their ambition of making the world a better place. This means that pupils from the Reception class onwards are motivated to be in school. This is reflected in their exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and their high levels of attendance.

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

The school has an ambitious curriculum. The school's ambition includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The knowledge has been precisely identified and organised in a logical and methodical way. Pupils benefit from lots of opportunities to practise and refine their learning with well-chosen activities and resources. Sometimes content is not delivered effectively. As a result, some pupils do not develop their understanding. However, by the end of Year 6, all pupils achieve well. The school matches and often exceeds the nationally published averages for pupil attainment. Pupils with SEND are swiftly identified and expertly supported.

Pupils love reading. They adore the library and are enthusiastic about exploring its different stories and types of books. There is a clear programme for teaching pupils to read. This starts from the earliest opportunity in the Reception class. Adults share the pupils' passion for reading. However, some teaching of letter sounds does not meet the school's expectations. This means some younger pupils could learn their sounds more accurately and swiftly than they do. The school has not provided effective feedback to these staff to sufficiently develop their skills. However, the teaching of reading for older pupils is highly successful. By the end of Year 6, pupils achieve significantly better than the national published averages. This includes pupils with any form of disadvantage.

Pupils' conduct in school is exceptionally positive. Respect is not only the school's expectation, it is the norm. Pupils' manners, language and behaviour in and out of class are of the highest standard. The expectations from staff are clear and consistent. Routines are joyful and followed consistently by all pupils. The school makes effective reasonable adjustments to support pupils with SEND. From the Reception class upwards, pupils feel safe and are grateful to be part of the school community. Attendance is

exemplary. Very few pupils miss school, and they are eager to attend school each morning.

Pupils have a strong understanding of how to be modern British citizens. Their personal values of tolerance and fairness exceed the standard British values. They are active in charitable works across the globe. Pupils have a comprehensive curriculum of learning, debate and experiences. This gives pupils an exceptional depth of knowledge about a wide range of topics. Pupils, including those in the Reception class, can self-regulate their emotions using strategies taught in the curriculum. As a result, they are helped to develop an exceptional level of maturity.

Leaders at all levels are passionate about the school. Governors are well informed and provide a solid mix of support and challenge. Professional development, particularly for teachers who have recently started teaching, is consistent and timely. However, sometimes the school has not consistently checked on the effectiveness of training in all subjects as stringently as it could have done.

The welfare of all staff is supported effectively, and there is a powerful sense of community across the school. The school plays an active part in supporting parents and carers and the wider community. They collaborate effectively with the local authority and other schools to develop effective practice. The leaders have shown great determination following the school's previous inspection. They have made significant changes across the school for the betterment of pupils and staff alike.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, including early reading, the school has not consistently monitored teaching, and some teachers do not receive feedback on improving their teaching with enough rigour. This creates gaps in teaching quality and hinders some pupils' progress. Leaders should evaluate teaching effectively and provide staff with the necessary guidance to teach the curriculum confidently and effectively.

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

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| Unique reference number | 110476 |
| Local authority | Milton Keynes |
| Inspection number | 10331890 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 262 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Co-chairs of governing body | Stephen Wheatley and Marian Pearce |
| Headteacher | Robert Mundy |
| Website | www.st-thomasaquinas.co.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 7 and 8 March 2023, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school is part of the diocese of Northampton. The school was last inspected in July 2019 under the Inspection Report of Denominational Character and Religious Education (Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005).
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Bletchley Catholic Schools' Federation. This means that the headteacher and the governing body are responsible for another school alongside this one.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection team met with the executive headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector met with the members of the governing body, including the co-chairs of governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, history, and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors 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. Inspectors also reviewed books and spoke to leaders about art and design and geography.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors 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 inspection team observed behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day. They considered the views expressed in Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of staff and considered the responses to Ofsted’s staff survey.

Inspection team

Toby Martlew, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Francois Walker

Ofsted Inspector

Mineza Maher

Ofsted Inspector

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