



St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120226
LEA Leicester City
Inspection number 280770
Inspection dates 15 November 2005 to 16 November 2005
Reporting inspector Barbara Crane RISP

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Newstead Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Leicester
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Leicestershire LE2 3TA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0116 2706365
Number on roll	260	Fax number	0116 2706365
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Jeremy O'Dwyer
Date of previous inspection	5 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Patricia Mason

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized Catholic primary school. Most of the pupils come from white British families, but a broad range of other ethnic groups is represented. An average number of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. The proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is higher than in most schools. Attainment on entry varies from year to year but is average overall.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's view that it provides a good quality education and that it has some outstanding features. It is a happy place that builds pupils' confidence and enjoyment in learning. Parents are very pleased with what the school provides for their children. Pupils' achievement is generally good because of good teaching throughout the school. Good provision for Reception children means that they build a strong foundation that sets them up well for the future. Standards are good, overall, by the end of Year 6. Standards in writing, however, are only average and the school recognises that these need to improve. Teachers' marking does not always help pupils understand how well they are doing in reaching their targets in writing or ensure that pupils use their skills in writing in other subjects. There is good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and so these pupils make good progress. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language achieve well because they get what they need to succeed.

Pupils show great enthusiasm for school and their personal development and well-being is outstanding because of the very high level of care, guidance and support provided for them. They are very keen to take part in the very wide range of activities provided outside normal lessons. Leadership and management are good and the headteacher provides very effective leadership. She sets the tone for looking closely at where and how improvements can be brought about. This has meant that the dip in standards for the oldest pupils has been resolved. The staff work well as a team and governors give good support. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve standards in writing by ensuring that the guidance given in teachers' marking is linked to pupils' targets and that pupils use their skills in writing more consistently in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good for all groups of pupils. Boys and girls do equally well. Reception children make a good start because their individual starting points are securely built upon. Children make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and develop very good attitudes to work. Children achieve above average standards in most areas of their learning by the end of Reception. However, many children do not form letters correctly when they are writing. Standards are above average, overall, by the time pupils leave the school. Progress for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is good. Pupils show real pleasure in reading, working with numbers, and investigating in science. There is challenging work in these areas that spurs them on to do well. More able pupils achieve particularly well in reading, mathematics and science. In writing, the progress of most pupils is only satisfactory and standards are not as high

because pupils are not always challenged to meet their targets through teachers' marking. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because the work is well adapted to meet their needs. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in very good attendance and first rate attitudes and behaviour. Pupils develop a good range of skills to set them up for their future. They are very confident, friendly and quick to help each other. Pupils from different backgrounds get on very well together. Pupils feel valued because the school recognises their individual talents and nurtures them. They say that they are proud of their school and achievements. They really relish taking part in activities such as sport, the orchestra and choir. Pupils organise events for charity and contribute to the community through their involvement with senior citizens' groups. They show initiative and channel their views and ideas through the school council. This has led to improvements to the play areas. Whilst Catholic principles firmly underpin pupils' development, other faiths are valued and respected. A very good understanding of different faiths and cultures develops through work with other schools and pupils think deeply about what they learn about friendship and tolerance. Pupils get a very good grounding in knowing how to keep safe and lead a healthy life and they put what they learn into practice. They know what to do if they face difficulties in their daily lives and feel that adults are on hand to help them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Very good relationships are established right from the start in Reception and children settle quickly to work because they want to please adults. Pupils enjoy lessons because of the interesting activities. Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) well to engage pupils and pupils in Year 6 have worked hard to use ICT to create an animated version of the story of the creation. Pupils with learning difficulties receive good support from well trained teaching assistants who know what to do to support their learning. Teaching for pupils who are learning English as an additional language is good. Pupils' understanding is frequently checked and support is provided so that these pupils can take a full part in activities. Good checks are made on pupils' progress in most areas and pupils help to set their targets. Teachers' marking, however, does not consistently follow up the progress being made towards targets that have been set. In addition, pupils are not always encouraged to check through their written work and find mistakes for themselves. Homework is very well organised and pupils have some choice over activities. This increases pupils' motivation and they are keen to complete the work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good curriculum keeps pupils interested in learning and activities include opportunities to learn Italian and Latin. Good links are often made between subjects. Older pupils, for example, worked in teams to interpret 'The Gifts of the Holy Spirit' in music, drama, art and design and technology. Whilst pupils make good use of their skills in reading, mathematics and ICT across the curriculum, opportunities to use their skills in writing are sometimes missed. Pupils' learning about healthy lifestyles is well supported through subjects such as physical education and science. Pupils also enjoy lessons in the 'life education bus', which visits annually. There is an outstanding range of activities outside normal lessons. Pupils appreciate the activities on offer and the take up in sport, music, art and drama is very high. Links with specialist secondary schools benefit pupils' achievement in art and sport.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The staff know pupils and their families very well. Pupils say that the staff are kind and look after them. The warm relationships throughout the school mean that pupils readily seek help if they need it, secure in the knowledge that they will be listened to. The school has a good system for tracking the progress made by different groups of pupils and so areas of weakness are identified and acted upon. There is very good attention by the staff and governors to keeping pupils safe and secure and the protection of children is very well assured. The school has the Healthy Schools standard and works hard to ensure pupils' ability to make the right choices over lifestyle. The initiative to improve the quality of school meals has taken pupils' and parents' views into account and has led to the inclusion of salad and fruit on the menu. Pupils like these new arrangements, as well as the easy availability of water through the day. Parents have been involved in sampling the new menus that include more fresh ingredients.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management ensure that the school knows what it needs to do to improve. The headteacher gives a very good lead and keeps a close check on how well the school is doing. There has been an effective focus on raising the attainment of more able pupils. There has been good improvement in the checks made on teaching since the previous inspection. Governors give good support and understand what the school is aiming for. Everyone works well as a team and the professional development of staff is well planned to support improvement. The school knows that it needs to provide better guidance for teachers in marking pupils' written work so that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve. This is an outgoing school that makes the most of the resources in its local community, such as expertise from local secondary schools, to benefit pupils' learning. The school seeks the views of parents and pupils

very well and uses what is learned to bring about change. This has led, for example, to the provision of a wider range of equipment for pupils to use at playtimes and plans to create a quiet area.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. We found that your school is a happy and friendly place and we were very pleased with these things:

you enjoy coming to school and do well in your work

you take part in lots of exciting activities at lunchtime and after school

you behave very well and get on together

the grown ups in your school work hard to keep you safe and healthy. The people in charge of the school want the best for you and know what they need to do to make things even better. We have asked them to:

make sure that the teachers' marking helps you to improve your writing and tells you exactly how well you are doing in meeting your targets.

Thank you again for helping us with our work.

Yours sincerely

Mrs B Crane Lead inspector