



St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122050
LEA Northamptonshire
Inspection number 281161
Inspection dates 22 May 2006 to 23 May 2006
Reporting inspector Doris Bell AI

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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | Northampton Road |
| School category | Voluntary aided | | Kettering |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 | | Northamptonshire NN15 7JZ |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01536 512112 |
| Number on roll | 219 | Fax number | 01536 512112 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | |
| Date of previous inspection | 9 October 2000 | Headteacher | Mr A Agnew |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized voluntary aided Catholic primary school serves the Catholic population in a relatively wide area of Northamptonshire. Most pupils are White British, with a small proportion of pupils coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average. However, this fluctuates from year to year as does the proportion of pupils joining the school after Year 2. Attainment on entry to Reception is higher than expected for the children's ages.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's evaluation of its overall effectiveness as satisfactory is accurate. Whilst standards are above average, the achievement of all groups of pupils is satisfactory, as is the quality of teaching. Standards, the quality of provision and children's progress are satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. In all age groups, there are weaknesses in assessment, planning and the tracking of pupils' progress that result in pupils' work not being well enough matched to their different levels of capability. This limits progress, especially for more able pupils. A very good range of additional activities successfully extends and enhances the otherwise satisfactory curriculum, especially in relation to personal development. Pupils are well cared for, their behaviour is exemplary and they are eager to learn. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall but the school's systems for checking teaching are not sharply enough focused on improving learning. The school has addressed satisfactorily the key issues from the last inspection. It has recognised and is addressing its current weaknesses, including in assessment and in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT). Its work so far demonstrates that it has the capacity to improve. It provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- In all age groups, improve the quality of teachers' planning and marking, and their use of ICT to enable all pupils, and especially the more able, to achieve well.
- Establish robust procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress, use the information in planning and target setting, and involve pupils in these processes in order to accelerate their progress.
- Rigorously monitor teaching and learning to identify further areas for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The pupils' satisfactory achievement is the outcome of satisfactory teaching. Standards are above average at the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6. Standards in Year 6 declined in 2004. However, although the school reversed the situation in 2005, it did not meet the challenging targets it had set at the higher levels last year. Vulnerable pupils, pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, and pupils for whom English is an additional language all make satisfactory progress. Their learning benefits from the contribution of the support staff and the school's effective use of external agencies. However, more able pupils, and those on the borderline between different levels do not always achieve as well as they could. This is because their work is not precisely enough targeted to meet their learning needs and they have too few opportunities to extend their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects. They are, however, acquiring good library skills as a result of the relatively recent focus on using the library better to promote learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and they thoroughly enjoy school. Relationships are very good throughout the school. Pupils are polite, friendly and articulate and it is a joy to speak to them. They readily care for and respect others and their behaviour is exemplary. One pupil confidently reported that 'there are no unkind people in our school'. Attendance is satisfactory. It is held back by parents taking their children on holiday during term time. Pupils successfully adopt safe practices and have a well-developed understanding of the importance of healthy eating and physical exercise. They know that their views are valued and they very much appreciate how the recently formed School Council helps to do this. Pupils make a good contribution to the community by, for example, raising funds for a wide range of charities at home and overseas. They develop good teamwork and acquire satisfactory literacy, numeracy and ICT skills that contribute to their future economic well-being. However, these skills are not as strongly promoted as they could be in all subjects.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but assessment and its use in planning and target setting are unsatisfactory. This, and inconsistencies in teachers' marking, limits pupils' learning and overall progress, making it satisfactory when it could be better. Teachers form very good relationships with their pupils. They instil in them very good attitudes to learning and have very high expectations of their behaviour. However, they do not capitalise on these strengths by planning work that challenges pupils, especially the more able, to do even better and learn to work at a faster pace. However, the clear, measurable targets set for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, and those set for pupils for whom English is an additional language, contribute to these pupils' satisfactory progress. Sound assessment procedures have recently been put in place but their usefulness is limited because they do not include the precise tracking of individual pupils' progress. This means that gaps in learning are not being addressed as early as they could be, and therefore progress is limited. All test results are analysed, pupils' work is assessed at two points in the year, and areas in which achievement is weaker are clearly identified. However, teachers do not use this information properly to set precise targets for pupils or to raise the quality of their lesson planning. The targets that are set are not shared with the pupils, and pupils are not sufficiently involved in assessing and improving their own work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Whilst overall satisfactory, the curriculum greatly enhances pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education. It caters adequately for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, and for pupils for whom English is an additional language. However, it is not well enough planned to provide the additional challenges that enable more able pupils, or pupils on the borderline between different levels, to reach higher standards in their work. A very good range of additional activities, visits and visitors greatly enhances pupils' learning and personal development in and outside the normal school day. These include popular clubs, sports and the arts activities, residential visits, and the effective use of the local environment. The school does not make enough use of these exciting experiences to enhance learning in literacy, numeracy or ICT. There are weaknesses in the provision for ICT. Year 6 do not have sufficient opportunities to acquire and use the skills expected. There are good examples of pupils in Year 3 and Year 5 using computer skills well to support their learning in different subjects but this good practice is not consistent across the school. The school is addressing these weaknesses as it builds up its ICT resources and improves teachers' expertise.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The effective care, support and guidance offered to pupils contribute greatly to their good personal development and well-being. Parents and pupils alike very much appreciate this. Several parents described this aspect of the school's work as 'excellent', and pupils reported that 'teachers are kind and helpful' and dinner ladies are always there to help'. Health and safety procedures are good as are the procedures for child protection. They ensure that all pupils are safe and well cared for, including the most vulnerable. Within this overall very positive picture, however, pupils do not receive enough academic support and guidance because their progress is not tracked well enough and they do not have targets to assist their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management, which are satisfactory overall, have not been sufficiently focused on raising achievement. However, they have promoted good care and personal development and established an environment in which pupils want to learn. Parents are highly satisfied with the school and it regularly seeks and acts on their views. The school's evaluation of its own work is satisfactory but not sufficiently robust or systematic. This is why leaders view a number of aspects of its work more favourably than the inspection team. Teaching is checked regularly. However, the impact it has on learning does not feature strongly enough in the evaluations, and areas for development are not always identified clearly. Governors are well informed about the school's work but they do not challenge the school well enough. For example, they have not questioned why achievement is only satisfactory when children start school

with above average levels of attainment and have such enthusiasm for learning. The school has satisfactorily addressed the issues for improvement since the last inspection and it knows what it needs to do to improve. This is evident in the improved test results in 2005, in the improving provision for ICT, and in the developing work on improving assessment procedures, all of which demonstrate that the school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

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Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|--|-----|----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 | NA |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage | 3 | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 | 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? | 3 | NA |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 | NA |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | NA |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 | NA |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 | NA |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 | NA |
| The attendance of learners | 3 | NA |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 | NA |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 | NA |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 | NA |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 | NA |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 | 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? | 3 | NA |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 | NA |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 3 | NA |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 | NA |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 | NA |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 | 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

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School Northampton Road Kettering Northamptonshire NN15 7JZ 24 May 2006 Dear Pupils Thank you for making us so very welcome in your school. It was a real delight to talk to you and to find out how much you enjoy school and appreciate what your teachers do for you. Here are some of the other things we particularly liked about your school:

- your behaviour is excellent. You are very polite and kind, and you help each other and your teachers in all sorts of ways
- you have a good understanding of how to keep yourselves safe, and of why it is important to keep fit and healthy
- you are well cared for and the school works very hard to ensure that you are safe and secure at all times. We have asked your school to help you to learn faster by:

- helping your teachers to improve the ways in which they plan and mark your work, and giving you more opportunities to use ICT
- finding better ways of checking up on and recording your progress and involving you in this by setting you targets and showing you the steps you need to take to achieve them
- making sure that the school gives teachers more chances to discuss the quality of their lessons and ways to these could be improved to help speed up your learning.

We wish you well and hope that you will continue to enjoy learning more and more as you grow up. Yours sincerely Doris Bell Lead inspector
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