



# St Thomas More Roman Catholic Comprehensive School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 100196  
**LEA** Greenwich LEA  
**Inspection number** 285330  
**Inspection dates** 25 May 2006 to 25 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Michael Chisnall HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Footscray Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		London
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		SE9 2SU
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	02088506700
<b>Number on roll</b>	606	<b>Fax number</b>	02082941855
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Gerald Peters
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30 April 2001	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Marcus Ryan

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	25 May 2006 - 25 May 2006	285330

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Thomas More is a smaller than average secondary school specialising in mathematics and computing. It is heavily over-subscribed, admitting Catholic students from a small number of primary schools. Students come from the full ability range but, taken overall, their attainment is above average when they start at the school. There is an average proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages but very few speak English as an additional language. Although there is an average number of students with learning difficulties or disabilities, the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Few students are eligible for free school meals. The headteacher was appointed at the start of the summer term 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The effectiveness of St Thomas More School is outstanding. A comment from one student summed it up, 'The school teaches me to be a nice person; this is just as important as the academic side'. Therein lies what makes this school such a good environment for learning and achievement; the two elements at the heart of its success.

Most students attain exceptionally high standards by the time they leave the school. From a good start, the students' rate of progress in academic subjects accelerates so that they are very well prepared for GCSE examinations. The school recognises that the achievement of the most able and those with learning difficulties is good and that they could do even better. There are some important factors that enable such good attainment. Students have a very strong commitment to learning; they work hard and behave extremely well. Significantly, attendance is above average and students come to school in good time. The teaching they receive is of good quality and much of it is outstanding. Staff know their subjects well and make their lessons interesting. They ensure there is intellectual challenge and have high expectations of students. There is excellent support for students who need extra help and very effective systems to check the progress of all. The curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities that meets the needs of learners well. However, the school has correctly identified the need to broaden the range of vocational courses at Key Stage 4.

The school's success is underpinned by excellent leadership and management at all levels. There is a relentless focus on achievement brought about through a very accurate analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. At the heart of the school is a belief that every student is important; this is a reality that is recognised by students and their parents. As a result, learning flourishes. This school has continued to improve since its last inspection, dealing effectively with weaknesses in information and communication technology (ICT) and improvement planning; in addition it has built upon its strengths. It works successfully with other agencies, including local parishes, to support students. It is very well placed to improve still further and offers excellent value for money. A comment from a parent of an older student sums up the school's effectiveness well: 'My child could have had no better education or preparation for adulthood.' This forthright statement is strongly supported by inspection evidence.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

When students enter the school, their overall attainment is above average. During Key Stage 3 they make good progress, achieve well and attain standards that are significantly above average, especially in English and mathematics. Interventions by the school are helping them to improve their achievement still further, particularly those who are higher attaining. Students increase their rate of progress during Key Stage 4 and reach standards that are very high. There are consistently high expectations of achievement and students are set challenging targets that they are on track to meet.

Those with learning difficulties are given very effective support which helps them to achieve well. Students with particular talents are stretched so that they, too, achieve standards that are good for their abilities. Through close checking of these students' progress, the school knows exactly where achievement could be even better and is active in promoting this end.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Students' personal development is outstanding and a major strength of the school. Their behaviour is exemplary and includes very high quality relationships with each other and with staff. They are responsible and confident young people who show significant enjoyment in learning and school life. They are very proud of their school. Students are fully aware of how to live healthy lives. They value the good example set by the catering facility in its meal options. They feel completely safe in school and recognise that bullying is rare. As one student commented, 'The rules make it a safe place'.

Students put their high levels of social awareness into practice and are keen to contribute to the wider life of the school by acting as wet break prefects or reading partners. This enthusiasm also extends to the local and world communities, where students make significant contributions such as providing the money for a house for a family in Bosnia. They have skills that will serve them well in future education or employment. The strong Catholic ethos of the school makes a major contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is first-class. They are excellent young citizens.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good across the school and much is outstanding. The relationships between students and staff are of a very high order, making a significant contribution to a strong learning ethos. Staff know students very well and, as a consequence, are able to pitch the content of lessons at the right levels to motivate, challenge and inspire students. Lessons are conducted at a good pace and little time is wasted.

A wide range of teaching styles helps to make lessons interesting for students, who recognise that they are taught well. Individual targets help promote students' learning and the feedback they receive through marking helps them see how they could improve their work. Learning support assistants make a major contribution to the learning of students who need extra help. Homework is used consistently to complement school-based work and students note that it is helpful but sufficient. Some parents correctly expressed a concern that teaching has not been consistent enough in some

subjects, recognising that teacher vacancies have resulted in temporary staff being used. This situation has been fully resolved for the coming year.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum meets the needs of students well overall and meets statutory requirements. It is enriched by a wide range of additional activities that are valued by students. The Computers for Girls club is well attended and provides very good opportunities for ICT confidence to be developed. Overall, ICT is promoted well across all subjects and students recognise its usefulness in promoting learning in different disciplines. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The personal, social and health education courses enable students to develop their personal skills very well. Although there has been some improvement in the provision of vocational courses, more remains to be done to broaden the choices for the older students. Nevertheless, work-related learning is a consistent feature of provision from Year 9 upwards. In addition, links with a sixth-form college enable students to access courses in critical thinking and in an additional mathematics qualification.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Students are cared for exceptionally well and systems to promote their safety and well-being are very well organised. Their academic and personal developments are monitored very closely so that support is provided where needed and targets set for all. There are outstanding opportunities for students to receive guidance on personal and academic matters and they know that staff can be turned to for advice and support. Staff are described by students as completely approachable, a view echoed by many parents. There is high quality support for vulnerable students who may be at risk of exclusion or underachievement.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding because they are clearly focused on the personal and academic development of each student and enable them to achieve very well in a calm oasis of learning. The senior management team provide excellent leadership, setting very clear goals for staff and students alike, underpinned by an accurate analysis of the school's strengths and areas that require development. As a result, plans for improvement are well focused on the right priorities and the school's capacity for continued improvement is very strong.

There is very systematic checking by senior and middle managers of the quality of provision, not least of which is the quality of teaching. This enables managers to identify quickly where provision could be even better and to bring about improvement. Good examples of these are noted in improvements to ICT and science provision, including the securing of permanent appointments to key posts.

Governors have a very good understanding of their roles and discharge their responsibilities, including prudent budget management, very well indeed. They are an excellent support to the school as well as being effective critical friends, not shrinking from holding the school to account. Good links with parents are established and there is growing account taken of parents' and students' opinions. However, not all parents feel that individual queries are dealt with as efficiently as they would like. The school is held in high regard by the local communities.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Inspection judgements

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

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	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	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	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	1	NA

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Students

Thank you for the very warm welcome you extended to me when I visited your school recently. I met many of you and you were very keen to tell me your thoughts about the school. In return, I want to tell you what I thought. I was very impressed by your behaviour, politeness and the way that you got on well with each other. I could see how well you look after the school buildings and grounds. In lessons I noticed how hard you worked and the excellent way that you responded to your teachers' questions. All of these successes create a very good learning environment where you can get on and make progress. Certainly, most of you make at least good progress and your exam results are excellent.

You told me that you are taught well and I agree. The staff work hard to provide you with interesting lessons that help you to learn well. There are lots of interesting activities for you to do at lunchtimes and after school as well as opportunities for private study. I think there should be more vocational options in Years 10 and 11 to increase the choices you have and I have asked staff to look at how this can be arranged. You have excellent systems for keeping you safe in school and for ensuring that you get the right help if you need it. You are very fortunate in having staff that really care about how well you are doing both in your lessons and in your personal development. One of you told me that you were a close community where people really cared about each other. That is absolutely how it is.

Many of you told me that you and your parents are very proud of the school and lucky to be there. You have every right to be so proud. I really enjoyed my day with you and wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Chisnall

Her Majesty's Inspector