



St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103723
Local Authority Coventry
Inspection number 286735
Inspection dates 28–29 November 2006
Reporting inspector David Cox

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Watercall Avenue
School category	Foundation		Styvechale
Age range of pupils	3–11		Coventry CV3 5AZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	024 76412619
Number on roll (school)	414	Fax number	024 76693896
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Leo Poole
		Headteacher	Mary Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	28–29 November 2006	286735

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is a larger than average sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average but has increased significantly in recent years. The attainment of children on entry to the Nursery is, on average, higher than that generally seen, although some year groups are closer to average. The headteacher was appointed to the school in January 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an improving school that provides a satisfactory education. Pupils achieve satisfactorily and reach above average standards because the teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. Parents and pupils are happy with the school. They comment on its caring nature and the approachability of the staff. They appreciate the good care, guidance and support which underpin pupils' good personal development and well-being. The strong Christian ethos is particularly successful in promoting pupils' good personal development.

Children make a good start in the Nursery and Reception. Good teaching enables them to make good progress in all aspects of their learning. Children make particularly good progress with their communication, language and numeracy because teachers know the needs of the children well. Attainment on entry to Year 1 this year is above average.

By the time pupils leave Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science, and this is reflected in the most recent set of results. Whilst achievement is satisfactory overall, information gathered on pupils' previous performance is not always used to plan work for pupils of different abilities, which restricts their progress.

Pupils feel safe and speak enthusiastically about how they enjoy their time at school. They appreciate the support they get from adults in the school. Pupils behave well because adults actively promote the school's caring ethos and encourage pupils to be courteous and polite. Pupils are encouraged to express their opinions through the school and class councils. They say there is little they would change about the school, apart from wanting more opportunities for sport. Even so, pupils adopt healthy lifestyles. Their concern for others is demonstrated by the many fundraising events they organise and their positive contribution to the local and wider community. Pupils develop good basic skills which prepare them well for later life.

This is a well led and managed school. The headteacher provides good leadership and is supported well by the deputy headteacher. The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and pupil progress has been strengthened. The rigour and effectiveness with which the four new quality improvement leaders are carrying out their role varies, consequently pupils are not making good progress in every year. With effective support from the local authority and the recent significant improvements, the school is well placed to move forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teachers' use of assessment data to set more challenging work so that pupils make consistently good progress in Years 1 to 6.
- Ensure that the quality improvement leaders take a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are above average and reflect pupils' satisfactory progress.

During their time in the Nursery and Reception, children make good progress, with most achieving beyond what is expected nationally by the end of Reception. Good planning and exciting activities ensure that children's needs are addressed carefully and they make good progress in all areas of learning.

From their entry to the school, pupils make satisfactory progress so that by the end of Year 6, standards are above average. Results from the tests in 2006 and pupils' current work show that these standards are being maintained. In 2005, standards in English, mathematics and science were exceptionally high at the end of Year 6. This represented satisfactory achievement for this group of pupils, who started Year 3 with very high standards.

Pupils now make better progress than they did in 2003 when there was considerable underachievement. The improvement is as a consequence of better teaching, tracking of pupil progress and target setting. The school has correctly identified that standards need to be raised even further. Leaders are taking action to make the required improvements and observations made during the inspection indicate that these actions are beginning to have the desired effect. Pupils' targets are challenging and these are helping to improve achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are developing as well-rounded people because of the good provision for their personal development. Their spiritual development is outstanding because pupils make very good use of the many opportunities to reflect on the world around them. Pupils' moral and social development is good. Children settle quickly into the Nursery and even the youngest children know the difference between right and wrong. Most pupils behave well in classrooms and at playtimes. Good relationships are evident throughout the school. Staff are quick to sort out any bullying and records show that this is a rare event. Pupils' well-developed social skills prepare them well for the future. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The school council, for example, is proactive in making suggestions to improve the school, and Year 6 pupils take on many responsibilities to help the school run smoothly. In some classes, pupils do not have enough opportunities to use their initiative or to work independently. Pupils' cultural development is also good and pupils have a good awareness of the range of cultural traditions represented in British society.

Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their good levels of attendance. They are very conscious of how to stay safe and they are aware of what they need to do to stay healthy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

In the Nursery and Reception, the interest and enthusiasm of teachers, with the good support of other adults, motivates the younger pupils to make good progress. Children are given many opportunities to work and play together and this helps them to develop good social skills. Well-planned learning activities ensure that the needs of children are catered for effectively.

In Years 1 to 6, teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are examples of outstanding teaching, particularly in Year 6. This has helped to boost the achievement of pupils who had underachieved previously. Pupils' behaviour is managed very well by staff and they respond positively to the praise and encouragement they receive. Assessment data is not always used consistently by all staff to set tasks that challenge pupils to do their best. Occasionally, time is lost when pupils spend too much time copying down the aim for the lesson and are not actively engaged in learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum in the Nursery and Reception is good. Interesting and purposeful activities are well organised and promote effective learning. In the rest of the school the need to raise standards in literacy and numeracy is identified and this is now emphasised in the planning. However, there are occasions when the sessions for literacy and numeracy are too long and not all pupils can maintain their concentration. Where cross-subject links are being developed well, pupils give their full attention to their work, resulting in their enjoyment of activities and themes. This practice is more rigorously developed in Years 5 and 6, where the teaching of reading and writing skills is integrated more effectively into other subjects than in other years.

The curriculum is enriched considerably with visits and residential visits. This has a positive impact on pupils' personal development. The good use of information and communication technology (ICT) makes learning more relevant. The use of topical news bulletins from Internet websites, for example, further develops pupils' skills in writing. Good links with other schools and good drugs awareness and sex education through links with outside agencies contribute well to pupils' social and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

'We feel safe at school' and 'We can always turn to someone if we have a problem' are opinions that spring from the good provision the school makes to meet pupils' all-round needs. This good care is firmly based on the school's strong Christian ethos. It is characterised by positive and encouraging support and guidance from all staff for each

individual. This personal support is backed up by the clear procedures and checks in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Pupils are now given clear information about what they need to do to move on to the next step in their learning. This is based on regular and careful assessments of their attainment and progress. These procedures are relatively new and are still being embedded. They are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school, including governance, are good. The headteacher leads the school well and, through the introduction of rigorous school self-evaluation, is taking the school forward in many areas. Strengths and weaknesses have been accurately identified and new initiatives implemented in order to raise standards. Most have been successful in bringing about considerable improvement in the progress that pupils make. The leadership team has been strengthened with the support of a new deputy headteacher. The four quality improvement leaders, who form part of the wider leadership team, are new to their roles and are not yet ensuring consistent practice and application of policies so that pupils' progress is good across all years.

The school has developed good partnerships with outside agencies to support its work. Governors' and parents' views are sought and considered when drawing up plans for improvement. Governors are highly committed to the school. They challenge the headteacher when necessary, give the school good support and make sure statutory requirements are met. With the support of the local authority, the school is on course to reduce a considerable budget deficit by the end of this financial year.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, we visited your school recently to find out how well St Thomas More's is doing. We would like to thank you for looking after us so well. We enjoyed talking with so many of you during play time and lunch time about your school, the work you have done and how much you enjoy coming to school. We think that the school is providing you with a satisfactory education.

What we found

During your time in the Nursery and Reception, you make good progress because your teachers know you well and provide you with lots of exciting things to do. Those of you in Years 1 to 6 make satisfactory progress and attain above-average standards in Year 6 because your teachers help you to work hard and provide interesting activities for you most of the time. You like coming to school and say there is little that you would change. You enjoy all the extra visits that you take part in, although you say that you would like more opportunities to take part in sport. The adults in your school look after you well. Your parents also value the good care that you receive. Most of you bring healthy food in your lunch boxes and the school also gives you lots of healthy food at lunchtimes. Your headteacher and all the other staff know what works well in the school and what needs to be done to make it even better.

We have asked the school to make sure that lessons are as good as they can be so that you have to think hard and are helped to improve your standards. The teachers need to keep a closer eye on how well you are doing so that you can be given more challenging work. You can help by working as hard as you can.

Thank you once again for your help.