

Redditch, St Thomas More Catholic First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116910
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	290676
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Andrew Watters HMI

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	188
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Laura Smiles
Headteacher	Liz Fitton
Date of previous school inspection	15 April 2002
School address	Woodrow Centre Studley Road Redditch B98 7RY
Telephone number	01527 525821
Fax number	01527 517453

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Thomas More Catholic First School is situated in the Woodrow centre in Redditch. The school serves an area of social and economic deprivation which has been identified by the local authority as a priority for extended school support and a children's centre. Currently 39% of the pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, which is well above the 2006 national average of 19%. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is 11%, which is below the national average of 16%. Most pupils come from the school's immediate catchment area and live in a mix of privately owned and local authority housing.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where children achieve well, both in their academic work and in their social and emotional development. The school's Catholic ethos and its Christian principles are reflected well in the children's good behaviour and attitudes and in the adults' support, challenge and encouragement of all children. A strong sense of justice, tolerance and fairness is evident in the school's work and in the determination of the staff to play a full part in helping the children do their best and achieve well. Targets are challenging and reflect the school's high expectations. The children are given a secure start when they come into the school. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, although the children's standards of attainment are very low. By the time they leave the school the children make good progress and, taking into account their very low starting point, achievement overall is good. In Years 3 and 4 the rate of progress in writing and mathematics is satisfactory. At the end of Year 2 and Year 4, standards are average overall.

The children's personal development and their well-being are good. They behave well and have positive attitudes. They enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their good attendance. The children are cheerful and confident and feel safe and secure. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers and other adults successfully develop the children's personal qualities and improve their basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. On occasions, however, teachers' assessments are not always used well enough to match the children's work to their different starting points and capabilities. The children who have learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress.

Over a third of parents returned inspection questionnaires and the great majority were overwhelmingly positive. One parent wrote: 'The school is brilliant. The children would like to stay here 24 hours, seven days a week'. Another parent reflected the school's strong reputation in the community when she said that 'the staff and headteacher are very supportive of families as well as the children'. The curriculum and the quality of care, support and guidance are good. Children are prepared well for their move to local middle schools and many attend a good range of enjoyable and stimulating after-school activities. The pastoral welfare of the children is good. The development of their social skills and their understanding of the difference between right and wrong are promoted successfully. Academic guidance is secure, although many pupils are unsure about their targets for improvement in writing and mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 2.

The quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher is effectively managing many important initiatives to raise achievement and is successful in doing so. Self-evaluation and strategic planning are good. Senior teachers make a satisfactory and improving contribution to the school's leadership. The arrangements for monitoring and checking the quality of teaching are satisfactory but not yet sufficiently rigorous and systematic. The governing body carries out its statutory duties well. The school has improved well since its last inspection and has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement at Key Stage 2 and particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Ensure that the headteacher and senior teachers monitor the quality of teaching and learning more rigorously and systematically.

- Ensure that the children's work is matched more consistently to their different learning needs and that children know and understand their targets for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children enter the school their attainment is often exceptionally low and consistently well below what is expected for their age. They make steady progress in the Foundation Stage and by the end of Year 2 they achieve well, make good progress and standards are in line with the national average. In Key Stage 2 the children's progress is more variable. It is good in reading and satisfactory in writing and mathematics. Given the children's very low starting point, their achievement is good. Almost 60% reach or exceed the level expected for their age at the end of Year 4 and 30% make exceptional progress, particularly in reading. Out of the current Year 4 cohort, the school has increased the proportion of children who are reaching above-average levels by almost 40% and has more than halved the number of children who are not reaching the level expected for their age. The school recognises that standards and achievement in writing and mathematics in Years 3 and 4 are not yet good enough; for example, 35% of the children do not yet make sufficient progress in these subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The children are proud of their school, enjoy new discoveries and experiences and delight in their achievements and those of their friends. Most work diligently, generally listen carefully and do their best. Behaviour and relationships are good, although a minority of Year 4 children do not always behave as well as they could in lessons. Attendance is good. The youngest children are developing their social skills, relationships and independence well. Most children have a good understanding of their responsibilities to others, both in the school and the local community. Children feel safe and very secure, knowing that any bullying will be resolved quickly. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, secure in the school's strong sense of Christian community. The children have a sound understanding of other faiths and cultures, for example, the Hindu celebration of Diwali and the Chinese New Year. They also show a developing knowledge about the global economy through their work on Fair Trade and the Catholic Church's fundraising activities. Awareness of healthy living and keeping safe is strong, with dance, cricket and swimming activities popular in well-attended school clubs. Children appreciate the work of the school council and eco-committee, for example, the improvements that have been made in the playground. Children feel that their teachers are friendly, their views are listened to and that school life is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The great majority of children achieve well by the time they leave the school because the quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and classes are usually managed very effectively. Relationships are good and children are encouraged to do their best in a supportive and positive atmosphere. Teaching assistants are deployed well and make an effective contribution to raising achievement. Children's work is assessed and marked regularly and most written comments help the children know what they need to do next to improve their work. Teachers' long- and

medium-term planning provides a good framework for improvement. However, during the inspection, in some lessons, the children's work was not always matched well enough to their different learning needs, particularly in Years 3 and 4. Teaching styles are usually appropriate and effective, although there are times when children spend too long in whole-class introductions and not enough time working in small groups with the adults available. This sometimes slows their progress in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3 and 4.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and adapted well to meet the needs of most children, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, the few who speak English as an additional language and those who are looked after. The provision and outcomes for literacy and numeracy are good, enabling children to achieve well in their acquisition of basic skills. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good, particularly in dance and cricket, which are enjoyed by many boys and girls in all year groups. This is having a positive impact on helping them to lead healthy lifestyles. Visits to places of interest, both locally and beyond, are eagerly anticipated by the children and enrich their learning. The school is keen to further develop children's multicultural experiences and is planning to achieve this by introducing more topics into the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Children and their families are well supported, reflecting the school's Catholic ethos and caring Christian principles, which parents greatly appreciate. Teamwork is strong and adults take great care of the children. Class support for children with learning difficulties and disabilities is good and their individual education plans help them achieve well. The school's arrangements for safeguarding children meet national requirements and risk assessments are carefully attended to. The school works very well with parents and keeps them fully informed about their children's progress. The children are prepared well for the next stage of their education, both academically and socially. The quality of academic guidance is not as strong in writing and mathematics as it is in reading. For example, there are well-established individual reading targets, which are helping the children achieve well, but targets are not set for individual children in writing and numeracy.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of the school's collective leadership and management is good. It is successfully focused on raising achievement and ensuring that the personal development and well-being of all children is promoted effectively. The headteacher is deeply committed to improving the children's life chances and is effective in doing so. The children's achievements and their progress are tracked carefully. Senior teachers are developing their role satisfactorily. They are making a positive contribution to raising achievement and are starting to improve their role in monitoring the school's performance. Self-evaluation and strategic planning are good because the school has accurately identified what it does well and most of its areas for further improvement. The monitoring of the quality of teaching is satisfactory but is not yet sufficiently systematic and rigorous, for example, in checking teachers' planning and children's progress in lessons, particularly at Key Stage 2. The headteacher acknowledges this and is already

considering practical steps to address and improve this important area of the school's work. The chair of governors is both supportive and challenging and is working effectively to ensure that the governing body keeps a watchful eye on the children's welfare and their achievements.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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.

Annex A

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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

8 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Thomas More Catholic First School, Woodrow Centre, Redditch, B98 7RY

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school. We have enjoyed being with you and seeing you working and playing together so well. Thank you for talking to us about your work. You told us that you really enjoyed coming to school and that you like your teachers and all the other adults who work with you. We could see they make sure that you are safe and secure and are well looked after.

You will be very pleased to know that we think you go to a good school which helps you do well in your work and to learn about sharing and living together happily. You have lots of interesting things to do and are kind and considerate to each other. We have asked Mrs Fitton and the teachers to help you do even better in your work. These are the things we have asked them to do:

- Make sure that all of you in Years 3 and 4 do even better in your writing and number work.
- Check your lessons more carefully to make sure that you understand your work and that it helps you learn more new things.
- Make sure that you know your targets for improvement in writing and numeracy so that you know what you have to do to get better.

Thank you again for making us feel so welcome in your school.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Watters Her Majesty's Inspector