

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100176
Local Authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	307318
Inspection date	23 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Elisabeth Linley HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Doherty
Headteacher	Mr P Finlay
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2003
School address	Appleton Road London SE9 6NS
Telephone number	020 8856 9153
Fax number	020 8856 6339

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement in Key Stage 1, pupils' personal development and well-being and the care, guidance and support they receive, also the effectiveness of target setting. Evidence for the inspection was gathered from observation of lessons, the pupils' work, discussion with pupils, staff, some parents and two governors, plus a scrutiny of school documents and parent questionnaires. The curriculum was an aspect of the school's work that was not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessment, as provided in its self-evaluation form, was not justified.

Description of the school

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is slightly smaller in size than most primary schools. The majority of pupils who attend live within the school's immediate locality. In the main, pupils are from a White British cultural heritage, however, a very small number of pupils are new to English or have English as a second language. Although the proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties is below average, the percentage of pupils with a statement for special educational needs is above the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

What a surprise is in store for any visitor to St Thomas More Catholic Primary School! An older building it may be, but inside it opens out into a beautifully maintained and welcoming environment. Pupils' work is everywhere to be seen. Staff take great pride in the displays that are around the school which praise and encourage pupils in their achievement. Pupils, in turn, are proud of their school. They work very hard and achieve well. Parents are right in their judgement that this is a good school.

Everyone has worked well since the last inspection to secure improvement, most notably in pupils' attendance. Attendance used to be unsatisfactory; this is no longer the case. The headteacher, staff and governors have introduced rigorous systems and positive rewards to promote good attendance. The pupils and their parents have responded very well and now attendance is higher than that seen nationally. This reflects the pupils' real enjoyment of school. They say lessons are fun and they love the extra curricular activities that enhance the good quality planned curriculum.

Very good partnerships have been established with others to enhance the curriculum and school has recently heard of its success in gaining the Extended Schools Award. Provision for pupils who are gifted and talented in mathematics is an example of where the strong links are particularly effective. Links with the main feeder nursery school are also strong and children regularly visit school with their teachers to use the computer suite. However, pupils in school, some parents and staff report that access to the suite is not organised to ensure that all pupils use it regularly. As a result, some pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practice their information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

The care and support provided for pupils are of a high quality. It is this level of care, fundamental to the school's Catholic ethos, which encourages pupils' outstanding behaviour and their exemplary attitudes to learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils work hard to care for others within and beyond their school community. The minutes of the school council show their successes; for example, in starting 'eco warriors' in each class who care for their environment, forming a friendship stop on the play ground and raising money for charity - almost £1800 in this year alone. Pupils know the importance of keeping healthy through a good diet and exercise and the school has been successful in gaining the Active Mark and, for the second time, has received the Healthy Schools Award. Pupils also know the importance of being safe; however, they report that on occasions they feel unsafe on the playground given the number of pupils on it.

The guidance provided for pupils' academic development is good. It is led primarily by the headteacher who has the main responsibility for analysing data. This is something that teachers are developing and in which they have differing levels of expertise. However, all teachers take care to ensure that lessons are planned to take account of pupils' differing abilities. Lessons are interesting and questions asked promote pupils' thinking and the application of their skills and knowledge to different tasks. Discussions are positive and, in this way, pupils are helped to improve their work. However, marking, to aid pupils' improvement, is inconsistent and the presentation of pupils' work varies in quality from class to class. Nonetheless, teaching and learning are good overall.

It is the quality of teaching that aids pupils' good achievement, this includes those pupils who have learning difficulties. As a result, pupils attain consistently high standards in the national

tests in Year 6, particularly in English and mathematics and at the higher levels. The picture is slightly different in Key Stage 1 where results of the national tests for pupils in Year 2 that have fluctuated over the last few years. In 2007, standards in reading, writing and mathematics dropped to broadly average overall and the proportion of pupils attaining at the higher levels was below the national average. However, when compared with the starting points of those pupils, it is evident that most achieved well. The school continues to focus on improving pupils' achievement in Key Stage 1 by working with parents and by using appropriate intervention strategies to aid their learning. This is paying dividends and records show that pupils in the current Year 2 are making good progress and are set to attain higher standards than seen in 2007.

Leadership and management of the school are good. Although financial management is effective, the school has a large budget surplus and this was also the case when the school was last inspected. Since that time, school facilities have been improved and it is hoped that a larger building project might be approved in the future; to this end, the surplus has been prioritised. The headteacher provides a strong lead in school taking an active role in the setting of challenging targets and tracking of pupils' progress. Self-evaluation is good and correctly identifies where improvement is required. The headteacher is supported well by the deputy headteacher, a good staff team and by an effective governing body. As a team, they have ensured that their school provides good value for money and, as a team, they demonstrate good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents say that they are very pleased with the way that their children settle in the Reception class. Children are helped to do so by an effective induction into school and the very positive partnership with the main nursery from which they transfer. The very good relationships established between staff, children and parents provide the security required for children to develop in confidence and independence. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is good because of these strengths that contribute well to the children's good achievement. The planned curriculum is balanced with whole class sessions, small group work and opportunities for children to play. Children's progress in the Foundation Stage is monitored through some observational assessments and more formal tracking. The evidence shows that children make good progress in the Foundation Stage given that their attainment on entry to school is broadly in line with what might be expected for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils in Key Stage 1 achieve as well as they can so that standards continue to improve in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Ensure that all pupils have consistent and regular access to information and communication technology (ICT) resources, particularly the computer suite, to aid the effective development of their ICT skills.
- Improve the quality of the presentation of pupils' work and the quality of marking to help pupils' improve so that both reflect the best practice currently in school.

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Annex A

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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

30 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, London, SE9 6NS

Thank you for welcoming me when I visited your school recently. I was pleased to be able to talk to you and to find out about all the things you like. I was soon able to find out that your school is a good school and that:

- You all try very hard to do your best and you do well at school. By the time you reach Year 6 you are reaching high standards particularly in English and mathematics - well done;
- You really like school and you particularly enjoy all the activities provided for you and your residential journey in Year 6;
- You behave very well indeed and your attendance is very good;
- You take very good care of each other and you take your responsibilities in school seriously;
- Everyone at school works extremely hard to look after and support you very well indeed;
- Your teachers make sure that your lessons are good and that learning is fun.

There are some things that I think could be better and your headteacher and teachers are going to work with you to make them improve:

- For those pupils in Key Stage 1, I want you to work hard in your reading, writing and mathematics to make sure that you all achieve really well;
- I want you all to try very hard to make sure that the presentation of your work is always of a good standard and I have asked your teachers to make sure that their marking of your work is always helpful so that you know how to improve;
- Your headteacher is going to make sure that you all get into the computer suite regularly so that you can practice on the computers and develop your ICT skills well.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Elisabeth Linley

Her Majesty's Inspector