

# St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124376
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314908
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Melvyn Hemmings

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	166
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	T Bullivant
<b>Headteacher</b>	Declan McCauley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 May 2004
<b>School address</b>	Huthill Lane Great Wyrley WS6 6PG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01922 857075
<b>Fax number</b>	01922 857078

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. It is popular and oversubscribed, with the number of pupils having doubled in recent years. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are a few Traveller pupils of Irish Heritage families. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.

## 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. It provides pupils with a friendly and calm environment, within a caring Catholic ethos, in which to learn. The overwhelming majority of parents are supportive of the work of the school and the warm family atmosphere that has been created. The following parental comment is typical of many, 'I think that sending my son to this Church School was the best thing I could have done. He has gained a lot of strength from the school, confidence and self-assuredness.'

The progress that pupils make has improved over the last two years and is now good overall. The high levels of pupils' mobility, which adversely affected standards in previous years, have now evened out and no longer pose a problem. Children enter Nursery with skill levels expected for their age and make good progress. Consequently, their attainment is above average when they enter Year 1. This good progress is maintained throughout the rest of the school. As a result, pupils attain standards that are above average in English and science by the end of Year 6. Pupils make satisfactory progress in mathematics and reach standards by the end of Year 6 that are broadly average. This represents achievement that is good overall. Pupils' performance in writing is a relatively weaker aspect of their work in English. This is because their sentence structure, spelling and punctuation are not accurate enough. In mathematics, their calculation skills are underdeveloped and this hinders the progress they make.

The key factor in the school's improvement is good leadership and management. The headteacher has effectively managed the school's growth, which has seen the provision of five extra classrooms and improved staffroom and office facilities in recent years. Senior leaders targeted the improvement of pupils' skills in reading and writing as a means of driving up standards in English. This has proved successful and standards have risen in both areas, particularly in reading. The school is now targeting an improvement in pupils' mathematical skills. As a result, pupils' progress is accelerating in this subject. Some leaders of subjects are relatively new and their role in monitoring and evaluating provision in their subjects is not fully developed.

Pupils behave well and show much enjoyment in coming to school. Their spiritual development is outstanding, acquired through regular faith-based worship involving the whole-school community, including parents and governors. Good teaching and learning is the main reason pupils make good progress. Teachers usually plan lessons well to build upon pupils' previous knowledge and understanding and to take their learning forward. However, they do not always provide activities that effectively challenge pupils who are more able, and this hinders the progress they make.

A wide range of enrichment activities effectively extends the experiences provided for pupils within a good curriculum. These include a good range of extra-curricular activities and the opportunity to take part in stimulating educational visits. The strong pastoral support provided for pupils is very much appreciated by parents. The school works well with other providers to ensure the safety and well-being of all pupils. The school's recent track record shows it has good capacity to make the changes necessary to bring about further improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good in the Foundation Stage and so children make good progress across all areas of learning. As a result, they reach above average standards when they enter

Year 1. Staff understand the needs of children of this age and this enables them to plan activities that are stimulating and capture their interest. Strong emphasis is placed on encouraging children to make choices for themselves and this effectively supports their development as independent learners. Children behave well and show a lot of enjoyment in their learning. They work and play well together in pairs and small groups and this makes a positive contribution to their personal and social development. Leadership and management are good and leaders have identified the need to develop the outside area to more effectively promote children's learning throughout the day. Parents are very pleased with the provision in the Nursery and Reception classes and are kept fully informed of their children's progress.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- 
- Improve the accuracy of pupils' sentence structure, spelling and punctuation in writing and their calculation skills in mathematics.
- Tighten lesson planning to ensure that more able pupils are always effectively challenged.
- Ensure all subject leaders are involved fully in monitoring and evaluating the performance in their subjects.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good progress that pupils make in the Nursery and Reception classes is maintained throughout the rest of the school. As a result, pupils attain standards that are above average in reading and writing at the end of Year 2 and in English and science by the end of Year 6. This represents good achievement overall from their attainment on entering Nursery, which is as expected for children of this age. Though standards are broadly average in mathematics, pupils' rate of progress is beginning to accelerate in this subject. This stems from the recent training and extra support from the local authority to improve the expertise of staff in teaching mathematics. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed and this enables them to effectively communicate their views and ideas to others. Pupils reach good standards in science because of the many opportunities they have to carry out practical scientific investigations. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the extra, well targeted support they receive.

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

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. They listen to each other in class, take turns to speak, and work well in pairs or groups. They say they enjoy school because lessons are interesting and because of the friendships they have made. They effectively learn democratic principles through the school council. Council members show a strong commitment to school improvement, for example, through planned fund-raising to replace the surfaces under playground equipment with safer material. Pupils have a good awareness of environmental issues, as is shown in the way they talk enthusiastically about their new eco-garden. Pupils make a positive contribution to the local community and this has encouraged some generous donations of materials for this garden. Pupils are adopting healthy lifestyles well, as is seen in their healthy choices at lunchtime and in their willingness to take part in physical activity. They know how to stay safe and so move responsibly in and around school. They are well prepared for their future lives.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Pupils have positive attitudes towards their work and are keen to learn. This is beneficial to the good progress they make. Relationships are strong with mutual respect evident between pupils and adults. Teachers explain activities well so pupils are clear about what they are to learn and how to set about their tasks. Pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively in pairs and small groups and this makes a good contribution to their personal development. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas and this effectively promotes their speaking and listening skills. There are times when the work given to pupils who are more able does not stretch them sufficiently. Teachers do not use marking consistently well to suggest to pupils how they might improve their performance. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for all pupils, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This makes a strong contribution to pupils' good progress.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The school has good links with other providers to add interest to the curriculum and further extend pupils' experiences. For example, links with road safety advisors and the local police and fire service make a valuable contribution to pupils' understanding of how to stay safe. A wide variety of school visits add another dimension to pupils' learning. Older pupils have the opportunity to take part in a residential stay at an outdoor education centre and this plays an effective role in promoting their personal and social development. Curriculum planning is not always focused enough to ensure that activities provided for more able pupils challenge them sufficiently. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities to extend further pupils' skills in sport, drama, cooking, science and modern foreign languages.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Pastoral care is strong and is praised by parents, who describe the school as providing a family environment. Rigorous safeguarding procedures are in place. All staff have been trained in child protection procedures and know the course to follow if they have concerns about a pupil. The risk assessments for activities in and around school and on visits are thorough. Pupils say they feel safe and secure and well looked after. The school has good links with outside agencies to provide extra support for individual pupils when needed. The arrangements for tracking the progress of individual pupils are comprehensive. However, the information gained is not always used effectively to plan work that is sufficiently challenging for pupils who are more able. The guidance for pupils on evaluating how well they are doing and how they might improve is effective, and pupils are gaining these skills well.

## Leadership and management

#### Grade: 2

Self-evaluation is accurate and enables leaders to identify and prioritise areas for development. This is evident in the way an improvement in standards and achievement in reading and writing

was targeted. This has proved successful and provision in mathematics is now a priority for development. In this way, leaders plan school improvement well so staff are not faced with too many targets to achieve at once. Performance management is good and effectively links individual professional development needs to whole-school priorities. The roles of some recently appointed subject leaders are not fully developed and so they do not yet have a complete view of provision in their subjects. The leadership of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and plays an important role in the good progress these pupils make. Governors are supportive of the school and willing to ask relevant questions of school leaders to hold them to account for its performance.

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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?	2
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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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

16 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Great Wyrley, WS6 6PG

Thank you for the really friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the things you do. Yours is a good school. It helps you make good progress overall and reach standards in English and science by the end of Year 6 that are above average. The progress you make in mathematics is improving, though currently your standards are average by the time you leave school. All of you could help your school by always trying your best in lessons.

What we found about your school:

- It is a very friendly and happy place in which to work and play.
- You behave well and are keen to learn.
- Your spiritual development is outstanding.
- The after-school clubs and a wide range of visits and visitors add interest to the curriculum.
- You enjoy coming to school and are kind and considerate to others.
- You are leading healthy lifestyles and show a good awareness of how to stay safe.
- Parents are pleased with the way the school looks after you.
- You make a good contribution to the school community, such as by being a member of the school council, and to the life of the local community.
- Adults make sure you are safe in and around school and on visits.
- The leaders of the school are working hard to make improvements and help you do better.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Help you to write more accurately and improve your calculation skills in mathematics.
- Improve teachers' lesson planning to make sure those of you who find work easy are always challenged effectively.
- Involve more effectively those teachers who lead subjects in checking how well the school is doing.

All my best wishes for the future.

Melvyn Hemmings Lead inspector