

# St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	107119
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sheffield
<b>Inspection number</b>	324531
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Andrew Swallow

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	180
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr M Levery
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Claire Greenwood
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 April 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Creswick Lane Grenoside Sheffield South Yorkshire S35 8NN

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 March 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	324531

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school, with the vast majority of pupils of White British heritage. Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes in staffing and a new headteacher and senior leadership team is in place. Fewer pupils than average are eligible for a free school meal. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above that found nationally. The school has the Healthy Schools and International Schools Awards, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, and is affiliated to the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust.

## 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 an improving school that is providing a good quality of education for its pupils. The recently appointed headteacher has successfully tackled the challenges arising from significant changes in staffing since the last inspection. These changes have slowed pupils' progress in the past. Staffing is now stable and pupils are making good progress in lessons. Outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils lies at the heart of the school's work. Pupils show high levels of support and respect for each other and the adults who work around them, and have an excellent understanding of the different faiths and cultures in modern day society. Parents are extremely supportive; 'The teachers work really hard, nothing is too much trouble.' is a typical comment.

Children get off to a sound start in the Reception. From below typical age-related starting points, the vast majority are working towards the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Reception Year. However, because opportunities are missed to encourage all children to work and think independently, their communication and mathematical skills are not as well developed as they might be by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils' achievement is good across Years 1 to 6 and although standards are broadly average overall, many reach above average standards in English and science by the time they leave school. Standards in mathematics are improving as a result of practical, problem solving strategies to develop pupils' oral and calculation skills. Nevertheless, not all high attaining pupils reach the levels of which they are capable in mathematics. Well targeted support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities means that they make the same good progress as their peers.

Teaching is good overall, with a small proportion of satisfactory lessons. Most teachers involve pupils actively in their work and make learning fun. Lessons are generally interesting with lots of opportunities for pupils to find out things for themselves. However, in some classrooms work is not always matched carefully enough to pupils' needs and teachers tend to direct the learning too much.

Pupils' personal development is good. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of keeping healthy and take part in a wide range of sporting and extra-curricular activities. They say how much they really enjoy school life. Nevertheless, overall attendance is broadly average. This is despite the school's best efforts to work with a small number of families who persistently keep their children at home. Pupils' strong literacy and numeracy skills and their good understanding of the world of work prepare them well for their future lives. The curriculum is good, with a range of 'hands-on' experiences and a variety of enrichment opportunities that widen pupils' understanding about their own community and the lives of people in different countries. The quality of care, guidance and support is also good. Pastoral care of pupils is of a particularly high quality. Most pupils understand what they are aiming for and how to improve their work.

Leadership and management are good. Governance is outstanding. As a result self-evaluation is accurate and has identified the right priorities to continue to improve the school's work. The committed leadership of the headteacher and governors, and developing strengths of the senior leadership team, are raising achievement and standards. These factors ensure that the school has good capacity for further improvement and that it provides good value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Parents say they are pleased about the way the school welcomes new children. Although there is a spread of attainment, the majority enter Reception with skills that are below those expected for their age and some with well below typically expected communication, personal and social skills. Overall, they make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that, by the end of the Reception Year, most children are working towards the Early Learning Goals, although their communication and mathematical skills are not as well developed as they might be. Relationships with adults are good and, by the time they leave Reception, many children work well together, learning to share and show respect for each other. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Staff work effectively as a team, are clear about their roles and participate enthusiastically in the children's work and play. They know what is required for children to develop but not all are confident about stepping back, allowing the children to learn for themselves, observing, then building skilfully on what they can or cannot do. As a result some children do not have enough opportunities to think for themselves. The indoor environment is well resourced, affording a good range of learning opportunities. However, the outdoor space is underdeveloped and activities are restricted. Leadership and management are satisfactory. However, the recently appointed coordinator has a clear idea of what needs to happen next and is already making improvements.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have more opportunities to think and work independently, to improve their communication and mathematical skills.
- Increase the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in mathematics by the end of Year 6.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils start Year 1 with overall levels of skills and knowledge that are below average. The vast majority reach challenging targets to leave Year 6 with overall average standards and above average standards in English and science. This demonstrates good progress across the school. Following a dip in Year 2 standards in recent years, largely due to changes in staffing, pupils now achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics across Key Stage 1. As a result of the school's practical and imaginative strategies to help pupils develop their writing and mathematical skills, current standards in Key Stage 2 are also rising. However, the school recognises that more needs to be done to ensure that high attaining pupils are sufficiently stretched to reach the levels of which they are capable in mathematics. Well targeted support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities means that they achieve well and make good progress. Outcomes in science, throughout the school, are particularly strong, reflecting the school's specialist resources.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils are well behaved, have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school. They say that their lessons are fun and that they really like solving problems for themselves and working with each other. They develop good basic skills to support their future economic

well-being and a good insight into the world of business through the many enterprise projects they undertake. They are eager to talk about the many opportunities for responsibility, such as helping as telephone monitors, playground leaders or taking one of the many roles on the school council. Good relationships are reflected at every level and pupils feel strongly that they are listened to and encouraged to express their views. They say they feel safe and clearly understand the distinction between right and wrong. Through their links with the local Catholic Church, fundraising for a number of different charities, Fair Trade work, and understanding of what it is like for a child growing up in East Africa, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The vast majority have an excellent appreciation of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and take part in a wide range of sporting activities, both in and after school. Attendance, although broadly average, is not as high as it could be, despite the school's sustained efforts to improve it. This is because a small proportion of families persist in keeping their children at home.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and is never less than satisfactory. For the most part, lessons are well planned to incorporate interesting activities, with a strong practical element, and frequent opportunities for pupils to discuss ideas and think for themselves. Relationships are very positive and most children are ready to learn. Skilful questioning enables teachers to determine how well pupils are learning and whether they require further explanation or additional resources to enable them to make even better progress. In the best lessons, teachers model good work by showing pupils precisely 'what a good one looks like' then pupils understand exactly what is expected of them. In a small proportion of lessons, however, teachers talk for too long and pupils are not as involved as much as they might be in their learning. Work is not always matched effectively to their needs. Across the school teachers mark pupils' work regularly and increasingly indicate how they can improve. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively to ensure that no pupil is left behind.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is increasingly responsive to pupils' needs and interests. Teachers are developing successful links between subjects to ensure that pupils extend key understanding, while retaining an emphasis on literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. The emphasis on experimenting, investigating and working things out independently is well developed across Years 1 to 6 and a direct result of the school's science focus. These approaches are having a positive impact on pupils' writing and problem solving skills and on their confidence in using computers. Effective links with local community services enhance pupils' personal and health education. Pupils' learning is brought to life by the many visits and visitors which lead to meaningful projects in the local community, such as work on the Hillsborough football tragedy. A good range of enrichment activities, including sport, dance, art and music, together with the many enterprise ventures, all help pupils to broaden their horizons.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Adults provide high quality care and support for all pupils. This is firmly reflected in the inclusive ethos evident throughout the school. Child protection and safeguarding procedures meet requirements. Parents particularly appreciate the way in which their children are helped to settle quickly into school and prepared for life beyond St Thomas More. Pupils talk proudly of their school and say, 'Everyone really cares.' Effective partnerships with a range of providers help the more vulnerable, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to overcome barriers to learning. In addition, good mentoring provides one-to-one and small group support. The high standard of support is a significant factor in pupils' enjoyment of school. Academic guidance is good. All pupils have targets and most are confident about how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. They are regularly encouraged to check the progress they, and their peers, are making.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The recently appointed headteacher has managed the many changes in staffing effectively. She is building a strong culture in which all adults feel they have an essential role to support all pupils to achieve their potential. Her aspiration for providing stimulating learning experiences, and for developing close partnerships with local and international communities, is engaging all around her. The new senior leadership team is equally committed to maximising every pupil's life chances. Refined monitoring procedures for reading, writing, mathematics and science are enabling earlier and more effective intervention, particularly where pupils may be underperforming. Self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders and managers, at all levels, contribute to the regular evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' outcomes. Arrangements to enhance community cohesion and promote equality are good. Parents talk positively about how well the school reaches out into the local community. Effective links with the 'Family of Schools', the local parish and community services, together with regular theme days, and assemblies on life in East Africa, ensure pupils appreciate the importance of belonging to a society which embraces different cultures and values. Governors have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are ambitious on behalf of all learners and are highly supportive of staff's efforts to raise achievement and standards. They are confident in holding leaders to account for the progress the school makes.



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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
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
The extent to which 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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## 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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	1
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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Sheffield, S35 8NN

Thank you very much for the welcome and help you gave to the inspectors when we came to your school recently. We liked how you talked to us in such a friendly way. We were especially impressed by how well you all get on with each other.

You are really welcoming to visitors and show good levels of respect for the adults working with you. We were particularly impressed with the work you carry out as telephone monitors, playground leaders and school councillors, as well as how often you get involved in enterprise activities and charity work. Many of you talk about the lives of children in East Africa with real understanding and concern.

We were pleased to hear how much you enjoy your lessons. You get off to a sound start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the standards that you reach by the time you leave school are in line with national averages. You are making good progress in your work.

Overall, we think that your school provides you with a good standard of education, but that this could be even better. We are asking the headteacher, staff and governors to do the following things to make sure that you all get the very best out of your time at St Thomas More:

- ensure that children make better progress in the Reception class, particularly in developing speaking, listening and mathematical skills
- increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in mathematics by the end of Year 6.

I am sure you will work hard and do your best to help your teachers bring about the improvements we think are necessary.