

# St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

Romany Road, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent, ME8 6JH

## Inspection dates

21–22 March 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Pupils join the school performing in line with age-related expectations. With good teaching, they achieve well and in recent years have reached above-average levels in English and mathematics by the age of 11.
- Last year, the progress made by pupils in English and mathematics was in line with the national average. However, rigorous teacher assessment shows that increasing proportions of pupils are now making faster progress and are achieving well in both Key Stage 1 and 2.
- Teaching over time is good because most activities are carefully planned to meet pupils' needs. Their work is very carefully marked, particularly in their English books, and teachers give pupils very precise suggestions for improvement.
- The headteacher understands what needs to be done to further improve the school. Her priorities include checking teaching to make effective changes to the pace with which pupils learn and checking pupils' progress. Staff and governors share her vision and ambition.
- Governors make sure that they are well informed and are prepared to challenge as well as support school leaders.
- Pupils speak very positively about their school, behave well and have a very clear sense of right and wrong. Leaders promote pupils' reflections upon behaviour as a high priority and, as a result, pupils are respectful and treat adults and each other with great courtesy.
- Provision in the school for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding because pupils who are capable of making more progress are not always set hard enough work or asked questions that make them think deeply about topics.
- Marking in subjects other than English and mathematics is not consistently detailed and pupils are not always clear about how to reach the next levels. They are not always sure about how to use skills learned in English lessons to write well in other subjects.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors spent a total of six hours observing 15 lessons or parts of lessons taught by eight teachers. Additional activities included observations during break times and school assemblies as well as visits to small working groups.
- Two lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher. An assistant headteacher participated in reviewing pupils' books to discern how well groups of pupils, particularly those who had underachieved in mathematics or writing last year, were now progressing.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body, school leaders and subject leaders. A meeting was also held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 25 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as views communicated during informal discussions with parents and carers. They also took account of the views of the staff through meetings and responses to 26 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and examined the work in pupils' books.
- The school's own attainment records for the current as well as previous academic years were scrutinised in addition to published information on pupils' achievement. Inspectors examined planning and documents relating to checks carried out by leaders, records relating to pupils' safety and welfare, including the school's single central record of security checks on staff, the behaviour logs and attendance records.

## Inspection team

Patricia MacLachlan, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Teresa Davies	Additional inspector
Barbara Saltmarsh	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is a slightly smaller-than-average-sized primary school. The Early Years Foundation Stage is provided in a Nursery and a Reception class.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium (extra money provided by the government for pupils including those eligible for free school meals) is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is in line with the national average. The largest group is of White British heritage, with the next largest groups having Other White and Irish heritage. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language, while growing, is slightly below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is slightly below the national average, and the proportions supported at school action plus or with special educational needs are lower than the national average.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum standards for attainment and progress expected by the government.
- The school has, since the last inspection, opened a Nursery class and made changes to the leadership team, with new appointments this year to literacy and numeracy leadership roles.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding by:
  - ensuring that pupils who are capable of making more rapid progress are given more challenging work
  - enabling and encouraging pupils to keep records of their own progress over longer periods to identify for themselves how to improve their attainment levels.
- Further strengthen the leadership and management of teaching by:
  - making sure that marking is consistently used in all years and all subjects to help pupils to understand their next steps and to give them time to improve their work
  - incorporating activities that encourage pupils to research topics for themselves and respond with high-quality writing in all subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment on entry to the Nursery is broadly in line with expectations of three-year-olds nationally. In the Early Years Foundation stage, pupils make good progress in linking sounds to letters and counting. By the time pupils leave the school at eleven there is a trend of significantly higher attainment in mathematics and English than the national average because teaching is good and expectations are high.
- In English and mathematics last year, pupils' attainment and progress in Year 2 and Year 6 were, however, similar to the national average. The reasons for this have been identified and addressed so that increasing proportions of pupils currently in Key Stages 1 and 2 are making good progress. More ambitious targets are being set and tailored support is arranged if pupils fall behind their classmates. As a result, school records and scrutiny of English and mathematics books show that more pupils are now producing a higher standard of work than pupils of the same age last year.
- The school provides and evaluates customised support, well matched to individual needs, and, as a result, by the end of Year 6 there are no significant differences between the achievement of groups of pupils with disabilities and special educational needs and their peers, nor between those for whom English is an additional language and their classmates.
- The pupil premium grant is used to pay for small-group activities in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, the majority of pupils in receipt of this funding are now making as good, or better, progress as their classmates and there is little difference between the attainment in English and mathematics achieved by both groups.
- Younger pupils recognise sounds and letters and link them (known as using phonics) to read accurately because they are well taught. More six-year-olds in this school met the required standard than the national average. Pupils of all ages enjoy reading and the school library is well used.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because strong and supportive relationships are established by all the adults in the classroom and pupils are consequently keen to learn. Planned tasks offer pupils of all abilities opportunities to make progress. For example, in a Year 2 English lesson on finding words within words, the teacher set open questions and gave pupils time to discuss poems with partners. Pupils identified alliteration and rhyme for themselves and were keen to make further progress and share more poems in focused discussions.
- Pupils are adept at discussing whether their writing has met improvement targets because teachers mark English work clearly in a way that shows pupils how to revise their answers. However, sufficient time is not always given for pupils to follow up on this advice, nor is this exemplary assessment process applied consistently to other subjects. Teachers do not always help pupils to keep records of their own progress over longer periods in all subjects. This makes it hard for pupils to understand the precise steps needed to improve their attainment levels or the ways in which they can write extensively in subjects other than English.
- Capable subject leaders check that sequences of lessons provide interesting tasks that help pupils to make progress. The best teachers re-shape tasks quickly if pupils are not succeeding to help them to learn at their own pace. Skilled teaching assistants give detailed support to pupils who need additional help to understand tasks. However, pupils who are capable of making faster progress are not always set open-ended challenges that require them to conduct independent research over longer periods.
- School leaders' own evaluation of teaching is accurate, and focused coaching has enabled some teachers to improve.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teaching is good because planning is thorough. Adults are

accomplished at asking questions that enable the children to reflect upon their activities and extend their vocabulary by explaining their interesting and varied experiences.

- The majority of parents and carers who responded to a school survey believe that their children are well taught and receive appropriate homework. They also value the parent information booklets that help them to understand how to support their children's learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. This is because pupils work very cooperatively and are resilient in completing tasks. Behaviour is good rather than outstanding because pupils who are capable of making faster progress are sometimes passive in lessons because they have not been given activities that would stretch their capabilities for independent working.
- Pupils feel well looked after by the adults around them. One, speaking for many, summed it up in saying, 'You can talk to any adult here. They will be there for you even if it is a problem at home.' The culture of promoting reflection on behaviour leads to the vast majority of pupils acting considerately and respectfully towards each other and to adults.
- Bullying is rare and parents and carers have expressed satisfaction with the school's good management of unkind behaviour on the few occasions when it has arisen. Pupils have a good awareness of personal safety, including cyber safety, and respond well to situations by avoiding unsafe behaviour.
- Attendance is above the national average because effective strategies are deployed to reward good attendance. Parents and carers believe that the school provides a safe and caring environment, and inspectors agree. Pupils enjoy coming to school and, as one parent remarked, '[he] is really enjoying it here and runs into school in the morning!'
- Pupils know right from wrong and many older pupils who act as prefects resolve difficulties among younger children in the playground and around the school. Lively assemblies, led very ably by the pupils themselves, encourage deeper reflection and kind actions. This reinforces moral development and promotes social growth.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- Good leadership and management have ensured that the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. School leaders check pupils' progress by looking at their books and grades regularly. Teachers now use assessment information to plan tasks that match pupils' needs and include activities for higher-attaining pupils. However, these activities are not always refined precisely enough to stretch their individual capabilities and promote independent and deeper thinking about topics. Information and communication technology is used regularly to enliven work in other subjects or to enhance survey work in science or geography with graphs and pie charts.
- The headteacher has developed a robust system for checking on the quality of teaching, and this has improved classroom practice. The system for managing teachers' performance ensures that only those teachers who meet required standards move up the salary scale. The headteacher has not shied away from difficult conversations about teaching performance when these were necessary.
- Provision to encourage spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils are knowledgeable about Christian values and practices. Their understanding of diversity is enhanced by assemblies and celebrations led by visitors, parents and carers from different faiths and traditions. Opportunities to experience sports competitions, participate in orchestra performances, enterprise activities and book clubs are relished and widen pupils' cultural horizons. A wide range of well-attended clubs further supports social and cultural development.
- Leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Arrangements for transition from home, for assessment and for teaching are good and, as a result, good progress is made by the young children. There are opportunities to engage in forest school and the

children find this stimulating but the opportunities to develop language and mathematical skills in the outdoor learning area are less well developed than indoors and this limits the gains they can make.

- Effective safeguarding systems meet statutory requirements and policies are rigorously applied. Leaders promote equal opportunities and are assiduous in tackling any discrimination that may arise.
- The local authority has provided support to the school by sharing lesson observations and checking that the headteacher is making accurate evaluations of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body knows the standards of achievement and teaching in the school because the headteacher provides regular summary reports under these headings. Governors use these to ask challenging questions, expecting, for example, for reports on the progress of pupils each term. Governors have an accurate understanding of how pupils are performing compared with national standards because some have attended training in tracking pupil progress in the school compared with national figures. Governors understand the link between teachers' pay progression and their pupils' progress because they receive summaries of teachers' performance from the headteacher. Checks are made that the pupil premium funds are spent on the intended groups because the headteacher reports on the impact on attainment made by the funds. Oversight of safeguarding is systematic and the governing body takes a strategic role in annual residential conferences with the school staff to consider and check the school development plan.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118767
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	403363

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

<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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	234
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jeremy Chapman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alma Myatt
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 November 2007
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 234677
<b>Fax number</b>	01634 319629
<b>Email address</b>	Offfig001@medway.org.uk

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