

St Thomas More RC Primary School

Park Lane, Eastfield, Peterborough, PE1 5JW

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Standards at the end of Year 6 have been significantly below average for a number of years. This is because progress has not been sufficiently strong to build on the low skills and understanding pupils have when they start at the school.
- The school's current assessment data show that the progress being made throughout the school, although improving, remains variable.
- The progress made in mathematics is slower than in reading and writing.
- Teaching requires improvement because not enough has been of a good or better quality to ensure that pupils make rapid progress.
- Not all lessons give the most able pupils sufficient opportunities to stretch their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers do not always explain tasks clearly enough so that pupils understand exactly what they are expected to do.
- Leaders at all levels are at an early stage in sharing existing excellent practice to improve achievement and teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is a very friendly and caring environment in which parents and pupils talk enthusiastically about the strongly positive ethos.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and their behaviour is kind and thoughtful.
- Much of the current teaching observed in the school is good and is supporting pupils' learning well.
- The broad range of subjects taught has made a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development over a number of years.
- The school is developing leadership well at all levels through effective professional development and this is having an impact on the improving teaching and learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 24 lessons or parts of lessons. A number of these were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings and discussions took place with the headteacher, school chaplain, governors, pupils, staff and parents.
- Samples of pupils' work were examined. Some pupils read books with an inspector.
- The inspectors took account of the 17 responses to the online survey, Parent View.
- The inspectors looked at key documents, including: performance data on pupils' progress and attainment produced by the school, procedures for safeguarding, the school's own evaluations of its work, reports to the governing body and the plans for raising attainment.

Inspection team

Geof Timms, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Liz Kissane

Additional Inspector

Maria Rees-Johnson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Thomas More RC Primary School is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The school has a diverse population including pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups within the school are White British, Polish, Pakistani or Portuguese heritage. A well-above average proportion speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- An average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium which, in this school, provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school provides a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- There is a privately-run Nursery on the school site. This is inspected and reported on separately.
- In the latest national tests for Year 6 pupils the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more of the teaching consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring tasks are matched to pupils' prior learning so that they provide sufficient challenge and, in particular, that those whose understanding is good have more difficult tasks to stretch their learning
 - explaining activities clearly and carefully enough so that all pupils understand what is expected.
- Help pupils make more rapid progress in mathematics by:
 - consolidating current efforts to close any remaining gaps in the progress made by boys and girls
 - ensuring that the progress made in all year groups matches that in Years 2 and 6
 - ensuring that the activities provided support the learning of pupils of all abilities.
- Provide more opportunities and sustain recent innovative ideas for teachers to develop their skills by working together, sharing their practice and learning from the outstanding practice that already exists within the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well below average at the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6. Too few pupils reach the higher levels. This is partly due to the low levels of knowledge and skills when children start school and the very significant numbers of pupils who join the school at times other than usual and with limited skills in English language. However, it is also the result of some poor teaching in the past, an issue which has now been addressed.
- When they start school, children currently have levels of knowledge and understanding which are very low when compared with those expected for their age, including their speaking, reading and other communication skills. They make good progress in the Reception classes but their achievement is still well below that expected when they start in Year 1.
- The results of the Year 1 check on pupils' skills in linking letters and sounds (phonics) show that standards in 2013 were below the national average but better than in 2012. However, the proportion of pupils who retook the check in Year 2 and attained the expected standard was above the national average, reflecting their improved language skills after more time in the school and better phonics teaching. Pupils have good skills which help them read words that are new to them, as was shown when they read to inspectors.
- The standards in mathematics, reading and writing by the end of Year 2 have risen since 2011. However, the improvement is inconsistent due largely to the specific needs of the pupils in each year group, especially those who are at an early stage of learning English. Currently all groups of pupils in Year 2 are making above average progress in reading, writing and mathematics due to good teaching.
- The standards at the end of Year 6 fell in 2013. There were a number of reasons for the poor progress made by this year group over time, although their progress during Year 6 was well above that expected due to outstanding teaching. Even so, this was insufficient to compensate fully for poorer teaching lower down the school and for the sometimes very late entry into the year group of pupils newly arrived in the country.
- Inspection evidence and the school's progress data suggest that the current Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve much higher levels this year. The progress being made is above average for most groups, especially in mathematics, due to outstanding teaching. A higher proportion of the pupils are now working at higher levels, especially in mathematics, than has been the case for a number of years.
- However, although the progress in Year 6 is now good, the progress made in mathematics in other year groups is not as consistently strong as that in reading and writing. At times teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently or explain exactly what is expected clearly enough. There is still a gap between boys' and girls' progress in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive effective extra help, particularly in reading and mathematics. This is evident in the current well-above average progress made by these pupils in all three subjects.
- Pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding in 2013 were over a term behind their classmates in reading and writing and almost a year behind in mathematics. Current progress is much better for these pupils and gaps are narrowing well, especially in Key Stage 1.

- The school works hard and largely successfully to address the needs of pupils with different ethnic heritages. The pupils of Portuguese and Polish heritages in particular achieve well and make good progress. The school successfully promotes equality of opportunity and good relationships, and ensures that all pupils are effectively supported.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because teachers do not explain well enough exactly what pupils have to do. For example, in a Year 4 lesson the pupils did not understand the purpose of the storyboard they were creating.
- Activities are not always planned well enough to ensure all groups of pupils make good progress. At times the next step in pupils' learning is too large and the planning not clear enough about how one task will lead to another to help pupils learn. In a Year 3 lesson, for example, the whole-class work on counting back in tens was not linked closely enough to the individual work pupils were then expected to complete. At times the most-able pupils are given work that is too easy for them.
- Recent work to address weaknesses in teaching has been successful, although this is yet to be fully evident in the outcomes for all pupils. There is outstanding teaching in Year 6 across subjects, but especially in its impact on current pupils' progress in mathematics. The proportion of good teaching has improved since the last inspection but remains inconsistent across year groups.
- The best teaching is effective in ensuring that pupils make good progress. For example, in a Year 2 lesson on multiplication the teacher assessed pupils' learning carefully by questioning them and getting them to assess their understanding themselves. She was then able to provide extra support to those who needed it. This impressive example enabled all pupils to make rapid progress.
- The marking of pupils' work has improved and is now good. It is clear in telling pupils what they need to do to improve or how they can reach their targets. Pupils are given good opportunities to respond to teachers' comments on how to improve their work. These are usually followed up and improvements become evident in pupils' later work.
- Teachers are well supported by effective teaching and learning support assistants, including those who support pupils at an early stage of learning English. These staff are especially effective in supporting the inclusion of pupils with significant disabilities or special educational needs, and also in working with small groups of pupils or with individuals.
- The positive impact of training is seen in the teaching of early reading skills. The teaching of phonics is now consistently good, resulting in the improved reading skills of younger pupils and in their early writing skills. In Reception, for example, one boy was very excited about discovering dinosaur eggs and wrote a number of labels which demonstrated he was using his knowledge of phonics to spell their names.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and create an effective learning environment in which pupils are willing to answer questions and take a full part in discussions. Because of these strong relationships, pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage helps children settle happily and safely into school. A good range of exciting and interesting activities are provided. The use of the outdoors is very effective in

helping children learn.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Parents are positive about how happy and safe their children are at school. Pupils are polite, friendly and during the inspection were happy to talk to inspectors about their work and school. They spoke about particular things they enjoy such as the use of netbooks and the topics they work on such as Romans or Tudors.
- In all lessons observed pupils were well behaved and showed very positive attitudes to learning. This has a major impact on their learning and progress, and they thoroughly enjoy their work. They are particularly good at working together. For example, pupils in Year 5 help Reception children learn sounds through one-to-one activities that give them some real responsibility and independence.
- Pupils remain attentive and well behaved even when the teaching is less effective. The quality of the presentation of their work is high and shows the pride they take in their efforts. Those from different cultures and faiths talk happily about how well they all get on. They do not achieve better because their enthusiasm and desire to do their best are not always matched by consistently high quality guidance they receive from teachers.
- Pupils say examples of misbehaviour or bullying are rare but dealt with well if they occur. They are aware of the different types of bullying, such as through the use of computers or mobile phones. Appropriate records are kept. There have been no recent exclusions of pupils.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. They say they feel safe in school and their views are supported by a large majority of parents. Pupils from all backgrounds benefit from the work of a team of learning mentors and language support workers. This particularly helps those newly arrived in the country settle into school life and make progress.
- The school provides good care and support for pupils. The breakfast- and after-school club provides good support through a range of activities as well as food and drink so that pupils attending have a good start or a purposeful end to the day.
- Attendance in 2013 was below average and not as high as in the previous year. However, over time it is improving and the number of persistent absentees has fallen rapidly. In addition, the current attendance figures are above average and reflect the school's efforts to ensure all families appreciate the need for full attendance.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management are not good because, although a number of improvements have been made since the last inspection, these are yet to have a full impact on the work of the school. Even so, enough has been done to address weaknesses in teaching and to maintain the school's very positive ethos to show that there is a good capacity to improve further.
- Leaders are aware of the need to raise standards for all pupils. This has been reinforced by the good challenge and support provided by the local authority. The school has willingly accepted advice and has made good use of expertise from across the authority, especially in literacy and numeracy, to address previous weaknesses. Although a start has been made on helping teachers improve their skills, including through the innovative use of cameras to record their practice for self-assessment, the best practice in teaching is not used enough as an example to assist less

effective staff to make more of the teaching is good or better.

- The school's monitoring of assessment data, pupils' work and the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. The school now has a clearer picture of its strengths and weaknesses. Detailed and regular reports are produced by teachers. These highlight the progress of all pupils in each class, including a focus on specific groups or individuals. These provide the basis for half termly discussions with senior leaders and governors. From this activity, for example, the school recognised an unusually large gap in the achievement of boys and girls in mathematics in Year 5. To address this, the school is teaching the year group in single gender classes. It is too early to judge the full outcomes of this innovative practice but early indications are positive.
- Parents are very positive about the work of the school. Those from minority ethnic backgrounds speak highly of how well their children have settled and the progress they make. Inspection evidence supports this view and the work to support these families and help their children learn is very effective.
- The school is very effective at developing leadership skills among the staff. The introduction of phase leaders with responsibility for age groups is having a positive impact on the improvements made in teaching and learning. Staff are very positive about taking on opportunities to develop their leadership skills. Support staff as well as teachers talk about how well the school provides for and supports their professional development.
- The leadership of the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is very caring and organises a good range of adult support. There is a good analysis of data to ensure a clear overview of these pupils' progress and, therefore, the school is able to monitor the impact of the variety of interventions groups and support accurately.
- The funding available through the pupil premium is used appropriately to help pupils known to be eligible for free school meals to take a full part in school life, and receive, where appropriate, specific resources and adult time. Available data indicate that although there remain gaps between eligible pupils and their classmates, often because of pupils' other needs, these are narrowing.
- Planning for improvements to the way physical education is taught under the new funding arrangements is under way and continually reviewed so that pupils receive good provision.
- The headteacher uses findings from lesson observation and other monitoring activities as a good tool for supporting and challenging staff. The checking of performance targets and the setting of new ones for individual staff ensure a sound focus on improving pupils' learning. Where teaching has required significant improvement in the past, a balance of challenge and support has resulted in better skills or changes to the staff team.
- The curriculum provides a good range of activities which pupils find interesting and enjoyable. The school uses this curriculum outstandingly well to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Effective use of visiting experts and visits locally and further afield, enrich the curriculum and enhance the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world. However, the quality of teaching does not always match the interesting learning opportunities available.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has worked hard to improve the impact of its work since the last inspection. Governors have greatly improved their monitoring and actively challenging the school's performance.

- Governors check on the school’s work through visits, meetings with staff, including presentations made by staff to governors, and through the headteacher’s reports. These enable a good professional discussion to take place. Members of the governing body now understand data better and therefore they are more aware of strengths and weaknesses. They have a good understanding of how targets are set for teachers and of appraisal systems, and they check how effective these are in improving the quality of teaching. Decisions about teachers’ pay are closely and appropriately linked to performance and responsibilities.
- Governors track finances well and assist the school in deciding how to spend additional money to support pupils eligible for free school meals and to extend sports and physical education. The governing body makes sure that arrangements for pupils’ safeguarding meet the current national requirements.

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

Unique reference number	110854
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	430787

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 of pupils on the school roll	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Morris
Headteacher	Anne-Marie McElhinney
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2012
Telephone number	01733 566005
Fax number	01733 312350
Email address	office@st-thomasmore.peterborough.sch.uk

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