

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Lewis Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL51 0HZ

Inspection dates 30–31 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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 enter the school with skills and abilities well below that of similar pupils nationally; they receive a good start to their education in the Reception class as a result of focused and stimulating teaching.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2, so that by the time they leave in Year 6 pupils' standards are in line with others nationally.
- This year the school has improved the way younger pupils are taught to read. Activities are now well planned and all pupils have daily sessions on recognising and making links between letters and sounds.
- The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in other subjects.
- A range of exciting opportunities together with a strong Catholic ethos make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are strong, with an emphasis on care and support, so that the vast majority of pupils are keen to learn and eager to come to school.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around school. The school makes good provision to ensure that pupils are safe.
- School leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the school's performance and know what needs to be done to move the school forward.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding. In a few lessons the most able pupils are not given sufficiently challenging tasks soon enough to enable them to reach their full potential.
- All teachers do not yet have the skills that enable them to effectively monitor pupils' attainment and progress and so contribute to school improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons and part lessons, three of which were joint observations with the headteacher and three with a member of the senior leadership team.
- The inspector listened to pupils read from Years 2 and 3, examined pupils' work and met with the pupils in the school council.
- Meetings were held with staff, the Chair and members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Sixteen responses to the staff questionnaire, 12 responses to the parent questionnaire (Parent View) and the results of the school's own parent survey were taken into consideration.
- A range of documentation was analysed, including that related to safeguarding, assessment data and school development plans.

Inspection team

Shahnaz Maqsood, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than an average-sized primary school.
- A well above average proportion of pupils are supported at school action and a well above average proportion of pupils are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special education needs.
- A well above average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children in the care of the local authority and children of service families.
- An average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds with the largest group being from Eastern Europe. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- A high number of pupils leave and join the school at different times than usual.
- The present headteacher was appointed in January 2013; before then the school was led by an executive interim headteacher.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching by ensuring that work given to the most able pupils is always hard enough to challenge them sooner in the lesson.
- Strengthen the skills of all teachers so that they are better able to support senior leaders in monitoring pupils' attainment and progress and so contribute more effectively to school improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Reception class with skills and understanding well below those typical for their age. As a result of good teaching, children make good progress. However, due to their very low starting points, by the end of their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage children are still below similar children nationally.
- In 2013 pupils in Year 1 performed well below the national average in the phonics (relationship between letters and sounds) screening check. In the light of this, phonics is now taught every day to pupils in ability groups. Pupils have an improved grasp of phonics and this is benefiting their reading.
- Attainment fell in 2013 and was lower than 2012 in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1, and was below the national average. This was mainly due to a number of pupils joining the school in Year 2 some of whom were at the early stages of learning English and some pupils who had not been to school at all. Overall progress of this group and others was good. School progress data indicate that attainment is rising again.
- In 2013 by the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment was in line with national standards. The proportions making and exceeding expected progress was above national figures. The attainment of the current Year 6 is on track to rise further in reading, writing and mathematics, with an increasing proportion making expected or more than expected progress.
- The inclusion manager organises effectively the support for different groups of pupils using the 'Pupil Passport' (an individualised learning plan). This includes disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. She checks the progress of these pupils carefully and arranges suitable extra help for them. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
- The school has also arranged for extra support for the most able pupils so that they reach their potential. This year more pupils than previously are expected to achieve the highest level at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium also make good progress through effective intervention programmes. They are ahead of their classmates in reading, and just slightly behind in writing and mathematics; however, overall the gap is closing.
- Focused support for pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who join the school at different times enables them to make good progress from the time they join.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good overall and improving. Leaders have given high priority to improvements in this area by providing resources and support, especially to the newly qualified teachers. This has resulted in recent data showing an increase in the rate of pupils' progress in these classes.
- Teachers make use of questioning to assess pupils' understanding and to challenge them by asking them 'why'. They then clarify any misconceptions allowing pupils to move on to the next stage of their learning.
- In most lessons teaching assistants are effectively deployed by the teacher to guide and support groups of pupils. For example in a Year 1 physical education (dance) lesson, the pupils were pretending to be animals from the book *The Gruffalo*; not only did the teaching assistant ask them about the characteristics of a mouse but she, to the delight of the pupils, joined in the dance, increasing their enjoyment.
- Pupils are often given opportunities to speak and engage in their learning with their classmates, helping them to develop their ideas further and progress in their learning.
- Teachers ensure all pupils are aware of their learning targets which tell them what they need to

do to move on to the next step in their work. These are used effectively by the pupils, not only as a guide but also to take responsibility for and to assess their own learning; this enables them to make good progress. For example in a Year 6 mathematics lesson on decimals, one pupil explained that his target was to multiply decimals by a single digit so he practised these diligently until he was confident and then moved on to the more difficult questions.

- In many lessons, work is set at the right levels for the different abilities in the class. For example in a Year 5 literacy lesson, more able pupils were given the task of including ellipses and similes in their writing and others were set less demanding tasks such as to include exciting adjectives. The teacher provided ample resources such as word banks to support their learning. All pupils achieved their objectives, making good progress.
- In some lessons, mainly lower down the school, more able pupils have to complete work which is too easy for them before they can move on to more challenging tasks. As a result, their progress slows.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents, staff and pupils agree that behaviour is good in lessons and around school.
- Pupils are friendly and welcoming. They are proud of their school, enjoy learning and feel safe.
- Classroom displays are vibrant and exciting. For example, the Year 2 classroom was decorated like Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory, which was the theme. This captured pupils' interest and imagination which benefited motivation for learning.
- Pupils informed the inspector that the new system for managing behaviour is used fairly by all the teachers and felt the 'traffic light' was an effective deterrent. They spoke excitedly about the privilege points they earned for good behaviour, which they spend in the school shop.
- Pupils are aware of all types of bullying. They say that bullying does occur, but rarely; they know who to go to if they have any concerns regarding bullying and are confident the adults will deal with the problem effectively.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.
- A small minority of pupils display challenging behaviour. The school recently appointed a child and family action worker who has successfully engaged with a number of parents and supported their children, which has resulted in their behaviour improving.
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection and most pupils attend regularly. The school closely monitors absence and has built positive partnerships with families whose children did not attend regularly. This, together with attendance rewards, has helped to improve attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, who has been in post for a year, is determined to raise standards and reverse the decline in attainment. She has been successful in doing this with the support of senior and middle leaders and the governing body.
- Pupils' progress is tracked meticulously and this information is used to provide support for pupils who are falling behind and also to check teachers' performance and link this to salary progression.
- Although senior leaders are skilled in monitoring the attainment and progress of pupils, this is not yet shared among all staff so that all teachers are better able to support senior leaders and so contribute more effectively to school improvement.
- Pupils' learning in their subjects is well planned and they have many opportunities to practise their skills across the curriculum. Their experience is enhanced by trips to local museums and participation in a number of events, such as the performances of dance at Tewkesbury Abbey

and Colston Hall.

- The sports fund has been used to buy in experts to improve the skills of the staff and to give pupils a more varied experience of different types of sport.
- The school's plans for improvement focus on the right areas. There has been a strong drive to improve the quality of teaching, including the implementation of a range of strategies to support the less experienced teachers.
- Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements.
- The school has benefited from the advice given following monitoring visits conducted by a representative from the local authority and the diocese. The local authority has also arranged for expert help for pupils at the school with challenging behaviour.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is extremely well led and organised. Governors support and challenge in equal measure. They are actively involved in the school, they visit regularly and some volunteer, for example one of the governors runs the after-school gardening club and another listens to pupils read. The governors have received appropriate training and they carry out regular checks on safeguarding and other legal responsibilities. They have an accurate understanding of the school data about pupils' achievement and what needs to be done next. They are aware of the quality of teaching and ensure that it is closely linked to pay progression. Governors know how the pupil premium and sports funds are spent and the impact these have on the progress and well-being of the pupils.

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	115710
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	430613

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	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	June Little
Headteacher	Charlotte Blanch
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 December 2011
Telephone number	01242 513339
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