

# St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 115710          |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Gloucestershire |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 338642          |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 22–23 June 2010 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | David Driscoll  |

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>                 | 4–11                                 |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                                |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 180                                  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Chris Gifkins                        |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Dominic Whyte                        |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 8 March 2007                         |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Lewis Road<br>Cheltenham<br>GL51 0HZ |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01242 513339                         |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 01242 257402                         |
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|--------------------------|-----------------|
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who observed 16 lessons taught by seven members of staff. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, parents, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at records of pupils' attainment, curriculum plans, safeguarding documentation, the school's plans for improvement and the 37 responses to the parental questionnaires, along with responses from pupils and staff to their questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether the school's leaders take sufficient account of pupils' achievement when drawing up plans for improvement
- attainment and progress in Years 1 and 2
- pupil's progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school which serves a housing estate on the outskirts of Cheltenham. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has increased recently and is now high. The very large majority pupils are from a White British background. A high proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school operates its own breakfast club each morning. The Year 1 class and the Year 2 class were both taught by long-term supply teachers during the inspection.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**4**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**4**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Children get off to a good start in the Reception class, but make inadequate progress in Years 1 and 2 where their attainment falls to a very low level. The school's leaders, including the governing body, have taken action to improve inadequate provision in these year groups and teaching there is now satisfactory. However, these actions were delayed and attainment has fallen sharply as a result of long-term underachievement. Progress in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory, including in mathematics, but attainment remains low by the time pupils leave the school, which leaves them ill-equipped for the next stage of their education.

Attainment and progress in Years 3 to 6 had been improving, but has stalled this year and now fallen again. Self-evaluation is inadequate, and leaders are not demonstrating the necessary capacity to improve the school. The school's leaders have a clear picture of the attainment of pupils in each class, but do not track their progress effectively. This means that they are unable to identify which groups of pupils are not making enough progress in each subject. Leaders are unable to compare accurately, for example, the quality of teaching they observe in each class with the progress made by the pupils. This leads to variations in the quality of teaching across the school. Consequently, leaders have not pinpointed the main reasons for underperformance and have not drawn up suitably detailed plans to address them.

Nevertheless, the school has some strengths. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay fit, and have responded well to the school's actions to promote healthy lifestyles. They behave well because teachers consistently make clear, and reinforce, high expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves both in and out of lessons. Although there is some good teaching in the school, expectations of what pupils can achieve academically are not high enough. The work is not always challenging so more able pupils, in particular, find it too easy. On other occasions, lower attainers have to wait until tasks are explained to all other groups before they can get started, which slows the pace of their learning.

Pupils trust the staff and feel very safe in school. However, despite several strengths in pastoral care, there are major weaknesses relating to safeguarding and the quality of care, guidance and support that render it inadequate. The school has not carried out all

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the required checks on staff, training has not been kept up to date and the governing body has not ensured that the school is meeting statutory requirements. Furthermore, the case histories and records for pupils who are at risk of harm are incomplete and insufficiently detailed.

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

- Meet all requirements for ensuring children's safety with immediate effect by:
  - ensuring all necessary checks on staff are carried out and recorded
  - ensuring all required training in safeguarding is up to date
  - keeping complete records of the case histories of pupils at risk of harm
  - ensuring the governing body monitors procedures and practice more closely.
- Ensure the school's leaders have an accurate view of the school's provision and performance by:
  - tracking the progress of pupils accurately
  - analysing the information gained from such tracking in order to identify variations in the progress of the different groups
  - comparing the results of such analysis with other methods of evaluating teaching, to build a complete picture of its quality.
  - Monitoring the impact of the recent changes to the curriculum
- Use the results of the analyses above to draw up detailed plans for improvement that identify what area is in need of improvement, how it is to be improved, and what impact is expected on pupils' progress as a result.
- Improve the quality of teaching from satisfactory to at least good and raise achievement by:
  - ensuring more-able pupils are always given suitably challenging work
  - enabling lower-attaining pupils to work more effectively
  - ensuring swift action is taken by the school's leaders to rectify any inadequacies in provision.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**4**

Pupils start Year 1 with attainment that is below average. However, they fail to make sufficient progress and attainment falls to a low level. By the end of Year 2, underachievement is widespread and attainment is very low indeed. In 2009, for example, only 30 percent of pupils reached the standard expected for their age in reading, and even fewer reached it in writing. In the lessons observed in Year 3, it was clear that these pupils were more able than their levels of attainment would suggest. In one lesson, for example, they were able to explain in words why two different books, read to them by the teacher, were similar in their use of characters. However, most were unable to read them for themselves and their writing was of a very low standard.

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The attainment observed by inspectors in lessons was marginally better, but was very low. Nevertheless, the learning and progress observed were satisfactory in Years 3 to 6 where staffing has been more stable. An exception to this picture is in information and communication technology (ICT), where pupils make good progress.

In all years, pupils usually concentrated well when they started work on their individual tasks. They tried hard, and were keen to answer questions. When they were kept waiting for their tasks, however, or when they had to listen to their teacher for too long, lower attainers in particular would lose interest and teaching assistants had to intervene to stop them misbehaving. Some pupils sat quietly during introductions to lessons and so gained little from them. While the large majority of pupils enjoy coming to school, others said they found some of the topics boring. The school does not effectively track the progress made by different groups in the school, so it has little evidence of where underachievement may lie.

Pupils' attendance is low, but is improving. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is half of what it was last year, for example. In lessons and assemblies, pupils demonstrated a good ability to reflect on deeper issues. They have a clear sense of right and wrong, and use this well in their daily lives.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

|                                                                                                                               |          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>                                                  | <b>4</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>                                                                       | 4        |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress                                                                            | 4        |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress                      | 4        |
| <b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>                                                                                   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Pupils' behaviour</b>                                                                                                      | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>                                                                    | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>                                                | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b> | <b>4</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>                                                                       | 4        |
| <b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>                                                | <b>3</b> |

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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## How effective is the provision?

Pupils get on well with their teachers, and want to do their best for them. The objectives of lessons are always made very clear, so pupils know what they are to learn. They also know exactly what they are to be doing, because teachers make effective use of targets showing what they must do, what they should do and what they could do if they worked really hard. However, the tasks given to pupils do not always match their targets. Sometimes, for example, pupils are all given the same worksheets, which higher attainers find too easy and lower attainers are unable to read. Assessments of pupils' attainment are accurate. In lessons, however, teachers do not always check pupil's work often enough to ensure they are working at the best possible rate.

The school has recently changed its curriculum to provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills in other subjects. Pupils enjoy this approach, but it is too soon to judge its effectiveness. Pupils already have lots of opportunities to use computers as part of their lessons, so they are confident and competent users of ICT. Pupils often work in pairs or on their own, but have relatively few opportunities to work in a group. However, the lack of progress and very low attainment show that the curriculum, despite the recent welcome changes, is inadequate.

Attendance has improved because the school has taken good actions to support pupils, through their parents and carers, in coming to school more frequently. The role of the pastoral support teacher has been particularly effective in this respect, but a relatively high proportion of pupils have been identified as being at risk of harm or neglect. The school notes carefully all incidents relating to these pupils, but does not keep sufficiently detailed records of the actions taken to support them or further investigate the incidents. The headteacher has not ensured that his training in child protection has been kept up to date, and the required statutory checks have not been carried out on all staff. Since the appointment of the new inclusion manager in September 2009, the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has been monitored well in terms of progress towards the targets on their individual education plans. Pupils said they felt well prepared to move to secondary school. The school provides good support in this respect, through its effective links with other schools.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

|                                                                                                                |          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>The quality of teaching</b>                                                                                 | <b>3</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>The use of assessment to support learning                                              | 3        |
| <b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b> | <b>4</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>                                                         | <b>4</b> |

## How effective are leadership and management?

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The school's leaders are aware of pupils' low attainment, and have put many initiatives into place with the aim of increasing the proportions of pupils reaching the levels expected for their age. However, leaders have not evaluated the impact of these initiatives on the progress made by pupils. The targets for year groups are not based on accurate monitoring of the progress made by pupils, so leaders are failing to communicate to all staff a message of high expectations in order to embed ambition and drive the school forward. The school is unable to ensure equality and reduce any discrimination, because leaders do not know how well different groups of pupils are achieving. The governing body relies too heavily on the headteacher's reports, rather than checking things for themselves. This is especially true for safeguarding, where the governing body instructed the headteacher to ensure all checks had been made, but did not then check the documentation to see if this was the case.

Parents and carers are very positive about the school. They have good lines of communication and the school's leaders regularly seek their views. The school runs activities for parents and carers, and the good breakfast club is appreciated by working parents and carers who have to start work early. The school also maintains good partnership with outside agencies as well as with other schools, particularly to support those pupils who may be considered vulnerable. Good links are maintained with the church and pupils are involved to a good extent in the local community. Links with schools further afield, both nationally and internationally, are more limited, but the promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The school's leaders have carried out a good quality audit of pupils' backgrounds, so they know which aspects of pupils' understanding of different communities need improvement. Plans have been drawn up to address these areas of improvement.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

|                                                                                                                                                                      |          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>                                                                  | <b>4</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>The leadership and management of teaching and learning                                                                                       | 4        |
| <b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b> | <b>4</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>                                                                                          | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>                                                                                        | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>                                                           | <b>4</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>                                                                                                                  | <b>4</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>                                                                                           | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>                                                                          | <b>4</b> |



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## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are taught well in the Reception class. They usually start with knowledge and skills that are low for their age, but make good progress and start Year 1 with attainment that is below average, but no longer low. Language and literacy skills are often particularly weak on joining, so children are provided with extensive opportunities to talk and to learn their letters, and improvement in this area of learning is particularly good. Effective use is made of ICT with programs that interest the children and make learning fun for them. There are not as many activities aimed at helping children to learn to add and subtract, so progress in this aspect is slower. Children's personal development is good. They quickly learn to take turns and show respect for adults and other children and teachers make good use of the outdoor area to provide opportunities for pupils to play together. Assessments are accurate and teachers use the information gained from them, together with their knowledge of individual children's interests, to match activities to their needs, although there are too few opportunities for pupils to choose activities for themselves. Good systems are in place within this part of the school for promoting children's welfare and keeping them safe. Staff are well trained and know the children very well. The setting is well resourced, although the equipment is not always arranged to the best effect to make clear the area of learning that is being promoted. Strong links are maintained with parents and carers, who praise the school for helping them to support their children's learning at home, such as by providing them with booklets explaining how to help children to learn to read.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

|                                                                                    |          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>                   | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:                                                               |          |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage                          | 2        |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage                       | 2        |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2        |

## Views of parents and carers

The small number of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire were very positive about all aspects of the school. Very few added comments to the form. Inspection evidence suggests a less positive picture. Safeguarding does not meet requirements, pupils are underachieving in Years 1 and 2 and leadership is not yet managing the required improvement adequately.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 180 pupils registered at the school. Not all respondents replied to every question.

| Statements                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Strongly Agree |    | Agree |    | Disagree |    | Strongly disagree |   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Total          | %  | Total | %  | Total    | %  | Total             | % |
| My child enjoys school                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 20             | 54 | 15    | 41 | 1        | 3  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 29             | 78 | 8     | 22 | 0        | 0  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress                                                                                                                                                                                 | 13             | 35 | 22    | 59 | 2        | 5  | 0                 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school                                                                                                                                                                               | 12             | 32 | 24    | 65 | 0        | 0  | 0                 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school                                                                                                                                                                                             | 19             | 51 | 18    | 49 | 0        | 0  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning                                                                                                                                                                              | 14             | 38 | 23    | 62 | 0        | 0  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle                                                                                                                                                                           | 20             | 54 | 17    | 46 | 0        | 0  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment) | 13             | 35 | 23    | 62 | 0        | 0  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs                                                                                                                                                                                    | 12             | 32 | 25    | 68 | 0        | 0  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour                                                                                                                                                                        | 15             | 41 | 19    | 46 | 5        | 14 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns                                                                                                                                                                         | 8              | 22 | 25    | 68 | 1        | 3  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively                                                                                                                                                                                       | 12             | 32 | 24    | 65 | 0        | 0  | 1                 | 3 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school                                                                                                                                                                   | 20             | 54 | 17    | 46 | 0        | 0  | 0                 | 0 |

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

| Grade   | Judgement    | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.                                                                                                        |
| Grade 2 | Good         | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.                                                                                                                      |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.                                                                                                              |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

### Overall effectiveness of schools

| Type of school       | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) |      |              |            |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------|------------|
|                      | Outstanding                                             | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools      | 51                                                      | 45   | 0            | 4          |
| Primary schools      | 6                                                       | 41   | 42           | 10         |
| Secondary schools    | 8                                                       | 34   | 44           | 14         |
| Sixth forms          | 10                                                      | 37   | 50           | 3          |
| Special schools      | 32                                                      | 38   | 25           | 5          |
| Pupil referral units | 12                                                      | 43   | 31           | 14         |
| All schools          | 9                                                       | 40   | 40           | 10         |

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Achievement:               | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Attainment:                | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Capacity to improve:       | the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Learning:                  | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Overall effectiveness:     | <p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul> |
| Progress:                  | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



24 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Cheltenham GL51 0HZ

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school. Your parents and carers can be very proud of your good behaviour and manners. We felt very welcome in the school because you were so friendly towards us.

Most of you told us that you enjoy school and you work hard, but some of you said some of the topics lacked interest. Sometimes the work is too easy for you so we have asked your teachers to make sure you are always given work that is challenging enough. You can all help, by telling your teachers whenever you are finding the work too hard or too easy.

We found that you are not getting a good enough education. We have said that your school needs 'special measures', which means it will get extra help to improve. Children get off to a good start in the Reception class, but those of you in Years 1 and 2 are not making enough progress. While the people who run the school have now done something to improve this, it is too early to say if it is working or not. This includes ensuring that all safeguarding checks are made thoroughly. They have not been keeping track of how much progress you are making and helping you to improve your work whenever possible. We have asked them to work out how much progress each of you are making, and then check for any differences between groups, such as boys and girls. Once they have done this, they can identify exactly what needs to be improved and draw up some plans to improve your education.

Yours sincerely

David Driscoll

Lead inspector

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