

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Watercall Avenue, Styvechale, Coventry, CV3 5AZ

Inspection dates 6–7 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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 start school life successfully and make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- All groups of pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school.
- Standards are rising in every year group and some standards that pupils are working at are above average.
- Teaching is good in all year groups. Pupils know the targets they are working towards and teachers give good advice as to how pupils can improve their writing.
- Behaviour is good throughout the school. Pupils are extremely polite and helpful to adults and to each other. They know how to stay safe and say they feel safe in school.
- The leadership and management of the school have ensured much improved teaching and achievement. The senior leaders check how pupils are progressing and ensure that the right support is given to any who need it.
- The governing body has a good understanding of the strengths of the school and what remains to be improved.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of pupils is a strength of the school and underpins all it does.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards in writing are not as high as standards in reading and mathematics.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding, because, occasionally, individual pupils do not get work at exactly the right level of difficulty for them.
- Marking of pupils' work, other than in writing, does not always guide them to the next steps in their learning well enough.
- Subject leaders have not sufficiently developed the skills to monitor the progress of pupils in their subjects.
- The governing body does not always record its checks on how well the school is doing thoroughly enough.
- A small minority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) feel strongly that the school does not deal well with their concerns.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 25 lessons or parts of lessons, of which seven were joint observations with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, a parent governor, school staff including support staff, senior and subject leaders, and a representative of the local authority. Informal discussions were held with parents.
- The inspectors took account of the 48 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), individual communications from parents, 43 staff questionnaires, and recent parent and pupil questionnaires carried out by the school.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at: information from the school's checks on its performance, school improvement plans, analysis and tracking of pupils' progress, leaders' records of classroom observations, safeguarding arrangements and minutes of governing body meetings. They also sampled pupils' work, listened to pupils read and checked information on pupils' attendance.

Inspection team

Susan Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Rosemary Saunders

Additional Inspector

Victor Chaffey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger-than-average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding to help particular pupils who need it) is below average.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and of those who speak English as an additional language are both higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through school action is below average, but the proportion of those supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not use alternative educational provision offsite.
- The school is accommodated in one main building and six temporary double classrooms.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding and helps pupils to reach higher standards in writing through:
 - ensuring that work is always well matched to individual pupils' abilities
 - making sure that marking in all books is as helpful as that in writing books and always gives pupils clear guidance as to how they can improve and that they are given time to respond
 - using interactive whiteboards and other technology more to stimulate learning.
- Strengthen the leadership of the school by:
 - developing the skills of subject leaders so that they can check on the progress of pupils in their subjects more effectively
 - ensuring that the regular scrutiny of teaching and achievement by governors is always fully recorded so that improvements can be evaluated in detail over time by all governors
 - building more constructive relationships with the very small minority of parents who feel their concerns are not being addressed.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils start the Early Years Foundation Stage with some skills below those usually found nationally at this age. Their good progress ensures they enter Key Stage 1 with the skills expected for their age in most areas of learning. Any children likely to make less progress than others are quickly identified and supported to do well.
- Standards in Key Stage 1 have risen steadily over recent years, particularly in reading. This is reflected in the good results of the national phonic (the sounds letters make) screening check for Year 1. Reading standards are above average by the end of Key Stage 1.
- Good progress continues throughout Key Stages 1 and Key Stage 2. Pupils leave with above-average standards in both English and mathematics – but higher in mathematics. Pupils in Year 2 made exceptionally good progress in reading and mathematics last year, while pupils in Year 5 made similarly good progress in mathematics.
- Pupils' achievement in writing is a little below that in other skills. However, progress in writing improved last year and this is closing the narrow gap between standards in mathematics and English.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make particularly good progress because work is matched well to their individual levels of learning. Pupils who are supported by the pupil premium make good progress. Extra funding has been well spent on the teaching of specific learning programmes – as in number work – which give considerable help to any pupils who are at risk of not doing well. Consequently, there is no gap between these pupils' achievement and that of other pupils.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make as good progress as other pupils. This is because they are well supported to practise speaking in class and to share their own cultural experiences with classmates.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. A good range of activities, which are well planned to develop children's skills, encourage them to explore their learning both inside and outdoors. Adults talk to children about what they are doing, developing both language skills and understanding.
- In most lessons, work is well matched to pupils' abilities. This means that they are motivated to learn and fully engrossed on what they are doing. Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to check how well pupils are doing and so activities in small groups sometimes allow some children to rely on the others to complete the task. When work is more closely matched to every individual's level of learning, they achieve more.
- Where teaching is outstanding, teachers ask searching questions which make pupils to think deeply about their learning. More-able pupils are given work which challenges them from the start of the lesson. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, while most pupils were fully involved in a lively discussion about different types of graphs, some more-able pupils were investigating the difference between continuous and discrete data.

- Teachers encourage an enthusiasm for learning through their own enthusiastic approaches. Planning of learning is thorough and literacy, numeracy and communication skills are well developed across a range of subjects. For example, during the inspection, Year 4 pupils were developing their computer skills while learning about Tudor houses.
- The use of technology, however, is not used as effectively as it could be to enrich pupils' learning. Teachers do not make best use of the wide range of functions that interactive whiteboards offer. For example, interactive whiteboards are used mainly for writing on, missing opportunities to use them to access exciting internet resources to stimulate new ideas on the topic.
- Teachers make sure pupils are very clear about what level they are working at, and pupils use their targets well to improve their learning and progress. Marking in literacy books is thorough and teachers skilfully identify the next step in learning for pupils and then give them time to respond. Consequently, pupils' achievement in writing is improving. Marking with clear guidance is less well developed in other subjects in some classes and pupils are not always given the opportunity to respond to the guidance that is given. Therefore, they do not make more rapid progress.
- Help in class is strong for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. There is a good balance between pupils working outside the classroom in small groups and additional adult support in class. Additional adults are well briefed and support pupils in a sensitive and caring way, following the lead given by class teachers. Progress is carefully and regularly checked so that the work planned always builds on what pupils already know. Pupils who are supported by the pupil premium are helped individually, when necessary, to make sure they maintain good progress. The support is well judged and gives these pupils the opportunity to work independently when they can.
- Homework is given regularly and closely linked to work being done in the classroom. Although a few parents spoken to feel that homework is too hard, pupils say they get the right amount and it makes them think hard about the subject. Where teaching is strongest, pupils get different levels of homework according to their ability.
- The school's strong sense of purpose and belief of 'God at the centre' underpins all teaching. For example, in a Year 3 science lesson, pupils were looking at senses which were introduced as 'gifts that God has given us' and regular prayer times are deeply respected by all pupils. Teachers' own sensitive and considerate behaviour sets an excellent example to the pupils, who respond well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around school and are polite to adults and each other. In lessons they show enthusiasm and most try hard to do the best they can. On the playground, boys and girls play well together. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 enjoyed playing with the hoops, making up games while ensuring they did not hurt anyone else.
 - Pupils are very clear about what is meant by bullying and they can talk about different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying and name-calling. One older pupil said, 'There has been some bullying in this school, but it was in the past and things are so much better now.' Others were
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very keen to agree that bullying now rarely happens and, if it does, they know who to go to with the problem. They were all equally clear that racism did not exist in their school.

- A minority of parents who responded to Parent View feel that bullying is not well dealt with. However, a school questionnaire of 140 parents held last year shows that most thought their children were safe in school and had experienced little or no bullying. In the pupils' questionnaire, almost all pupils said they felt safe in school.
- Pupils say they are given good guidance about how to keep themselves safe in different situations. This sometimes comes from visitors to the school, such as the police and fire services. They could also talk confidently and were well informed about firework safety, internet safety and road safety.
- Pupils are helped to develop positions of responsibilities which they take very seriously. For example, pupils in Year 5 train as sports leaders for younger pupils while others receive liturgy training. Pupils are given areas of responsibility both within the class and within the school, such as setting up rooms for acts of worship. Older pupils think it important to set younger ones good examples of how to behave.
- Learning mentors work closely with pupils and families to support good behaviour and good attendance. As a result, more pupils come to school regularly and average attendance has risen to be, currently, above average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders monitor pupils' progress accurately. They identify where additional support is needed and make sure that it is effective. Subject leaders, however, have lacked the opportunity to develop their skills in making judgements about the teaching and learning in their subjects. Consequently, they have not contributed enough to improving the quality of teaching, learning and progress in their subjects across the school.
 - Pupils learn from an appropriate range of subjects. Literacy, numeracy and communication skills are increasingly well developed within themes, such as the Tudors or the Second World War. However, pupils are not given enough opportunity to use information and communication technology in some lessons and, consequently, their learning experience is, sometimes, limited.
 - The leaders and managers of the school are very clear and accurate about its strengths and areas where it can improve. Thorough improvement plans are regularly checked to measure progress and identify where any changes need to be made.
 - Teachers' performance is checked against how much progress their pupils make. Targets for teachers are used to measure whether promotion up the pay scale is justified by the results achieved. Leaders' regular observations of teaching and learning check accurately on how well each individual teacher is doing to maintain pupils' good progress and achievement.
 - The school has worked hard to give parents opportunities to discuss school issues. For example, a parents' forum is held termly where parents set the agenda and a group of parents were involved in reviewing the behaviour policy to ensure it met requirements. Termly consultations about individual pupils' progress and weekly newsletters keep parents informed about what is happening in school. However, not all parents responding to the Parent View survey endorsed
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good communication with the school. Leaders are keen to keep parents fully informed and recognise the importance of communication with and cooperation of every parent and carer.

- The spiritual development of pupils is evident throughout the school. Pupils reverently take part in acts of worship and are proud of their school's religious background. They sing well in assembly and speak openly about their faith.
 - Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to discuss moral issues through 'circle time' and through a project to develop social and emotional aspects of learning. Issues for discussion may arise from pupils' first-hand experience, current affairs or through their theme work. For example, older pupils were challenged to think about the place of religious conviction in war situations.
 - The school values the range of cultures among its pupils and a celebration of different cultural activities is evident in displays around the school. Special events such as 'Diversity Day' give pupils the opportunity to explore their own culture and the cultures of others.
 - The school has been well supported by the local authority, which has provided guidance on developing the leadership team, training for governors and help with developing the subjects pupils learn.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a good understanding of what the school does well and how it can improve. Governors visit the school regularly to check on how well plans are being implemented. However, they do not all record their visits thoroughly enough to be helpful to the rest of the governing body in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning observed. However, they know how good teaching is and maintain a close watch on promotion of staff to ensure it is merited by good performance. Governing body minutes of meetings show that governors ask challenging questions and hold the school leaders to account for making sure all pupils make good progress. They manage the budget effectively and are clear that spending has a major impact on the performance of the pupils, especially those supported by the pupil premium. Governors know how this funding contributes to the additional help these pupils receive and check the quality of education for these and all pupils. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties and has ensured that safeguarding arrangements in school meet the required standard. In view of the fact that there are so many temporary classrooms, they have made careful arrangements for the start of the school day to ensure access is monitored and pupils are safe on arrival.
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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	103723
Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	400648

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	424
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Colby
Headteacher	Mary Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	18-19 January 2012
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