

St Thomas More RC Primary School

Park Lane, Eastfield, Peterborough PE1 5JW

Inspection dates 20–21 January 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are ambitious for the school and have high expectations of pupils and staff.
- Leaders, managers and governors have improved teaching and learning through close monitoring and effective coaching and mentoring.
- Outcomes are improving as a result of more consistently good teaching, learning and assessment.
- The early years provision is good. Staff know the children's needs well and plan exciting and purposeful activities for their learning.
- The work in pupils' books shows that they are making good progress over time. Pupils take great pride in the presentation of their work.
- Home learning projects build on pupils' experience at school very well. They undertake them with commitment and enthusiasm.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding. They have excellent attitudes to their learning and work extremely hard.
- Pupils feel very safe in school and have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe.
- Governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas to improve; they provide a good level of challenge to senior leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics, while improving, are below average by the end of Key Stage 2.
- At times, some teachers are not aware enough of how well different groups of pupils are doing in class to address any issues they may have.
- Leaders do not systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the individual programmes of support they provide for pupils with special educational needs.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers are aware how different groups of pupils are getting on in class so that they address any issues promptly.

- Develop the existing good practice in special educational needs, by:
 - gathering specific information about the success of individual programmes of support to evaluate their effectiveness.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The school has improved well since the previous inspection. This is because leaders and managers are ambitious to see all pupils succeed, whatever their circumstances or starting points.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are passionate about providing the best possible education for the pupils; this is evident in their high expectations of staff, governors, pupils and parents.
- There is a strong culture of caring and acceptance in the school, where every child matters. Pupils are encouraged to do their best, and respond very positively to the guidance of their teachers.
- Teaching staff greatly appreciate the time and effort senior leaders put into helping them improve their practice. The deputy headteacher leads a learning group of new and inexperienced teachers and uses a variety of effective approaches to support and coach them in becoming good or better teachers.
- Leaders do not hesitate to tackle any underperformance, and make clear their expectations to all staff. There have been changes in teaching staff as a result of this unequivocal approach.
- Leaders and governors use the management of teachers' performance to ensure that they continue to teach effectively. Regular reviews of their progress towards targets keep teachers informed about how well they are doing.
- The local authority has provided good support and guidance to school leaders, helping them make the school securely good.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. It is kept under constant review. The school's thematic approach to the broad range of subjects is used well to provide pupils with plenty of useful opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Pupils learn about British values such as democracy and the rule of law. These align closely with the school's strong Catholic values. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school caters very well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils celebrate their many varied cultures. A pupil said, 'Everyone here is equal.' The curriculum is enriched well through visits and visitors. For example, Year 6 pupils benefited from their visit to a local stately home, Burghley House, for their 'Tudor' day.
- The school spends the pupil premium effectively in supporting disadvantaged pupils. A 'pupil premium coach' ensures that all pupils receive the help they need and runs a homework club for them. As a result of the measures the school is taking, gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school are closing.
- While leaders know how individual pupils with special educational needs are progressing, they do not always measure the specific impact of particular programmes of support to see how effective they are.
- The physical education and sport premium for primary schools has been used effectively to increase the range of clubs for pupils, including kick-boxing and gymnastics, and this has led to a greater uptake among pupils. Additional sports activities linked to curriculum themes bring learning to life for pupils, such as archery for pupils studying Robin Hood.
- The impact of leadership and management is not yet evident in raising standards to reach the national average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors provide a good level of support and challenge. They are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas to improve, and bring a wide range of experience and expertise.
 - Governors have a good understanding of the school's performance information. They question subject leaders closely about how well pupils are doing.
 - Through their own visits to school, governors satisfy themselves that the provision for pupils meets requirements and follows agreed policies.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are outstanding. The school's work to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism features in different subjects. Leaders keep meticulous records of any concerns and contacts with parents and other agencies. Communication within the school and with those outside is highly effective, so that everybody knows what is happening. Pupils say they feel completely safe, and almost all parents who responded to Parent View agreed that their children are safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- As a result of improvements brought about by senior leaders and governors, teaching is now good.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they make learning interesting and enjoyable for pupils. They organise learning very well and are confident and flexible in the approaches they adopt to accelerate pupils' progress.
- They use attractive resources and give pupils plenty of opportunities to become actively involved in their learning, which engages them well. For example, pupils were able to drink tea and role play family life during the Second World War in a 1940s style kitchen that had been set up in one of the Year 6 classrooms.
- Teachers probe pupils' understanding well and question them in ways that challenge their learning.
- Teachers utilise teaching assistants very well; they are well organised and work closely with teachers to promote pupils' learning.
- Teaching equips pupils well to make decisions about the next steps in their learning. For example, Year 5 pupils reflected sensibly on their progress at the end of a mathematics lesson on multiplication. They arrived at informed decisions as to which methods they needed to develop further in preparation for the next lesson.
- The quality of homework is particularly strong. It is carefully planned to build on pupils' learning but also to be accessible to all parents and to promote the development of pupils' language, including their home language. 'Home learning projects' involve the whole family in supporting learning, for example through carrying out research or building models.
- All staff follow the school's marking and feedback policy consistently well. This means that pupils receive clear guidance about their strengths and the areas they need to develop in their work across a range of subjects.
- Phonics (the sounds that letters represent) is taught well. Pupils are able to sound out unfamiliar words. As they grow older they are taught how to interpret text and develop a love of learning.
- On occasions, inexperienced teachers are not fully aware how every group in the class is getting on, and sometimes pupils' progress slows because any issues are not being picked up promptly.
- All parents who responded to Parent View said they were pleased with their children's progress. Parents said that the school keeps them well informed about how well their children are doing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and are confident and self-assured. They thoroughly enjoy their lessons and work extremely hard.
- Pupils take a real pride in their work; their books are very well presented, including learning journals where they have arranged the contents themselves.
- Pupils are very confident in expressing opinions, talking about shared values, and reflecting on their own ideas.
- Pupils have a heightened understanding of how well they are doing. Through their individual discussions with teachers they reflect on their attainment, achievement and attitudes. They know what they have to do to improve their work and their approach to learning.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at the heart of the school's work; their empathy for others and tolerance means they get on very well together. They listen attentively to one another in class and cooperate extremely well, with all groups mixing together, including boys and girls.
- Pupils feel completely safe at school. No pupils or parents, when asked, had any concerns about bullying. The school's records support their views. Pupils run a healthy tuck-shop and take plenty of exercise. They benefit from healthy school dinners.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of keeping safe while using the internet. They know about the potential dangers of social media, as shown when Year 6 pupils considered attitudes to identity. They were able to compare 1939, when everybody had to carry an identity card and evacuees wore labels, with today, when children are taught not to reveal their personal details to strangers.

- The breakfast club and the after-school club provide pupils with a safe, stimulating environment where they can socialise and join in with a wide range of interesting activities. They enjoy healthy snacks.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct is impeccable. Their behaviour around the building is exemplary. Pupils are extremely self-disciplined and regulate their own conduct to suit where they are, whether it is the classroom, the dining hall or the playground.
- Pupils are friendly, keen to talk about their learning and confident when speaking to visitors. They are courteous and sensitive to one another's needs.
- The school environment is very attractive. Pupils work in orderly classrooms, where displays of high-quality work, often linked to the particular themes they are studying, inspire them and enhance their learning.
- There is no disruption in classrooms. Supply teachers comment on how well-behaved the pupils are and what a pleasure it is to teach them.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils and apply the behaviour policy consistently well across the school. The learning mentors make a very positive contribution to supporting those pupils and their families who face particular difficulties.
- Attendance is above average, reflecting the pupils' great love of school, and all the hard work staff have done to engage with families in sending their children to school regularly and on time.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- The progress of pupils currently in the school is good. The consistently good teaching means that pupils achieve well over time.
- Pupils' books show that they have made good progress this year in all subjects. Teachers' high expectations and pupils' excellent attitudes to learning mean that pupils produce a large quantity of good-quality work. Pupils' standards are consistently improving.
- The gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally were wide in 2015. However, the school's performance information shows that, for current pupils, their good progress means that gaps are closing.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good and improving across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. They receive support that is well-targeted to their specific needs. Staff know them very well as individuals. There is good sharing of information about the needs and achievements of these pupils among members of staff.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. They read widely. They read fluently and can understand what they are reading. The proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the Year 1 phonics check in 2015 was above average.
- Teachers are careful to adapt learning to meet the needs of pupils who are new to learning English. Most pupils speak at least two languages, with 31 different home languages represented in the school. An emphasis on promoting vocabulary supports pupils in acquiring English quickly so that they make good progress.
- Pupils have good opportunities to develop their literacy skills through a wide range of activities. For example, Year 6 pupils took part in a festival where they performed from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* at a local theatre.
- The very large majority of pupils speak English as an additional language. Many have limited spoken English when they join the school. Many pupils also face additional difficulties and have had disrupted experiences in the past. While children make good progress in the early years, the proportion reaching the expected standard in each area of learning was below average in 2015.
- In 2015, the provisional published information did not take into account several late arrivals from overseas whose results will be disapplied. Nonetheless, the standards they reached in reading, writing and mathematics were below average at the end of Key Stage 2. This was despite this group of pupils making good progress from their different starting points.

Early years provision

is good

- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas to develop in the early years. Good leadership and management mean that all adults have high expectations of all children, which they link to an accurate understanding of the children's current knowledge and skills.
- Children learn well in focused activities where they take advantage of opportunities to find things out for themselves. They extend their understanding through responding to careful questioning and engaging in conversation.
- By the end of the early years, children have developed most of the key skills they need to succeed in Year 1.
- Children, including disabled children, those with special educational needs, and those who are disadvantaged make good progress from their different starting points.
- Teaching is good. Teachers are alert to children's needs and plan work to address gaps in children's learning. For example, children at the early stages of learning English reinforced their learning about length through activities adapted by the teacher during an afternoon outdoors session.
- Children were intrigued by the appearance of 'dinosaur eggs' in the polytunnel. These generated a wide range of interesting activities. For example, when children were making egg carriers they showed they could choose whether they needed long or short boxes.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Children are extremely responsive to each other and to adults, and sustain concentration well. The staff ensure that welfare standards are met and that the children stay safe.
- Assessment is rigorous. The school's online systems are used by parents and staff to share children's achievements and enter into a dialogue about their progress.
- Parents are very pleased with the progress that their children make. They feel their children are made welcome in the Reception classes and have settled quickly.
- The early years is not yet outstanding because not enough pupils reach a good level of development by the time they leave, despite making good progress from their starting points.

School details

Unique reference number	110854
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	10009144

This inspection 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	417
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Morris
Headteacher	Anne-Marie McElhinney
Telephone number	01733 566005
Website	www.st-thomasmore.peterborough.sch.uk
Email address	office@st-thomasmore.peterborough.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 January 2013

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It has two classes for each year group and three classes in Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after) is broadly average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- In 2015 the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The governing body runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning in 40 lessons or parts of lessons, 12 of them jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- The inspectors heard pupils read and, with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, looked closely at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of school documents including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports and safeguarding records. They considered evidence of the school's partnership work and the information provided for families.
- A meeting was held with a group of older pupils chosen at random. Inspectors also met with the head boy, head girl, and house captains. Discussions were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and other staff on a wide range of subjects, including safeguarding arrangements and their professional development. The lead inspector talked to the Chair of the Governing Body and five other governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the 22 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. The inspection team also considered comments conveyed electronically about the school, spoke informally to some parents in the playground and met one parent by appointment.

Inspection team

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