

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

Dartmouth Avenue, Coalpool, Walsall, West Midlands WS3 1SP

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 December 2024

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish in this caring and inclusive school. The school's culture promotes a strong sense of community, where pupils from diverse cultures and backgrounds learn together in harmony. Pupils behave exceptionally well. They respect others and look after each other. This creates a joyful and happy environment for everyone. As one pupil said, 'This is our home and we care about it.'

Staff members have a deep understanding of each pupil. They have high expectations for each individual to reach their full potential. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) actively participate in the school's curriculum and receive effective support that helps them progress. Pupils achieve success and excel in various aspects of school life. They make strong progress through the curriculum. This means they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils build fond memories at the school. Almost all pupils take part in the school's extra-curricular programme. This programme includes various high-quality clubs and experiences, carefully selected to enhance pupils' knowledge and talents. Some pupils take responsibility for maintaining the school's colony of bees. Others compete to a high standard in county sporting tournaments. Staff make sure there is something for everyone.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has placed strong emphasis on further improving the quality of the curriculum. Central to this work has been the enhancement of teachers' subject knowledge and expertise. This increased expertise has enabled staff to clearly identify the knowledge that pupils are expected to learn in all subjects. The curriculum is thoughtfully designed to help pupils build deep and secure knowledge over time. For instance, children in the early years experiment using different colours. In art and design, pupils in Year 1 go on to practise using shade and tone. They then build on this knowledge in Year 2, when learning stippling and hatching techniques. By the time they reach upper key stage 2, pupils are well prepared to complete more complex work. For example, they produce high-quality sketches of the human hand.

Adults provide clear and logical explanations that help pupils grasp new concepts. They teach a broad range of subject-specific vocabulary and terminology. Pupils understand this vocabulary and use it. Teachers also provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise and reinforce their learning, including regular recapping of prior knowledge. This is helping pupils to master and remember the things that they learn.

Teachers regularly check on pupils' understanding. If they identify that a pupil is falling behind, they provide extra support to help them catch up. They also work diligently to recognise and meet the needs of pupils with SEND. This includes teachers sometimes making adaptations to the way that the curriculum is taught. As a result, all pupils know and remember more. Pupils' exceptional achievement is reflected in the school's published outcomes. For instance, in 2024, many pupils achieved a greater depth standard in key stage 2 mathematics tests.

The school prioritises the teaching of early reading and writing. The approach is very well organised. Children build their knowledge of phonics day by day. They have plenty of practice and enjoy reading regularly. Teachers place sharp focus on ensuring that all children keep up, right from the start of the Reception Year. This means that children receive extra support when necessary to help them stay on track. The approach is proving successful. Pupils demonstrate a love of reading; most are fluent readers by the time they reach Year 2.

Pupils are extremely polite, well mannered and kind. They display positive attitudes towards learning and incidents of low-level disruption are extremely rare. They listen attentively and show eagerness to understand new knowledge. Routines are well established from the early years onward. For example, children in the nursery self-register each morning. They read their names on an attendance card, place it in a box to indicate their presence, and then promptly settle down to engage in purposeful tasks. Pupils' rates of attendance at the school are exemplary.

The school's efforts to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain are highly effective. Pupils actively seek and value the opinions of others. They witness democracy in action, often making classroom decisions through formal debates and voting. They learn to take responsibility for their choices and for the upkeep of their school. For example, during lunch and breaktimes, pupils help to maintain high standards of cleanliness throughout the school.

The school's strategic vision is clearly understood by all stakeholders. Staff members feel valued and motivated to ensure that every pupil receives a high-quality education. They prioritise the best interests of pupils and actively engage parents and carers in their children's education. Many parents express strong positivity about their children's experiences at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in February 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	104236
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10343798
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	287
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mike Quinn
Headteacher	Jean Richmond
Website	www.st-thomas.walsall.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is federated with St Patrick's Catholic Primary School in Walsall. Mrs Richmond is the executive headteacher of both schools.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school is within the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in March 2023. The next inspection will be within five years of the last section 48 inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other members of the school's senior leadership team. He also met with representatives of the board of governors.
- The inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the Archdiocese of Birmingham.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. He also heard some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interest first.
- Throughout the inspection, the inspector met with staff. He also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- The inspector spoke to parents and considered the views expressed through Ofsted Parent View. He also reviewed surveys completed by pupils.

Inspection team

Jonathan Leonard, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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