

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103723
Local Authority	Coventry
Inspection number	336140
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2010
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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	443
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr L Poole
Headteacher	Mrs M Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2006
School address	Watercall Avenue Stivichall Coventry
Telephone number	024 7641 2619
Fax number	024 7669 3896
Email address	admin@st-thomasmore.coventry.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2010
Inspection number	336140

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent the majority of time looking at learning, visited nineteen lessons, and observed 18 teachers. They held meetings with groups of parents and carers and pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work and looked at school records and policies, assessment and monitoring information and 211 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- whether teaching is consistent and its impact on progress
- pupils' understanding of the quality of their work and how they could improve it
- how governors and partnerships contribute to leadership and management.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to other schools. Over half of this group have speech, language and communication difficulties. The number of pupils who do not speak English as their first language has risen during the last 2 years and the percentage is now above average. Structural faults in about half of the school, discovered in May 2009, led to the sudden loss of many classrooms and other spaces. Much of the school now functions from 11 temporary modules. The school holds the Artsmark gold award.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School provides a satisfactory education. The school has several good features. The committed leadership and staff work hard to achieve their vision of helping children work together to learn and grow. Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development supports good personal development. One typically positive comment from a pupil was, 'It is a great school and the staff are always happy and always teach us a lot.'

Partnerships with parents and carers are good and parents' and carers' views of the school are highly favourable. One, speaking for many, wrote, 'I feel very lucky to have such a lovely school.' The curriculum is good. It is well adapted to pupils' needs and tastes, offering many interesting opportunities in the arts and in after school clubs.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. This includes those who speak English as an additional language and those with speech, learning and communication difficulties, because these groups receive strong support. Pupils' progress is satisfactory but uneven. It is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 because teaching is better in this age range. Academic performance is increasing at Key Stage 2.

Nevertheless, variable quality teaching in Years 3 to 6 reduces progress to an overall satisfactory level and attainment at the end of Year 6 is average. Teaching is inconsistent because the school does not use monitoring information rigorously. There are strong elements in teaching, but some lessons lack pace and challenge. Marking is inconsistent, frequently failing to provide the right information to help pupils understand what they do well and what they should focus on to raise their attainment. The setting of targets is good in some classes, but very inconsistent.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors are knowledgeable and support the school well. School leaders and staff worked very effectively to address the sudden loss of many classrooms and other facilities in May 2009. Remarkably, pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 only missed three days of schooling, despite 260 of them having to be re-housed. Parents and carers admired the school's response, one writing, 'The way the building incident was dealt with was incredible and speaks volumes for the governing body and leadership.' While the school functions well with its temporary arrangements, there are too few spaces for small group teaching, resulting in inconvenience and overcrowding. The curriculum and teaching in Early Years Foundation Stage are affected by limited accessibility to outside areas.

The school has satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. There is a trend of improvement in several areas, such as pupils' behaviour. Self-evaluation is comprehensive and generally accurate, but the way the school has tackled

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

inconsistencies, like teaching, lacks the sharpness required to quickly boost progress. Essential systems to ensure the smooth running of the school are embedded and enable the school to continue improving.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement by January 2011 by
 - developing greater consistency in teaching, especially in Key Stage 2, through more effective use of monitoring information
 - ensuring that the marking of pupils' work and target setting provide clear information to pupils about the next steps in their learning.
- Develop the school's facilities to
 - provide opportunities for Early Years Foundation Stage children to work and play freely indoors and out
 - provide many more small spaces so that children withdrawn from lessons for extra support can work uninterrupted and unhindered.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enter Year 1 with skills and aptitudes higher than those expected for their age. Teachers, in Years 1 and 2 focus effectively on meeting pupils' needs; lessons are lively and fun and progress in Key Stage 1 is good. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 is above average.

The school's very thorough data gathering confirms that progress in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. Although attainment and progress in Key Stage 2 have risen gradually during the last three years, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is average. Rates of progress are similar for all subjects and for all pupils, whether they have speech, language and communication difficulties or not. The underlying reason for less rapid progress in Key Stage 2 is inconsistency in the quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6. Pupils are not always challenged effectively and the pace of learning slows. Consequently, achievement is satisfactory as a whole for all groups of pupils.

Pupils report they feel safe and enjoy school because it is friendly and welcoming. Parents and carers say they are glad that their children are at the school because they know they will be well looked after and are 'expected to behave properly'. Pupils know they should eat healthily and take regular activity. Fruit and water in classrooms, and opportunities available at lunchtime and after-school clubs, enable pupils to make both a part of their regular routines.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils develop a social and moral compass through learning about the Catholic faith and improve cultural awareness through developing understanding of other faiths. The well respected school

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

council and committees help them learn about democracy. Close links with the diocese help pupils take a full part in many local activities and, through arts initiatives, associate frequently with pupils across the city. The school works well to reduce absence and attendance is average. Pupils learn good independence. Their overall satisfactory progress in key skills like literacy, numeracy and computing means that their preparation for the future is satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum is well planned, meeting pupils' interests and learning needs. National requirements are met, as are issues specific to the school, such as the need to deal with the increasing number of pupils who learn English as an additional language. A number of subjects are taught as elements within carefully selected themes that are often supported by educational visits that make learning relevant.

Within the big picture of satisfactory teaching, there are some strengths. Good teamwork between teachers and their assistants, the effective use of questioning, assured behaviour management and mutually supportive relationships are

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

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

commonplace. Teaching in Key Stage 1 is better than in Key Stage 2, where inconsistent practice leads to satisfactory, rather than good, progress. In some lessons there is insufficient challenge, pace of learning and opportunities for pupils to work independently. Pupils enjoy learning and behave well, even when some lessons do not interest pupils as much as others. Pupils enjoy the many lunchtime and after school clubs, participating in large numbers. Very good additional opportunities in music and drama are recognised in the Artsmark award.

The school holds a wealth of data on pupils' progress and uses it intelligently to identify those who need individual and small group support. However, the way assessment is used to identify the next steps of learning for pupils is variable.

The school's caring and supporting ethos is evident in pupils' positive behaviour and the respect they show to each other and staff. This is because the school strongly promotes their personal and social development and values, such as trust and friendship, which help pupils thrive. Many pupils have overcome serious social and emotional issues because of the commitment, sensitivity and support of staff. Others gain support from a wide range of agencies, including social services. Parents and carers are quick to praise staff for the assistance they receive in dealing with their children and in managing difficult issues.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders and managers systematically monitor teaching and pupils' progress. The school uses this information to help plan for the future and drive improvements. Planning is relevant and focused on appropriate priorities, aiming to address areas of weakness. The headteacher, governors and staff coped very well with the shocks caused by the demolition of half of the school. However, the time that was necessarily spent on overcoming accommodation problems has slowed the rate of school improvement. Senior staff monitor lessons regularly, but have been insufficiently rigorous in eliminating weaknesses. This limits pupils' progress, particularly in Key Stage 2 where the inconsistencies are most acute. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Governors are well organised and have clear insights about the school, based on effective monitoring. The governing body uses its knowledge to robustly challenge the school. Governors use their expertise well to monitor safeguarding, displaying an

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

intimate knowledge of site and safety issues. The school has well developed systems and procedures to ensure good safeguarding. Its pro-active working with other key agencies reduces the risk of harm to pupils.

Partnership arrangements enhance the strong curriculum. Local links provide additional expert teaching in humanities and sport. Close liaison with the adjacent Catholic church benefits the school in numerous ways, not least in providing a location for the weekly full school assembly.

Equality of opportunity for pupils is good. The school works assiduously to eliminate gaps in achievement between groups of pupils. Well-qualified and effective teaching assistants help those who experience barriers to learning and many interventions are effective. The promotion of community cohesion is based on the school's clear understanding of its local and wider context. Through the church, the school reaches out to other faith groups in the city. The school is internally cohesive and has burgeoning links with schools in Spain; this supports its teaching of Spanish.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children arrive at school smiling and eager to learn. Their attainment on entry is similar to expectations for their age. Children make good progress so that, when they start Year 1, most are at above expected levels. Children's emotional development is good. They settle quickly, behave well and enjoy routines that help them feel secure. Staff are doing their best to overcome the difficulties of the temporary accommodation, including its lack of space indoors and limitations in free access to the outdoor play area. The school

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

is working with the local authority to overcome these issues.

Teaching is good, so children have fun discovering new skills and making friends. The balance between adult directed and child led activity is satisfactory, but more adult direction is needed to challenge higher attaining children. Development of basic learning skills is good so children become confident learners. Activities are well resourced and planned, sparking children's imagination and interests. Children's care and welfare is strong, with good safeguarding and the effective use of key workers to support children and liaise with families. This means all children thrive, including the more vulnerable.

Leadership and management are good and staff adopt new initiatives readily to enhance children's play and learning. Children are well prepared to move on to the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

Parents and carers regard the school very favourably. The overwhelming majority reported that children their child enjoys school and a very large majority are happy with their child's experience at the school. Parents and carers feel that they are closely involved in the school. They are well-informed about school life and their child's progress. Many appreciated the early text message warning of school closure in recent snow. Their views are regularly canvassed and there are clear channels of communication.

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 211 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 443 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	144	68	66	31	0	0	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	139	66	64	30	5	2	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	89	42	103	49	11	5	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	82	39	107	51	17	8	4	2
The teaching is good at this school	99	47	98	46	7	3	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	84	40	101	48	16	8	4	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	87	41	116	55	6	3	1	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)	80	38	104	49	8	4	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	86	41	106	50	11	5	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	76	36	115	55	9	4	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	72	34	118	56	11	5	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	89	42	101	48	10	5	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	104	49	97	48	7	3	3	1

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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:	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. ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



20 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Coventry, CV3 5AZ

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school recently. St Thomas More provides a satisfactory education. You told us how you liked the school and we agree that you are well cared for. Other strengths are your good behaviour, your personal development and the interesting mixture of subjects and activities you do.

The progress you make is satisfactory and, by the time you leave, your standards are similar to other children in the country. There is some good teaching and you are keen learners, but some lessons do not challenge you enough and their pace can be a little slow. The headteacher and her staff help you develop well and were terrific when some of the school building had to be closed last summer. They check up on the school carefully but do not always act strongly to sort out some weaknesses.

We have asked the school to act to improve these areas:

- improve teaching so more of it is good and it boosts your progress
- help you learn more quickly by marking your work more clearly and by setting better targets. If you are not sure how to improve, you should ask your teachers
- improve opportunities for children in the Nursery and Reception to play and learn inside and out
- provide more small spaces, so pupils getting help in small groups have a quiet place to learn.

Once again, thanks for all your help. It was lovely meeting you

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.