

St Thomas More Catholic First School

Woodrow Centre, Studley Road, Redditch, B98 7RY

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.

- All pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 4 is in line with that expected for their age.
- Teaching throughout the school is good. It has particularly improved in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils enjoy school. They show their pride in the school when talking about it.
- Pupils behave well and feel very safe in school.
- Leaders and managers have been effective in improving the quality of teaching. This has resulted in some rapid improvements, particularly in pupils' achievements in reading, since the previous inspection.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and value the support they and their children receive.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always plan tasks that challenge all pupils, particularly the more able.
- In some lessons and parts of lessons activities take too long. As a result, pupils lose focus and so learning slows.
- Pupils are not always encouraged to be involved in sharing their ideas, whether in pairs, groups or whole-class sessions.
- Pupils do not have the skills to take responsibility for knowing how well they have done and what they must do to further improve their achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors spent time in 14 lessons and saw nine members of staff teaching and working with the pupils. They were accompanied by the headteacher to four of these lessons.
- Meetings were held with members of staff, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and with pupils from Year 4.
- The inspectors heard pupils read from Years 1 and 3.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at the school's development plans, minutes of the governing body, the school's records of pupils' progress and work in pupils' books.
- The inspectors took account of the 12 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and held informal discussions with parents and carers at the start of the day.

Inspection team

Jenny Batelen, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Anthony Green

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized first school with eight classes.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the two Reception classes.
- Some pupils in Years 1 and 2 are in a mixed-year class, and some pupils in Year 3 and 4 are in another mixed-year class.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. These include pupils with complex learning needs, including speech and language difficulties.
- The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds with a higher than average percentage from a range of other ethnic backgrounds, including any other White background, Indian and Pakistani backgrounds.
- An above-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is average. The pupil premium is extra money given to schools by the government to support, amongst others, pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school is currently led by an acting headteacher following the retirement of the headteacher in July 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further by involving pupils more in deciding how well they have done and what they must do to improve.
- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - planning work that always challenges all pupils, especially the more able
 - keeping activities moving at a brisk pace so that pupils do not lose focus
 - giving pupils more opportunities to share their ideas in pairs, groups and whole-class situations.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy.
- All groups of pupils in the school make good progress, with a rising trend in standards in Year 2 as reflected in school data as well as the national tests. School assessments and work in books show that standards in Year 4 are broadly in line with that expected for their age.
- Although standards are rising, pupils, particularly the more able, are not yet always challenged enough to make rapid progress in their lessons.
- Pupils from different ethnic groups make good progress in line with their peers. Those who speak English as an additional language quickly settle and are helped to make good progress with language, communication and understanding so that they can cope with the work in the classroom.
- The school's early identification of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs ensure that these pupils have the skilled help they need, in class and in small groups, so that they make good progress.
- The targeted use of extra funding from the government (pupil premium) enables the school to ensure that eligible pupils make good progress. The school has used the funding to provide additional adult support in the classroom and for small-group activities, and has bought further resources to develop these pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills. As a result, the gap between their attainment and that of their peers is closing, particularly in reading.
- The skilled teaching of phonics (sounds that letters make) throughout the school gives pupils a strong foundation of skills that they use to read and write. Pupils have a love of reading and this is strengthened as they move through the school and learn to enjoy particular authors, such as Roald Dahl.
- Pupils' communication skills are developed well and they become confident speakers, keen to talk about their work and their school with visitors.

The quality of teaching is good

- Children in the Reception classes learn together and make good use of the inside and outdoor areas. They make good progress in all areas of learning through a range of child-initiated and adult-led activities. They are included in the whole school teaching of French and enjoyed the conversation and singing about parts of the body, developing good understanding and language skills.
- Teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2 plan together to ensure that the mixed-year classes meet the needs of the pupils in both year groups.
- Teachers and teaching assistants question pupils skilfully to probe their understanding and develop their thinking. Pupils are able to discuss their work in pairs, groups and in whole-class sessions. This was evident in a mathematics lesson for Year 1 and 2, pupils when they worked in

pairs to answer questions and develop their understanding of reading the time in hours and half hours.

- Teachers make strong links across the different subjects so that learning is relevant. In a Year 4 English lesson, pupils learnt to use imagery, alliteration and similes in writing poems about Rama and Sita, a story studied as part of the current topic of 'Festivals of Light'.
- English and mathematics teaching has a strong focus on developing the technical language for the subject. Pupils helped each other to use the correct terminology as they sorted and classified shapes in Year 4.
- A range of information and communication technology is used effectively in lessons. Pupils photograph their practical work in order to share it with all pupils through the interactive whiteboards.
- In the best lessons, teachers make sure that no time is wasted and pupils are fully engaged in their learning at all points in the lesson. On occasions, when activities go on too long, pupils lose focus on what they are learning.
- Teachers in all year groups do not always make the best use of discussion opportunities and, as a result, some pupils do not do enough thinking for themselves and their learning slows.
- Although lessons have clear objectives and success criteria so that pupils know how they can be successful, pupils are not given the opportunities to decide these and they are not always referred to at the end of the lesson. Consequently, pupils do not have the skills to make independent decisions about their progress and how they can improve their achievement.
- Marking and feedback is consistently used across the school so that pupils understand 'green for great' and 'pink to think' and make the most of the opportunities they are given to reflect on their work.
- Regular, formal and informal checks mean that teachers know exactly how well pupils are doing. They usually plan challenging tasks so that all pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, can make good progress towards achieving the next level. Sometimes the challenge is not sufficient, particularly for the more able, and, as a result, their progress slows a little in that part of the lesson.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the teaching in the school and value the support their children are given to make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are very polite and well mannered. They care about each other and play well at break times, which they say they enjoy.
- Consistent strategies across the school ensure that those who may find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are helped to stay on task and handle relationships with others. Small-group work to help pupils manage their feelings mean that pupils who find this difficult are helped to get on well with each other. As a result, there are very few behavioural incidents recorded.
- Pupils feel very safe. They understand how they are kept safe in school and they know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. They are confident about how to keep themselves

safe when using computers and mobile phones, and how to deal with cyber-bullying.

- Pupils say there is no bullying of any kind, including racist incidents. They are confident that staff will help them sort out any 'niggles', as pupils describe the few disagreements, and will help with any concerns or worries. Parents support this view and say that their children are safe in school. They are very confident that their children are happy to come to school and, as a result, attendance is above average.
- Pupils are keen to learn and, in most lessons, good behaviour ensures that pupils listen well to their teacher and to their classmates. Very occasionally, pupils' interest is not held well enough and, as a result, there is some restlessness and lack of focus by some pupils.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is well supported by the senior leadership team and the governing body. There are very clear and focused priorities for school improvement, based on thorough school self-evaluation.
- Leaders and managers ensure that each teacher is helped to improve their effectiveness. The process of setting targets for teachers allows them to focus on individual points for development as well as whole-school priorities closely linked to raising achievement for all pupils.
- Subject leaders have a clear idea of the strengths and areas to improve in their subjects. Action plans drive improvements, as demonstrated by the specific plan for raising standards in writing, where the positive impact is now evident in books and test results.
- Careful record keeping and checking on each individual's progress, linked to regular discussions about pupils and their progress, mean that any extra help that is needed is quickly put in place. This ensures equality of opportunity for all pupils, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, and that there is no discrimination, for example between boys and girls.
- The curriculum has been transformed and provides pupils with rich experiences, including visits and visitors. Pupils are enthusiastic about the topics they study. They learn about and value the range of cultures and languages represented in the school. Art and music are explored and celebrated. Opportunities for reflection are provided throughout the school day.
- The school has good links with a range of other agencies, including local schools, which support pupils' progress in a range of subjects, such as sport and a modern foreign language, and in dealing with any particular needs such as speech and language difficulties.
- Parents value the support they receive through the work of the parent link teacher and the family support worker.
- The local authority provides strong support to the school and this has been particularly effective in supporting the improvement in teaching in Years 3 and 4.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provides good support to the headteacher and senior leaders. The members of the governing body are skilled and ask searching and challenging questions of the school and thoroughly check information about pupils' progress. They are confident about the

impact of developments in the school and how these lead to raised achievement. They understand and monitor the process of setting targets for teachers and how this relates to their salary. They are effective in ensuring that the school is in a good financial position and that any extra funding, including the pupil premium, is used wisely to benefit pupils so that they make the best possible progress and access the full range of curriculum activities. The governing body regularly reviews its statutory responsibilities, including ensuring that staff are vetted and trained in order to keep pupils safe and free from harm.

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	116910
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	401629

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary Aided School
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Desmond Chilton
Headteacher	Sheila Hicks
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2009
Telephone number	01527 525821
Fax number	01527 517453
Email address	office@st-thomasmore.worcs.sch.uk

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