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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Anne Wood
Headteacher
St Thomas More Catholic Primary School
Appleton Road
Eltham
London
SE9 6NS

Dear Mrs Wood

Short inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are a strategic leader who has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to secure even further improvements. This is reflected in your school's self-evaluation and development plan.

Since your appointment in September 2015, you have maintained strong standards in reading, writing and mathematics across the school and at the end of key stages 1 and 2. The proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was well above the national average.

Over the last three years, the proportion of children in the early years who achieved a good level of development has been above average. This means that children leave the early years with strong basic literacy and numeracy skills. Equally, they have developed the personal and social skills to become successful and confident learners. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for their next stages of education.

You have effectively addressed the areas for improvement identified at your last inspection. For example, in mathematics the most able pupils are given demanding work that enables them to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills. However, you acknowledge that all pupils, including the most able, are not consistently challenged in their learning in subjects other than English and mathematics. Furthermore, you have identified the need to develop the work of middle leaders to improve the learning opportunities offered to pupils across the curriculum.

During the inspection, pupils were well behaved. They are friendly, polite and respectful. Staff, parents and carers agree that pupils are well behaved. Pupils are

articulate and talked confidently with me about their learning in a wide range of subjects. For example, they talked about how the eye detects light and how they would improve their drawing skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The designated safeguarding lead has made sure that all statutory checks are completed for staff working with pupils. Staff are trained well and receive regular updates in accordance with the latest safeguarding guidance. As a result, they know how to report any concerns that relate to pupils' safety and well-being.

Leaders work well with external agencies to keep pupils safe. For example, older pupils attended a workshop run by an external organisation on how to stay safe on the streets and the risks associated with gang affiliation.

Pupils told me they feel safe. They have trust and confidence in the adults who listen to them and take their worries seriously. Pupils know that they can post their concerns in the 'worry box' that is situated outside your office, and that these will be addressed swiftly.

Parents say that their children are happy, safe and well cared for at school.

Inspection findings

- First, we agreed to check the actions leaders have taken to ensure that girls are challenged sufficiently in reading and mathematics so as to attain highly in these subjects.
- The assessment information showed that at the end of key stage 1 in 2017, boys in school performed better than girls in attaining the expected standard in reading. In the same year, at the end of key stage 2, girls' attainment at the higher standards in reading was below that of their peers nationally.
- In 2017, at the end of key stages 1 and 2, girls did not perform as well as girls nationally in attaining the higher and greater depth standards in mathematics. In school, boys performed better than girls.
- You and your leadership team have rightly identified this as an area to improve. Your leaders have selected high-quality texts to challenge the most able pupils, including girls, in their reading. Pupils who read to me did so with fluency and accuracy. They demonstrated a good understanding of the text by answering questions well.
- Your leaders have provided more opportunities for girls to talk through the mathematics being taught and explain their thinking. The work in girls' books shows that they are challenged well to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to solve problems and develop reasoning skills. The actions that you and your leaders have put in place have a positive effect on all groups of pupils, including girls. This is a clear strength of the school.
- Next, we focused on what leaders are doing to make sure that pupils make strong progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. In 2017, the

proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in science at the end of key stage 1 was in line with the national average. Pupils' attainment in science at the end of key stage 2 was above average.

- You have rightly identified the need to develop the role of middle leaders to improve the provision in the wider curriculum. Middle leaders are currently involved in checking the quality of teaching and learning in their respective subjects. However, you agree that their work to check pupils' progress is at the early stages of development.
- The work in pupils' books and displays in classrooms and around the school show that pupils are gaining strong knowledge, understanding and skills in a wide range of subjects. For example, as part of their history topic on 'Explorers' pupils in Year 2 learned about Neil Armstrong and Christopher Columbus. Pupils made comparisons between the two explorers. Pupils have opportunities such as this to deepen their learning. At times, in some subjects, learning activities set for pupils do not enable them to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Finally, we looked at what leaders are doing to make sure that pupils' above-average attainment in the 2017 national assessments is sustained in other year groups. Your school assessment information and work in pupils' books show that pupils in almost all year groups make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders carefully monitor the quality of teaching and provide constructive guidance to teachers to help them improve. You have successfully created an ethos where staff learn from each other and share good practice.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders use information from checks on pupils' progress to raise standards further across curriculum subjects
- pupils are routinely challenged to deepen their learning in subjects other than English and mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Southwark and the director of children's services for Royal Greenwich Children's Services. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rajeshree Mehta
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the executive principal, your assistant headteachers, middle leaders and two governors. I met with a local authority representative. I went on two learning walks with you and your assistant headteachers, and we jointly scrutinised pupils' work. I spoke to pupils about their learning and sought their views about school life, both within lessons and at breaktimes. I met formally with one group of pupils. Additionally, I listened to pupils read. I analysed the 31 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and 15 staff survey responses. I reviewed a wide range of school documentation, including the school's documentation related to safeguarding, self-evaluation, plans for improvement and information on pupils' progress and attainment.