

Inspection of a good school: St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Appleton Road, Eltham, London SE9 6NS

Inspection dates:

30 November and 1 December 2023

Outcome

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this warm, inclusive and friendly school. The school's mission about 'learning together and loving others' is clearly demonstrated by pupils and staff. Pupils recently helped to formulate five new values to support the school's vision. All pupils worked with an artist in residence to create art displays, which helped them to understand these values.

Leaders have high expectations of all pupils. Pupils are included fully in the life of the school. Pupils are happy and safe. They sing with enthusiasm and joy in assemblies. The 'three for me' system works effectively. This enables each pupil to have three trusted adults they can talk to if they are worried about something. Pupils behave well in class and around the school.

Pupils attend outings linked to their learning in different subjects. For example, pupils visited the Thames Barrier for geography fieldwork and they went to the Florence Nightingale Museum for history. Younger children get the chance to visit the local farm and take part in a 'teddy bears picnic'. Pupils attend clubs which include musical theatre, taekwondo and gymnastics. They have the opportunity to take part in special events, such as enterprise week and the science festival.

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

Working with other schools in the local authority, leaders have created a broad and ambitious curriculum throughout the school. They have carefully selected the knowledge they want pupils to learn and the order in which they should learn it. For example, in geography, pupils develop their fieldwork map-reading skills as they move through the school. In physical education, pupils build on their simple ball skills from Years 1 and 2 in order to play more complex ball games in Years 3 to 6.

Overall, pupils learn well across a range of subjects. They build up their understanding and use of subject vocabulary. In science, pupils in Year 6 talked about the body's

circulatory system using terms, such as 'plasma' and 'platelets'. In geography, pupils in Year 5 discussed the climate of the Atacama Desert in Chile using terms, such as 'arid' and 'temperate'. In mathematics, pupils in Year 4 calculated the area of two-dimensional shapes using terms, such as 'rectilinear'. However, the curriculum is not implemented with the same precision across all subjects. This leads to some variability in pupils' depth of knowledge and understanding in some subjects.

Reading is prioritised from the start of Reception. Pupils read books that match the sounds they are learning in class. The love of reading is promoted, including through the well-stocked class libraries and the new school library. Pupils enjoy completing book reviews for each other to read. Older pupils support the younger ones through the 'paired reading scheme'. Staff identify quickly pupils who are struggling. They support these pupils well to catch up. The school's most recent published outcomes for phonics, as well as reading and mathematics at the end of Year 6, are high.

The school identifies pupils' needs well and puts in place effective measures to support pupils, including in the early years. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve highly as staff are aspirational for them. Teaching is adapted appropriately, so that pupils get the help they need. For example, pupils who require extra support in mathematics receive additional teaching later in the day. Pupils with SEND achieve highly. They are well supported to meet their targets and reach their individual goals.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge across a range of subjects. They present information clearly to pupils. However, some of the systems to check pupils' understanding in lessons are not embedded. This means that, sometimes, staff are not fully aware of precisely what pupils know and understand.

Pupils' rates of attendance are high. Leaders monitor attendance well and follow up any absences tenaciously. Staff's expectations of pupils' behaviour are high. Pupils rise to these and behave well. Bullying is rare but it is dealt with effectively if it does happen. Pupils are very respectful towards each other and adults.

There are many opportunities for pupils to take on positions of responsibility. The school's 'travel ambassadors' recently attended a 'clean air' conference. The 'Lighthouse Team' helps to lead collective worship. The school council meets every month to discuss different aspects of the school, including helping to create a new lunch menu. Pupils enjoy the chance to become house captains or librarians. Pupils contribute to local and national events, such as through fundraising and charitable work. Recently they commemorated Remembrance Day by creating poppies from recycled materials.

Leaders, including governors, have worked effectively together to maintain the high standards since the last inspection. They have made a number of key improvements, particularly to the school site and the enrichment offer. Staff said that leaders support their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created an open and positive culture of vigilance in the school. They protect pupils from harm in an open and transparent way. Staff know pupils well and care for them. Pupils said they feel safe in school. The school is in the process of introducing a new online system for recording and reporting safeguarding concerns. In doing so, the school should ensure that staff have the training and support they need to use it confidently.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Systems to check pupils' understanding in lessons are not well embedded. This means that sometimes staff are not fully clear about what pupils know and understand. The school should ensure that systems for checking what pupils know, understand and remember are well established and used consistently well.
- The school has made a range of improvements to the curriculum. However, some of these are not firmly embedded. This means that there are some inconsistencies in how well the curriculum is implemented. It leads to some variability in pupils' learning. Where this is the case, the school should ensure that the curriculum is implemented consistently well across classes and subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 in March 2014.

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	100176
Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	10293196
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Evelyn Holdsworth
Headteacher	Laura Collins
Website	www.stmprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	3 July 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with members of the school senior leadership team, a selection of subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work. The inspector also considered the curriculum in some other subjects.

- 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' interests first.
- The inspector met with those responsible for governance, including the chair of governors, spoke with a representative of the local authority and the diocese.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were considered through discussions and looking at information collected from Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Christian Hicks, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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