

Inspection of St Thomas More Roman Catholic Primary School

Bleakwood Road, Chatham, Kent ME5 0NF

Inspection dates:	15 and 16 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school, where there is a friendly, happy atmosphere. Pupils' well-being is paramount. Trusting and warm relationships with staff mean that pupils know they are safe and well cared for. The inclusive, positive culture supports all pupils well, including those who may face challenges in their lives. Pupils are respectful and have a strong sense of acceptance of the differences between pupils from different backgrounds and with different needs.

The school strives for all pupils to achieve their very best whatever their starting points, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils achieve well overall. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities to learn and play outside as well as inside, including sessions in the forest school. One parent, reflecting the views of many, rightly commented that the school, 'Strongly supports the children's well-being and learning inside and outside of the classroom and champions children's achievements, big and small.'

Pupils are friendly and polite. They behave well in lessons and around the school. Older pupils are positive role models for others in the school. Pupils reflect the school values by developing as happy, confident, resilient, respectful, compassionate and ambitious individuals, with strong moral values.

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

The school's curriculum is broad and ambitious for all pupils, including those with SEND. The essential skills, knowledge and vocabulary that pupils need to learn are clearly sequenced from Reception to Year 6. Pupils' work shows that most are learning and achieving well. In Reception, there is a successful focus on children's speech, language and communication development. By the end of Reception, they are ready to continue learning in Year 1. Teachers have secure subject knowledge about the subjects they teach. In mathematics and science, for example, thoughtful questioning successfully probes pupils' understanding, reinforces subject-specific vocabulary and identifies any misconceptions. On occasion, however, there is a little inconsistency in how well matched the work and activities are to the intended learning. As a result, pupils' depth of learning is not always as strong as it could be.

The school identifies the needs of pupils accurately. The provision for pupils with SEND is organised well, including support from external agencies where needed. However, adaptations made to the curriculum in lessons do not always precisely meet some pupils' needs as effectively as they could.

Reading has a high priority in the school. Reading for enjoyment is promoted successfully. Children in Reception have plenty of opportunities to enjoy rhymes and songs. They learn to love books and stories. Children learn to read through a structured phonics programme. They learn the sounds that letters make and read books that match the sounds they know. Those who are struggling are given additional help to catch up. As pupils move through the school, they are introduced to a carefully chosen, often

challenging range of high-quality texts. They are encouraged to read widely and often and develop as confident, fluent readers. Pupils love the new school library, where they say they can 'widen their imaginations'. Year 6 reading ambassadors enjoy helping others choose and read books.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and enjoy learning. Most attend regularly. Lessons are purposeful. There is a calm, supportive ethos throughout the school. Pupils are inspired and motivated by staff, who are committed to raising pupils' aspirations for the future. Pupils collaborate and work well together. Good behaviour helps pupils learn well. Pupils understand and uphold the school rules and conduct themselves well in lessons, in the playground and around the school.

Opportunities for pupils to discuss and share their thinking are built into lessons. Pupils learn to listen to and respect others' opinions even if they disagree with them. Pupils enjoy many trips and visitors to school that help them explore the curriculum more broadly and expand their horizons. There are opportunities to engage in a range of sporting and cultural activities. The school provides a wide range of after-school clubs to widen pupils' interests and develop their skills.

The staff are a strong, supportive team, who are proud and happy to work at the school. They appreciate leaders' consideration of their workload and well-being. Teachers, including those new to their careers, appreciate the opportunities and support to enhance their skills and expertise. Parents are very supportive of the school and what it offers their children. Governors are working closely with leaders to ensure that they more effectively and robustly challenge, as well as support the school, and hold leaders to account for the school's performance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are a few inconsistencies in the implementation of the school's ambitious curriculum. Activities and work are not consistently well matched to the intended learning. This means that pupils do not retrieve and consolidate their prior knowledge and apply this to more complex ideas. The school should ensure that the curriculum is implemented consistently so that pupils recap and build on their knowledge and deepen their learning.
- The identified needs of some pupils with SEND are not always being met as precisely as they could be in lessons. Leaders need to ensure that there is a common, shared

understanding of what adaptations to the curriculum look like, to enable all pupils with SEND to develop their skills within the curriculum and achieve as well as they can.

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	118769
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10321857
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	408
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Simon D'Souza
Headteacher	Nicola Collins (Interim Executive Headteacher) Paula Le Breton (Acting Head of School)
Website	www.st-thomasmore.medway.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 February 2013 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The leadership of the school has changed since the previous inspection. The interim executive headteacher, acting head of school and acting deputy headteacher took up their posts in September 2024.
- As a Catholic school, it is part of the Diocese of Southwark. Its most recent section 48 inspection was in June 2024.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school
- Inspectors met with the interim executive headteacher, the acting head of school and acting deputy headteacher. They also met with the assistant headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders and many staff.
- An inspector met with governors, including the chair of the governing body. She also met with a local authority school improvement adviser, and a representative from the diocese.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and music. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. They looked at work and spoke with pupils and subject leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses from Ofsted online surveys for staff, parents and pupils.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Rixson	Ofsted Inspector
Rosemary Keen	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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