

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Kidlington

Oxford Road, Kidlington, Oxfordshire OX5 1EA

Inspection dates

25–26 September 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and her leadership team share their vision for the school effectively with pupils, staff and parents. Leaders have high expectations that the school curriculum supports the academic and pastoral needs of every pupil.
- Governors have a strong understanding of the quality of education provided at the school. They gather critical information linked to the school's development priorities effectively.
- The leadership team has ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers and teaching assistants receive targeted training and support that helps pupils to make good progress across the curriculum.
- Leaders ensure that pupils receive a broad and rich curriculum that prepares them well for life in 21st century Britain. Pupils are inclusive and demonstrate high levels of empathy and tolerance.
- Pupils behave very well in class and around the school. They are kind, respectful and extremely considerate of the needs of other pupils.
- Progress for pupils at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 is strong. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, make good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- The curriculum ensures that pupils learn how to keep safe at school, at home and on the internet.
- Leadership of Reception and Nursery is strong. Staff develop children's language acquisition well. As a result, children make good progress and reach a good level of development in line with the national average.
- The teaching of reading is very effective. Pupils read widely and fluently. The proportion of pupils reaching the national standard in the phonics screening check is above the national average.
- Staff do not consistently support the extension of the skills and knowledge of the most able pupils across the whole curriculum.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide sufficient challenge in all subjects to enable the most able pupils to reach their full potential.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The leadership team has established high expectations and aspirations for every single pupil in the school. Leaders, teachers and teaching assistants collaborate well to ensure that this vision is experienced by pupils in the classroom. Consequently, pupils make good progress in most areas of the curriculum.
- Leaders know pupils very well. Through frequent analysis of pupils' progress across the curriculum, they identify swiftly where pupils might require additional support. As a result, teaching and learning are adapted successfully to meet the needs of pupils.
- Subject leaders have established strong programmes for their respective subject areas. For example, the English leader provides staff with additional training to plan effective writing lessons. Consequently, pupils craft their writing well for a range of audiences. Mathematics leaders understand the importance of developing pupils' reasoning skills. As a result, staff received useful training in using a breadth of strategies to help pupils consider the methods they employ for their calculations.
- Senior leaders have enabled subject leaders to evaluate and review the progress expected of pupils across the curriculum. As a result, all staff have adapted the teaching, learning and assessment of every subject to ensure that pupils develop the key skills, knowledge and understanding expected at different stages.
- Support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is strong. Leaders are highly reflective and have adapted the support for these pupils to ensure that they participate equally in classroom learning alongside their peers. Teaching assistants are trained well to provide additional support, such as targeted questioning, to ensure that pupils can access the curriculum successfully. This helps pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress across the curriculum.
- Leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is accurate. Drawing on a range of information such as work in pupils' books, lesson observations and achievement data, they have a clear understanding of strengths and the areas for improvement. Leaders ensure that all teachers provide a good education to pupils.
- There are very few disadvantaged pupils at the school. Leaders use additional funding effectively to tailor academic and pastoral support to this group's needs. This ensures that these pupils thrive and make strong progress.
- Leaders have designed an exciting, rich and balanced curriculum to meet the needs of their pupils. Pupils study high-quality texts which help develop a love of reading as well as a context for work across the curriculum. For example, Year 6 pupils read 'Street Child' by Bertie Doherty to underpin their study of history, geography and English.
- Leadership of early years is strong. The curriculum is structured well to enable children to explore the world through imaginative play and develop key skills in preparation for study in Year 1. As a result, a high proportion of children consistently reach a good level of development by the end of Reception.
- Leaders ensure that pupils develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally through assemblies and throughout the curriculum. For example, pupils are immersed in other

faiths and cultures during the school's multicultural week, with visitors from the local synagogue and mosque. Pupils develop strong empathy, tolerance and respect for other faiths and cultures. One pupil's view that: 'Love is a magical, sensational feeling that conjures up every time you do something kind or forgive someone,' was voiced by many other pupils throughout the school.

- Although leadership of the curriculum is robust, the most able pupils are not extended consistently enough to deepen and embed their understanding, skills and knowledge across the curriculum.

Governance of the school

- The governing board is highly effective. It is led very well and has a clear, strategic overview of the school and its development priorities. Governors are very well informed about the work of the school and are both supportive and challenging in equal measure.
- Governors regularly monitor the impact of expenditure on disadvantaged pupils to ensure that pupils make good progress across the curriculum.
- Governors have also ensured that the sports premium funding is used effectively and measure its impact on pupils' progress and their engagement with sport.
- Despite the difficulties encountered with communications with the Dominic Barbieri Multi Academy Company, governors have demonstrated resilience, perseverance and absolute commitment to ensuring that the school continues to improve. The chair of governors and other governors bring a range of experience to their roles, enabling them to evaluate effectively the impact of school improvement strategies on raising standards.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding leads are vigilant and alert to the needs of pupils. They identify issues regarding pupils' physical and mental well-being swiftly and ensure that pupils receive timely and appropriate support.
- The single central register meets statutory requirements. Appropriate checks are made on all staff who work in the school and the register is reviewed regularly.
- All staff are trained in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. As a result, all staff know how to make a referral and pupils know who to go to if they have a problem.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils enjoy learning at St Thomas More Catholic Primary. Inspectors observed a range of lessons where pupils' high levels of engagement were evident throughout. This is due to staff's high expectations and their meticulous planning. Pupils are able to evaluate their own progress in lessons well.

- The teaching of reading is strong. A breadth of high-quality texts is used in all year groups. Pupils develop a love of reading alongside a critical understanding of how writers use language to describe ideas, characters and places. For example, pupils in Year 5 were observed articulating how the writer's use of language in the text 'Hetty Feather' shaped their responses as readers.
- Pupils' writing has improved markedly across all year groups and key stages. Pupils embed their understanding of grammar effectively in their writing. Pupils consider the audience, purpose and text type when writing to ensure that their language choices are appropriate. Through editing and redrafting, pupils have developed a strong understanding of how to craft their writing. For example, pupils in Year 6 crafted exemplary poems in response to Kit Wright's poem, 'The Magic Box'.
- Pupils develop independent, investigative skills in many areas of the curriculum. For example, using historical artefacts in the local museums, pupils in all year groups consider the different ways of life at different times in history.
- Teachers liaise and collaborate well with teaching assistants to enable the inclusion of all pupils, including pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Inspectors saw teaching assistants skilfully support pupils' understanding of number sequences in a Year 1 class.
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- Pupils learn a range of skills and develop a breadth of knowledge and understanding in the visual and performing arts. For example, pupils study drama with a specialist drama teacher from the Oxford Playhouse. An inspector observed the highly effective ways in which pupils developed miming skills through miming the artefacts in a bathroom. Pupils were able to evaluate how well they had developed their mime, because they understood what was expected.
- Pupils in Year 5 learn how to play brass instruments with a specialist music teacher. Through sequential learning, pupils make strong progress in their understanding of how to play an instrument accurately and enthusiastically.
- Most-able pupils do not make consistently good progress. There is often insufficient support to deepen and enrich their knowledge, skills and understanding across all subjects, to help them reach their full potential.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is good.
- The school successfully nurtures pupils' intellectual curiosity about the world. They have very positive attitudes towards learning and embrace new challenges.

- Pupils have very good relationships with staff at the school and respond well to the support they provide. Additionally, pupils enjoy excellent relationships with each other. They are kind, respectful and empathetic to the needs of others. The school has strong support systems for pupils who may experience difficulty. One pupil's view, 'It is a small school but a giant community,' was echoed by many others in the school.
- Pupils respond well to teachers' support. Pupils' work in the classroom and in their books demonstrates a strong sense of pride.
- The school has a very strong curriculum founded on personal, social, health and economic education. Pupils gain an understanding of how to share ideas and work cooperatively. Pupils in Year 6 carry out their roles as play leaders with great responsibility. Younger pupils told inspectors how valuable the support offered by play leaders was in helping them to adapt to life at the school.
- Pupils develop a strong understanding of the importance of democracy, free speech and tolerance. Through elections to the school eco council and the appointments of Catholic ambassadors, pupils develop their public speaking skills and awareness of personal, social and spiritual issues.
- Pupils recognise that the school keeps them safe. The school prepares pupils well to keep safe when on the internet. Through the curriculum, pupils learn about their rights as children and the importance of their physical and emotional well-being. Consequently, pupils know how to keep themselves safe both in school and beyond.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They respond very well to the school's positive behaviour system. As a result, pupils conduct themselves well in classrooms and as they move around the school.
- The attendance of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, is good and above the national average. Pupils told inspectors how much they enjoyed attending school.
- Classrooms are stimulating learning environments. Pupils enjoy using the resources provided by staff, such as the number lines in Year 1.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is consistently above the national average. Pupils use their phonics skills well to read age-appropriate texts. Across the school, pupils' reading skills are well developed and pupils make good progress.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics. They receive good support, which helps them to understand mathematical concepts well. As a result, they make good progress from their starting points.
- Following a dip in standards in writing at key stage 2 in 2017, leaders focused on this aspect of the curriculum. Teachers now link grammar lessons more overtly to writing

and follow a more structured approach to the writing process. Consequently, current pupils are making strong progress in writing.

- Pupils at both key stage 1 and key stage 2 achieved in line with the national average over the past three years in science. Current pupils continue to develop good scientific skills, knowledge and understanding.
- There is effective tailored support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils access the curriculum fully and make good progress.
- Pupil premium funding has demonstrable impact. Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress in all areas of the curriculum.
- In recent years, too few of the most able pupils reached greater depth at key stage 1 or the higher standard at key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Provision for these pupils is not sufficiently challenging to allow them to demonstrate their full capabilities across the curriculum.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years setting is led well and teaching is good. Staff receive appropriate training to ensure that activities and approaches meet the needs of all children.
- Safeguarding is effective in the early years. Children know how to keep themselves safe both in the classroom and in the outdoor area.
- Activities are well structured to develop children's language skills, knowledge and understanding. In Reception, teachers use targeted questioning to extend children's use of language. For example, inspectors observed a child developing his story about an ambulance through the teacher's skilfully structured questions.
- Activities are structured to enable children to immerse themselves in imaginative play. For example, children were observed making cakes with baked bean decorations, rescuing a snake from the zoo and sending emails at work to 'Fireman Sam'. The creation of these imaginative worlds enables children to successfully develop their social and language skills.
- Children maintain their concentration and complete activities well. They collaborate well with each other. For example, children were observed working together to catch balls in a parachute.
- The transition between Nursery and Reception is well structured. Enjoying the same outside area of the school, staff ensure that children's learning in Nursery leads into the curriculum at Reception.
- The proportion of children who reach a good level of development is consistently in line with the national average. Currently, children are developing their key skills well. They develop their manual dexterity well through manipulating scissors, glue and paper. They develop their spatial awareness and mobility through a range of outdoor resources such as bicycles, stepping stones and running. Children practise their reading, writing and mathematics through a range of well-structured activities.

School details

Unique reference number	139530
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10056888

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	197
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Sally Reckless
Headteacher	Breda Bowles
Telephone number	01865 373 674
Website	www.st-thomas-more.oxon.sch.uk/
Email address	principalSTM@dbmac.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average primary school. It opened in 2013 as a part of the Dominic Barbieri Multi Academy Company. The school has a local governing body alongside a board of trustees.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with education, health and care plans is below average.
- Most pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms, sometimes with the headteacher, to observe learning and to talk to pupils about their work.
- Inspectors met formally with the headteacher and other leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, the chief executive of the Dominic Barbieri Multi Academy Company, and the leader of early years.
- Meetings were held with two governors, 14 pupils, the eco council, two Catholic ambassadors, the Dominic Barbieri Multi Academy Company improvement leaders, and parents.
- Inspectors listened to some pupils read, as well as discussing reading with a range of pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work across the curriculum and across all year groups to determine the accuracy of teachers' assessment and the sustainability of pupils' progress.
- The lead inspector checked the school's documentation regarding the school's approach and systems for safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and the quality of teaching. She also considered the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plans.
- Inspectors took into consideration 88 parent responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the views of parents in the school playground at the beginning of the school day.

Inspection team

Susan Aykin, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mary Maybank

Ofsted Inspector

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