

St Thomas More Catholic First School

Woodrow Centre, Studley Road, Redditch B98 7RY

Inspection dates

22–23 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 started to fall sharply soon after the last inspection in 2012.
- Until recently governors had not provided sufficient challenge to leaders about declining outcomes.
- Not enough pupils currently in school, especially lower-attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, have made rapid progress in key stages 1 and 2
- Teaching does not provide a consistent enough challenge for the most able pupils. As a result, few pupils are working at a high standard or in greater depth in reading, writing and mathematic
- Phonics is not taught consistently well in key stage 1.
- Teachers do not follow the school's policy on written feedback closely enough.
- Leaders do not monitor with enough rigour the impact of additional support, including the nurture group, provided by additional adults, nor hold additional adults sufficiently to account for their performance.
- The quality of monitoring of teaching and learning, as well as the modelling and sharing of best practice, is uneven across the leadership team.

The school has the following strengths

- Some of the teaching in the school is of a high standard, enabling some pupils to make rapid progress.
- Provision and leadership in early years has significantly improved and is now good.
- Pupils behave well and usually have positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- Pupils feel safe as a result of the strong culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Parents spoken to, or responding to surveys, were unanimous in their praise of the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and governance by ensuring that:
 - senior and middle leaders lead by example in their own teaching so they can effectively model teaching and share the best practice that exists in the school
 - the impact of leaders’ monitoring of teaching and learning is improved
 - additional adults working in the school are held to account for the quality of their work through performance management
 - leaders and governors monitor and evaluate more rigorously outcomes for low-attaining pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - the school’s accessibility plan and up-to-date spending plans for the use of the primary PE and sport premium are published on the school’s website.
- Improve pupils’ outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2 by ensuring that:
 - teaching and learning is at least good across the different year groups
 - the work planned for most able pupils contains sufficient challenge and enables these pupils to work in greater depth or at a high standard
 - phonics is taught consistently well in key stage 1
 - written feedback to pupils is consistently in line with the school’s policy
 - teaching and support for lower-attaining pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is pitched correctly.

An external review of governance and an external review of the school’s use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher tries to do too much herself and other leaders do not do enough. The reduced capacity in the wider leadership team has meant that improvements made have not been fast enough or have had too recent an impact.
- Outcomes at key stage 1 remain too low as a result of previously identified weak teaching and inconsistencies in the quality of current teaching. As a consequence, too few pupils are reaching higher standards or working in greater depth.
- Not enough pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, many of whom are also disadvantaged, are making good progress. Additional funding for SEN and pupil premium is not translating into sufficiently improved outcomes for enough of these pupils.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching has not yet led to consistently good teaching. The very best practice is not shared sufficiently across the school. Leaders do not consistently lead by example in the quality of their own teaching. In addition, leaders do not do enough to check the work of additional adults, who lead in alternative provision or additional support out of the classroom.
- There is not a consistent, coherent approach to teaching phonics across the school.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils reported that they have regular opportunities to study a range of subjects, including science, humanities and the arts, through discrete lessons or topic work. However, a small minority of pupils do not have enough access to teaching of literacy and numeracy when they are engaged in the nurture group every morning.
- The physical and education (PE) and sport premium for primary schools has been used to ensure that almost all pupils in key stage 2 learn to swim. However, a large amount of the funding was left unspent in the last academic year. Plans for this year's funding have not yet been published on the school's website, nor have proposals for the sustainability of current activities been fully set out.
- The headteacher has taken action to improve standards. She has led by example. This has led to either staffing changes or improvements in teaching. She has accurately evaluated why the school is not currently good and what needs to improve further.
- Outcomes are starting to improve. More of the pupils currently in school are now making better progress as teaching has improved.
- The school has engaged well with the local authority to achieve improvements through regular external reviews and school-to-school support.
- Members of staff speak highly of the school and share the headteacher's vision for further improvement.
- Leaders promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through the personal social and health education curriculum and assemblies. The school rightly prides itself on being a 'happy, welcoming and caring community'.

- All parents responding to Parent View said the school was well led and that they would recommend the school to another parent. Parents spoken to on the gate especially praised the school's ethos, welfare and concern, especially for pupils at risk of becoming vulnerable. Leaders place a high emphasis on securing the emotional well-being of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Governance of the school

- Governors were slow to challenge leaders regarding declining outcomes for pupils. They were also slow to ensure that there are good-quality tiers of leadership to support the work of the headteacher. They are not sufficiently aware of outcomes for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They have not ensured that there is a system of accountability for additional adults in the school. They have not ensured that the accessibility plan or current plans for the use of the PE and sport premium are published on the school's website.
- They have the following strengths:
 - they have increased the educational knowledge, experience and expertise of the governing body with recent appointments
 - they are now challenging leaders more on outcomes for pupils
 - they know the strengths and areas for development well
 - they make sure that leaders meet all their duties and requirements with regard to safeguarding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders promote a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Those with specific safeguarding responsibilities are well trained. They make sure that all staff are kept fully up to date with guidance and requirements through regular training and briefings.
- All staff, including those with administrative responsibilities, apply themselves rigorously with regard to record-keeping and storing information safely and securely.
- The school complies with all statutory requirements. Additional policies, such as e-safety, are applied thoroughly to ensure that pupils are well prepared for keeping themselves safe on the internet.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good across all year groups. There is not enough challenge for the most able pupils, which prevents them from working in greater depth.
- Too few pupils who are low-attaining or have SEN and/or disabilities are making enough rapid progress.
- Too often, they find the work difficult to access without intensive support. Where they are given open-ended writing tasks without support, they sometimes struggle because they do not fully understand what they are supposed to do. In some instances when

they are stuck, they wait for help for long periods with their hands up. Eventually they switch off and either stare out of the window, chat or fiddle with equipment and clothing.

- Additional adults are often not well deployed, sometimes for extended periods, when teachers are speaking to the whole class. Once pupils settle to their work there is too much focus on helping them to complete the task, rather than learn new skills. This means that pupils do not fully develop the skills to enable them to complete work for themselves.
- Pupils receiving additional support or attending the nurture group outside of the mainstream classroom are not set work consistently that is appropriate to their individual needs.
- In key stage 1, phonics is not taught consistently well. There is insufficient emphasis on teachers' and pupils' articulation of sounds. Sometimes, pupils' misconceptions are not picked up when teachers are reviewing their work.
- Teachers' written feedback to pupils is not sufficiently in line with the school's policy. Where extension tasks or spelling corrections are set, they are not completed consistently by pupils. Where corrections are done, pupils' efforts are not routinely acknowledged by teachers. On too many occasions, the most able pupils complete their work successfully and then do not have more challenging work to move on to.
- The teaching in some year groups is of a very high standard, which enables almost all pupils in these classes to make rapid progress over time. Work is set appropriately for pupils at different starting points, which enables them to keep on task unaided. No time is lost for off-task misbehaviour. Any misconceptions, such as the meaning of 'rhetorical questions', are quickly identified through brief mini- or whole-class reviews. This ensures that there is minimum interruption to pupils' work. In these instances additional adults are well deployed.
- Pupils have a wide opportunities for practical work, which they respond to enthusiastically. Good examples of this seen by inspectors included experiments on melting in science and map work in geography. Teaching in science enables pupils to develop technical language such as 'prediction' and 'reversible' in key stage 1.
- Teachers use technology well to support pupils' learning, for example tablet computers and interactive whiteboards. Classrooms are well resourced with sufficient equipment to support pupils in their work on calculation in mathematics. Pupils have opportunities for problem-solving and reasoning in mathematics in those lessons where teachers' subject knowledge is strong.
- Pupils have numerous opportunities to write in a range of genres, including through diary entries and writing persuasively across a range of subjects, such as history.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- Pupils have fully embraced the values of the school, which align closely with British values of respect and tolerance.
- Pupils showed empathy for others less fortunate than themselves during an assembly on how to treat other people.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe around school and outside, particularly when using the internet. They reported that bullying is very rare, but when it does occur they are confident in reporting it. No parents spoken to or responding to Parent View expressed any concerns about bullying.
- Pupils know about democracy. They have engaged in the process of voting for the school council and for house captains.
- Parents spoken to and those responding to Parent View commented favourably on pupils' development and welfare. For example, the school provides breakfast for those pupils identified with individual needs.
- Relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils are strong. The school is becoming increasingly diverse and pupils have fully embraced the culture of the increasing Polish population of the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct when walking to and from assembly and lining up for PE in the corridor was impeccable. They are polite and courteous moving around the building.
- Pupils are compliant in class when following instructions. When they are engaged with stimulating activities they are enthusiastic and eager learners.
- Pupils spoken to said that they enjoy almost all of their subjects. They were especially keen when talking about science experiments which they have conducted. These covered subjects such as 'floating and sinking' and making sedimentary rocks. Some pupils said they found literacy and numeracy too easy at times.
- Pupils are able to self-manage their own behaviour well in most instances, including on the playground and in lessons where groups have been left to get on with their work independently. Lessons seen during the inspection were free of any disruptive behaviour.
- Pupils spoken to said behaviour is good in lessons and at breaktimes.
- All parents spoken to agreed that behaviour in school was good.
- Exclusions are extremely rare. There have been hardly any in the last two years after an increase up to 2015. Leaders set high expectations of standards of behaviour and conduct, and pupils respond well.
- Attendance is rising for almost all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Where attendance has not risen, as in the case of White Other pupils, this is due to the extended absence of a small number of individuals.

- There are a small number of occasions where pupils are off task in lessons. This is either because they have finished their work and do not know what they have to do next or because they find the work is too difficult.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 1 have been consistently low in reading, writing and mathematics since the last inspection. They have only recently started to improve.
- The school's monitoring of current pupils' progress shows that many are making better progress in response to improving teaching. However, a significant proportion of pupils in some classes and among some pupil groups are not on track to make sufficient progress. Some low-attaining pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those who are disadvantaged, have made limited progress so far this term. Those pupils who are not at the expected standard for their age are not yet equipped for the next stage of their education when they leave at the end of Year 4
- Most-able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have not made enough accelerated progress in order to be working in greater depth or at a higher standard.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1 in the most recent assessments was below average in 2017. However, this has improved significantly compared to 2016. Results by the end of Year 2 were above average.
- White Other pupils, including those learning English as an additional language, do better than other pupils in school by the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. Work in pupils' books indicates that, in some classes, almost all pupils have made accelerated progress in their writing.

Early years provision

Good

- Outcomes have continued to improve over time as a consequence of improved provision and good leadership and management. From 2014 to 2016 there was a significant rise in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development in their early learning goals. After a dip in 2017, when the starting points of the children were lower than previous years, outcomes are on track to rise again this year.
- Children usually make good progress from their typically low starting points when they join Reception. This is as a result of the effectiveness of the provision. Children have a good variety of imaginative activities to choose from. These activities encourage children's interests and independence.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths of the provision and what needs to be improved further.
- Additional adults support children well in their learning. They know when to intervene and when to step back.
- Teachers and additional adults teach phonics effectively in the early years. They model sounds well and provide good opportunities for children to use and apply them. The

teaching of phonics is skilfully sequenced and systematic. Children are confident in identifying the sounds letters make.

- Adults assess children's learning accurately through an established system of recording evidence for each of the early learning goals.
- Leaders engage well with parents, for example through providing curriculum workshops.
- Where children have an open choice, few tend to gravitate towards reading and writing activities. This is not systematically monitored by leaders.

School details

Unique reference number	116910
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10043148

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Buckley
Headteacher	Miss Teresita Moriani
Telephone number	01527 525821
Website	www.stthomasmorefirst.com
Email address	office@st-thomasmore.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 November 2012

Information about this school

- St Thomas Catholic First School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The current headteacher was appointed in 2013.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average, as is the level of social deprivation in the local area.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average and on a rising trend. There have been a very small number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan in the last two years.
- The proportion who speak English as an additional language is high and on a rising trend. Just over half of pupils are White British which is below the national average. The highest minority ethnic group is White Other which includes an increasing proportion of pupils from a Polish background.

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about its accessibility plan and future planned spending for the PE and sport premium funding for primary schools on its website.
- The school has not been assessed against the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6, as there are no pupils in Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited many parts of lessons, almost all of which were jointly observed with the headteacher or members of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to other activities.
- Inspectors heard pupils read during lessons and conducted scrutinies of written work in literacy, mathematics and other subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other leaders and members of staff and spoke to two group of pupils.
- Inspectors met seven members of the governing body, including the chair.
- The lead inspector spoke by telephone to a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to 18 parents during the inspection. In addition, they took account of 20 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View and 19 responses to Parent View free-text. There were 19 responses to the staff survey and none to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents, including those relating to the school's self-evaluation, as well as improvement plans, and school information on pupils' recent attainment and progress.
- Inspectors also considered behaviour and attendance information, and policies and procedures relating to SEN, pupil premium funding, and PE and sport premium funding, safeguarding and child protection.

Inspection team

Mark Sims, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Khalid Din

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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