

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

Oxford Road, Kidlington, Oxfordshire OX5 1EA

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 February 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Julieann Exley. This school is part of The Pope Francis Multi Academy Company, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Fraser Long, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Concannon.

What is it like to attend this school?

A sense of warmth and inclusion permeates the school. Pupils feel overwhelmingly safe and happy. The school views itself and everyone in it as a family, creating a strong sense of belonging. The school values are fully realised and celebrated at every opportunity.

The school has the highest ambition for every pupil to be the best they can be. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from excellent support provided by expert staff. Pupils with SEND achieve exceptionally well and are fully involved in school life.

Pupils' behaviour is first rate. They behave incredibly well in lessons and at play times. Older pupils relish the opportunity to be role models for younger children and look after them with care and compassion. They delight in the opportunity to bring early years children to assembly or to create exciting games for them to play.

Pupils benefit from a vast array of additional opportunities. These include clubs and theatre trips as well as the chance to perform in the local community. Pupils are keen to support local and national charities. They understand the importance of helping people in need.

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

The school has introduced a highly ambitious curriculum. Staff are determined that all pupils will reach their full potential. The curriculum begins in Nursery, where children have access to many high-quality, well-planned learning opportunities. The broad and balanced curriculum is rigorously sequenced, enabling pupils to build their knowledge as they move through the school. Pupils are supported to use this knowledge to hypothesise and evaluate information well. For example, in geography pupils confidently articulate the benefit of living near a volcano for hydroelectric power, as well as analysing the risk and danger during eruptions. The curriculum carefully maps out the knowledge, skills and vocabulary pupils will learn. This supports all pupils to achieve highly.

Children get off to a flying start in early years. The curriculum design enables children to develop a strong understanding of language and communication and also number. Children successfully explore through play the numbers they have learned. Staff expertly support children to be successful through skilful questions and individual interactions. Children are highly engaged on their tasks, showing determination and an early positive attitude to school. Staff are quick to identify children with SEND from an early age and provide immediate and effective support.

Reading is a top priority in this school. Pupils love to read. They are excited by the books adults read to them in class. Pupils appreciate how these texts help them learn more about the subjects they are studying. The reading curriculum develops pupils' fluency and confidence. Every member of staff is highly trained to deliver the phonics programme with precision and accuracy. Staff rigorously check throughout lessons that pupils are keeping up with new learning. They are swift to identify those who are struggling and offer support to catch up. Pupils new to speaking English receive effective support to make rapid progress with their reading.

The school has high expectations for pupil attendance. Staff are tenacious in their approach and challenge to ensure pupils are in school learning. Because the curriculum is well designed, pupils want to be in school and demonstrate this through the high levels of engagement and positive behaviour seen in lessons.

The personal development of pupils is exceptional. Pupils celebrate the inclusive and diverse school community and welcome everyone from around the world. They love to learn about other cultures. This includes the Chinese Lunar New Year and sharing food from Brazil. Pupils have a deep understanding of their school values and can also carefully link these to fundamental British values. They understand the meaning of respect and tolerance, knowing that everyone is different, with differing experiences and families. The school supports pupils to keep safe through well-planned activities, such as swimming, learning first aid or going on trips to learn about possible dangers. Pupils love taking on extra responsibilities and value their roles and responsibilities that support the school community.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They understand the context and school community exceptionally well. Families are overwhelmingly effusive in their praise of the school and

the commitment and dedication of staff. Staff feel well supported by leaders, governors and the trust. Those responsible for governance have an accurate picture of the school and work well together to ensure that statutory duties are fully met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2018.

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 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	139530
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10296384
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	196
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Concannon
CEO of trust	Fraser Long (Catholic senior executive lead)
Headteacher	Julieann Exley
Website	www.st-thomas-more.oxon.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	25 and 26 September 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is part of the Pope Francis Multi Academy Trust.
- The school is a Roman Catholic Primary School and is part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Its last section 48 report was carried out on 7 and 8 June 2022.
- The school currently do not use any alternative provision.

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 the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in this evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 their work.

- The inspector also looked at a range of other books and work in history, English, science, art and design, music and religious education.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leaders.
- 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 reviewed a wide range of documents provided by the school and observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons.
- The inspector met with members of the local governing board and representatives from the trust.
- The inspector considered the views of parents shared through Ofsted Parent View.
- The views of staff were gathered through surveys and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.
- The inspector gathered pupils' views throughout the inspection, including during classroom visits and at playtimes and lunchtime.

Inspection team

Simon Woodbridge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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