Inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Horse Shoes Lane, Birmingham, West Midlands B26 3HU

Inspection dates:	23 and 24 January 2024

Overall effectiveness	**Good**
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Outstanding**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Early years provision	**Outstanding**
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The principal of this school is Mark McLoughlin. This school is part of Lumen Christi Catholic Multi Academy Company, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the senior Catholic executive leader, Paul Collins-Smith, and overseen by a board of directors, chaired by Peter Vince.

What is it like to attend this school?

Summed up well by one pupil, this is a school where 'everyone is special, unique and valued'. Building strong relationships is at the heart of its work. Many parents and carers praise the care that staff show. They also commend the school on how it helps pupils to do their best.

Staff expect pupils to behave well, and they do. They show high levels of engagement with their learning. Pupils try their best, which enables them to learn well across the curriculum. They demonstrate the utmost respect for each other and play well together at social times.

The school has high expectations for every pupil. Staff ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well. Pupils enjoy learning and strive to meet the school's high expectations.

Pupils feel safe and comment that they have no worries about bullying at school. They follow the mantra of 'call it out, to sort it out'. They are confident that when incidents happen, adults will help them to sort things out.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities within the classroom and beyond, delivered through an extensive range of after-school clubs, pupil leadership roles and exciting trips.

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

The curriculum is ambitious and carefully organised to help pupils learn. Teachers break down the knowledge pupils need into small steps. Staff check pupils' understanding and address any misconceptions. In most subjects, teachers ensure that pupils revisit important knowledge and skills. This helps pupils to learn well and remember their learning over time. In a few subjects, where pupils do not recap as frequently on their prior knowledge, learning is not as strong.

Staff deliver the phonics programme with expertise. They provide effective support for pupils who are at risk of falling behind with their reading. The school ensures that pupils read widely and often. They develop a love of reading. Despite reading progress in the 2023 published outcomes being significantly below national averages, the school has taken swift action to strengthen the reading curriculum. This has improved pupils' reading stamina and comprehension. Staff teach reading effectively. Staff training has helped teachers to better identify and remedy any gaps in pupils' learning.

The school has a well-designed mathematics curriculum. This supports pupils to build their knowledge and skills logically over time. Teachers use resources effectively to develop pupils' understanding. They explain new concepts clearly and model mathematical vocabulary well. Teachers ensure that there are frequent

opportunities for pupils to consolidate their learning. As a result, pupils progress well through the curriculum, tackling increasingly complex mathematical concepts.

Staff identify the needs of pupils with SEND swiftly. They adapt lessons effectively to ensure that pupils access the same curriculum as their peers. Pupils with SEND experience success in their learning.

Children in the Reception class make a very strong start to their education. The way that children manage their behaviour during independent activities is impressive. They cooperate exceptionally well with each other and are inquisitive learners. For example, in the forest school, children worked creatively and collaboratively to create animal homes. The school's additional learning support for children with SEND in the early years is exceptional. The school's 'snug' provides bespoke and nurturing support alongside regular opportunities for pupils with SEND to learn with their peers. Enthusiastic teachers provide rich curriculum experiences, which deepens children's learning.

Pupils flourish socially and emotionally and benefit from excellent pastoral care. They enjoy spending time with Rosie, the therapy dog. Pupils benefit from a carefully planned series of experiences to widen their horizons. They develop spiritually through quiet reflection and Pilates. Pupils respect those who have religious beliefs different to their own and have an impressive understanding of different faiths. Pupils develop their talents and interests. They have extensive opportunities to make a difference and take pride in the many pupil leadership opportunities.

The school takes effective action to make sure that pupils attend school regularly. They look for patterns in pupils' absence and plan actions accordingly, including for disadvantaged pupils. While improvements have been made, attendance continues to be a high priority for the school.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the positive changes made since joining the trust. They are confident that leaders consider their well-being when making decisions. Governors and trustees know the school well and undertake their duties effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, teachers do not ensure that pupils revise and revisit important subject knowledge often enough. As a result, pupils sometimes struggle to recall what they have learned. The school should ensure that there are sufficient

opportunities for pupils to revisit important knowledge so that they can secure this into their long-term memories.

- Improvements to the reading curriculum are in the early stages of being implemented. As a result, the school has not evaluated the effectiveness of these changes on securing strong progress in reading beyond the phonics programme. The school should ensure that the revised reading curriculum and pedagogical approaches result in all pupils acquiring the necessary reading skills to be well prepared for their next stages in education.

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	147017
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10294649
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	350
Appropriate authority	Board of directors
Chair of trust	Peter Vince
Principal	Mark McLoughlin
Website	www.sttommor.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined The Lumen Christi Catholic Multi Academy Company in September 2019.
- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Its most recent section 48 inspection under the Education Act 2005 for schools of a religious character was carried out in July 2022. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the local governing committee, the senior Catholic executive leader and representatives from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and art. 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 a sample of pupils' work. Inspectors also talked to pupils and examined their work in science.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. Minutes of governing body meetings were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors looked at records of pupils' attendance and behaviour. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school and talked to them about behaviour, bullying and welfare.
- 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.
- The inspectors talked to parents at the start of the school day and considered the Ofsted Parent View survey and free-text comments. Inspectors also reviewed the responses to the staff surveys and gathered the views of staff and pupils through discussion.

Inspection team

Cathy Young, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jayne Thorpe	Ofsted Inspector
Amarjit Cheema	Ofsted Inspector

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