

# St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

High Street, Carisbrooke, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 1NR

## Inspection dates

16–17 January 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors provide clear vision and direction. They have raised achievement and strengthened teaching. As a result, the school has improved since the last inspection and is now good.
- Leaders have rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching throughout the school. There is a strong culture of ambition and support for pupils.
- Teaching is good and is particularly strong in the early years. Occasionally, expectations of what pupils can achieve are limited. Consequently, tasks do not always deepen pupils' understanding and provide them with sufficient challenge.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, give clear explanations and plan their lessons well. Sometimes, questions do not stretch pupils' thinking, and learning slows.
- Pupils are making good progress from their starting points, especially in reading and mathematics.
- The teaching of phonics helps younger pupils to tackle unfamiliar words accurately. Those who struggle with reading and fall behind with their learning are supported to catch up quickly.
- Pupils' attainment in writing is not as strong as in reading and mathematics. Pupils are not challenged consistently to use and apply their skills, especially in longer pieces of work.
- Children in the early years make good, and sometimes excellent, progress. They are curious and respond very enthusiastically to the exciting and stimulating teaching they receive.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They are happy, confident, courteous and well mannered. They care for each other and are respectful.
- The curriculum is broad and well balanced. Pupils enjoy a wide range of engaging learning experiences to develop their academic and personal skills.
- Leaders and staff have created a safe and welcoming school culture where pupils can thrive. Leaders involve outside agencies and work effectively to ensure that vulnerable pupils are well cared for.
- Governors know the school well and hold leaders to account effectively for the school's performance.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make by:
  - ensuring that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are consistently high and tasks challenge pupils more effectively
  - making sure that questions challenge pupils to think more deeply about their learning
  - providing pupils with more opportunities to use and apply their writing skills and knowledge, particularly when writing at greater length.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Since her appointment, the headteacher has brought about significant changes through her ambitious and effective leadership. Senior leaders have improved pupils' achievement and transformed the culture of learning within the school. They quickly identified improvement priorities, and took determined and successful action to address them.
- Leaders and governors use the school's performance information well to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. As such, they evaluate accurately and have a good understanding of how to improve the school. The findings of the inspection match the leaders' own views of the school's effectiveness.
- Leaders have used additional training and effective checks on classroom practice to improve teaching, particularly in mathematics. Leaders make good use of measurable success criteria to enable staff to evaluate the impact of actions to improve teaching precisely. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and, as a result, pupils make strong progress. Senior leaders have high expectations. Where weaknesses are identified, effective support is provided and improvement expected quickly. Teachers know and fully understand that they are accountable for pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders and governors carefully scrutinise the use of the pupil premium funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are supported to achieve well. Outcomes for many of these pupils have improved, most notably in reading and mathematics. For example, skilled teaching assistants ensure that disadvantaged pupils understand fully what is expected in whole-class lessons and support their learning well.
- The special educational needs coordinator takes great care to make sure that the individual needs of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are carefully assessed and that the right interventions are put in place. Consequently, the additional funding for these pupils has a positive impact on their progress. This is due to the effective support they receive from well-trained and carefully deployed teaching assistants.
- The school has used the sport premium wisely to improve the quality and breadth of physical education and sport provision. The range of after-school sports clubs has been extended and specialist staff employed to improve pupils' expertise in different sporting activities.
- The curriculum is broad, and pupils enjoy a wide range of experiences. It is structured well to ensure good coverage of the national curriculum in a variety of interesting ways. For example, pupils spoke excitedly about the themed events, including the science and art weeks. Subject leaders support their subject well with advice, resources and ideas which enable teachers to develop their expertise and become more confident in their teaching. The school's learning values of being 'resilient, independent, creative and helpful' help pupils tackle a wide range of subjects enthusiastically. There is a good range of clubs for pupils to attend. For example, pupils say that they enjoy 'Isle' dance and the opportunity to play board games from around the world.

- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities, help each other and work together. For example, a group of pupils is responsible for ensuring that seeds are always available for birds. Leaders prepare pupils to be good citizens and ensure that they have a role in their community. Pupils show tolerance and respect for other pupils with different opinions. As a result, they are well prepared for life in modern Britain and the wider world.
- The local authority and the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth are providing a beneficial balance of challenge and support. They have worked together effectively to improve and support leadership and the quality of teaching.
- Most parents and carers are pleased with the education their children receive and express their confidence in the leadership. They appreciate the visibility of the headteacher and other staff. One parent echoed the views of many with the comment, 'The headteacher is always there in the morning, whatever the weather.'

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors are proud of the school's inclusive and welcoming ethos. They are committed to improving pupils' outcomes, both academically and in their personal and social development. They share leaders' high aspirations for pupils and are committed to securing further improvements.
- Governors know the school well and have an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Governors' meetings minutes show that they check on expected and planned improvements robustly.
- Governors are well informed by leaders and through their own monitoring activities, including visits to see the school at work. This enables them to provide an appropriate balance of challenge and support. They hold leaders to account effectively for the school's performance.
- Governors make sure that they receive up-to-date training so that they can interpret school and published test information for themselves. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and know the initiatives of school leaders to improve classroom performance.
- Governors check that additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is being spent effectively and is having a positive impact. They ensure that leaders set targets that are focused ambitiously on significantly improving progress and raising standards.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders' awareness of safeguarding is strong. This is communicated effectively to all staff. Training and ongoing updates ensure that safeguarding is a high priority. Leaders identify areas of particular risk to pupils. They are effective in creating a strong safeguarding culture across the school.

- All staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and know the procedures to follow should they have any concerns. There are well-trained designated safeguarding leads so there is always someone for staff to go to.
- Administrative staff complete and maintain meticulous records that are comprehensive and accurate. All necessary checks are undertaken when recruiting new staff. Information is recorded in detail on the school's single central record.
- Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that they felt that their children are safe in school.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are kept safe and out of harm as a result of strong pastoral and multi-agency work. Referrals are timely and outside specialists are used well to help pupils thrive.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teaching has improved as a result of higher expectations from senior leaders. It is good overall and, consequently, pupils are making rapid progress from their different starting points.
- Teachers and teaching assistants establish good relationships with pupils so that, in each class, pupils are keen to learn and respond readily to teachers' directions and support. They are attentive throughout different subjects and lessons taught by a range of staff.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use this well when planning lessons. Consequently, pupils from different groups, including lower-attaining pupils, are well supported. However, teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. They do not ensure that tasks and learning opportunities consistently deepen understanding and provide the right level of challenge.
- Teachers and support staff work effectively to provide well for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, whose needs are correctly and quickly identified. Teachers continually assess pupils to inform flexible programmes which adapt to pupils' changing needs.
- Teaching assistants have a positive impact on pupils' learning. They support pupils well in order to further their progress across the curriculum. This is because they adapt work so that it is appropriate, and select appropriate resources to meet pupils' needs.
- Careful targeting of disadvantaged pupils ensures that they benefit from additional funding. These pupils receive dedicated teaching time to catch up with, discuss and reflect upon their learning. The outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are good and are improving as a result of this.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. Teachers ensure that pupils are fluent in their mathematical skills and have regular and challenging opportunities to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills. For example, in Year 5, pupils made very rapid progress when they had to justify the awarding of marks to answers for mathematical tasks. They were challenged outstandingly well by the teacher and teaching assistant.

- Phonics is taught effectively. Staff are well trained in the school's systematic approach so that pupils experience consistent teaching as they move through the school. All the adults involved show a good understanding of phonics and speak clearly when they say the sounds. This is particularly helpful to pupils who have limited communication skills.
- The teaching of writing is generally effective throughout the school. A strong emphasis on using good-quality texts helps pupils to develop interesting ideas for their writing. Pupils take pride in their writing and their books show evidence of good progress. However, there are times when pupils are not challenged to use and systematically apply their knowledge of writing. For example, pupils do not sustain the use of correct punctuation. This means sentences are of varying quality.
- Teachers intervene at timely intervals to check on pupils' learning through questions and by leading discussions. They address misconceptions that individuals might have and give the necessary guidance about what must be improved. However, there are times when the questions that staff ask are not challenging enough. As a result, there are periods when learning slows.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are kind and helpful to other pupils. Older pupils look out for younger ones. Pupils show positive attitudes to others, particularly those who need help.
- Staff model the behaviours they expect of pupils and set a positive example by working well together. This helps pupils to develop strong social skills.
- Most pupils are confident and self-assured. They show respect for others' ideas and views. Older pupils can reflect, with maturity, on their experience of school. These views are overwhelmingly positive.
- There are very trusting relationships between teachers and pupils. As a consequence, pupils work hard and want to do their best. Pupils feel that they are well looked after.
- Pupils said that they feel safe in school. One pupil very quickly and enthusiastically responded when asked if he felt safe in school, saying, 'Oh yes!' Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations in and out of school, including when using the internet.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and behaviour of this type is acted upon quickly and decisively by staff.
- Pupils' well-being is a high priority for staff. Provision for pupils' individual emotional needs is effective. The school uses an extensive range of outside agencies to ensure that the needs of pupils who are vulnerable or who have SEN and/or disabilities are met effectively.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils concentrate well in lessons and want to do the best they can. The 'Inspiration Alley' motivates pupils very well. For example, a gold-medal-winning Olympian inspired pupils to 'think big' at all times.
- Pupils are respectful of their school and conduct themselves well as they move around the building during the school day, including at lunchtime and during assembly.
- Most pupils are keen to improve their work and they have positive attitudes to learning. However, these positive attitudes occasionally lapse when teachers' expectations are not high enough.
- There is a calm atmosphere in school. Most staff, parents and pupils agree that behaviour is good. Pupils know the school's behaviour system well and have a strong sense of self-discipline. This ensures that lessons are typically free from distractions.
- Rates of attendance and persistent absence are in line with national averages for primary schools. Leaders take a coherent, creative and successful approach to improving attendance issues and punctuality. For example, the 'attendanceopoly' initiative has encouraged pupils to attend more regularly and reinforced to them why this is important.
- Pupils who attend the before- and after-school club receive a safe, healthy and happy start and end to the school day.

## Outcomes for pupils

### Good

- Outcomes have improved because leaders and governors have focused sharply on the quality of teaching, and they have successfully eliminated weak practice. Work in pupils' books and the school's current assessment information show that pupils make rapid progress. As a result, attainment is rising further and pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- From low starting points on entry, pupils currently make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They progress particularly well in reading and mathematics. Pupils also achieve well in subjects across the curriculum because learning opportunities often ensure that pupils use skills from more than one subject. For example, pupils in Year 1 used their writing skills effectively in history when providing reasons why objects look new or old.
- Pupils get a good start in reading. In Year 1, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics is a little above the national average. Those current pupils who need to catch up with their learning are identified and effectively supported to make good progress. Pupils continue to attain well in reading and, by the end of key stage 1, the proportion achieving the expected standard is above that found nationally.
- Attainment and progress in mathematics have improved and continue to increase. Leaders rightly recognised that changes were needed to improve the school's approach to teaching mathematics. Current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are making

good progress in mathematics because teachers ensure that there are clear and effective opportunities to apply their skills in a wide range of real-life problems.

- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress from their starting points in a range of subjects, and in their social and emotional well-being. Leadership is good, and resources, including additional support, are used well to effectively meet the needs of this group.
- In writing, although published test information in 2016 and 2017 shows that attainment is broadly average, the skills of current pupils are behind those in reading and mathematics. Pupils are not always challenged to apply what they know, including their understanding of punctuation and sentence structure.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Their progress and attainment are carefully assessed by leaders. Work in books shows that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school attain generally in line with the school's expectations. However, there is some variation in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils across the classes.
- The most able pupils achieve well. Inspectors found that these pupils read widely and often and with fluency and expression. They are also challenged effectively to develop their mathematical reasoning skills and to deepen their understanding of problem-solving.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- The early years is led very well. The leader's analysis of the provision is extremely thorough, detailed and accurate. Children join the early years with knowledge and understanding below those typical for their age. The leader has a very clear understanding of the academic and personal priorities for each child, so that they make rapid progress from the moment that they join the school.
- The leader has created a stimulating environment that is used energetically by children. The indoor and outdoor spaces are well organised and offer learning opportunities across the breadth of the curriculum. For example, the 'penguin school' provided very good opportunities for children to practise and improve their speaking and writing skills.
- There are good systems for getting to know the children and their families before they start, so that there is a smooth transition into school for children and parents. There are continuing links with parents so that home and school can work together to support children's learning. One parent described the move into the school as 'effortless'.
- Children behave well and demonstrate that they feel safe. Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that movement between activities and different times of the school day is calm and orderly. Staff care for the children well and establish clear routines so that children know what to expect. Children listen carefully to adults' instructions and behave sensibly as they explore different areas of the classroom and outside spaces.
- Teaching in the early years is effective. There is no time lost, and the staff ensure that learning opportunities extend children's learning continuously. Staff support children's learning well. As a result, children are eager to participate. They work hard and make

good progress. This prepares children well for their learning when they move into Year 1.

- Adults work well with children who require additional support, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities. These children make the same rapid progress as others in the early years.
- Leaders use additional funding, including the early years pupil premium, effectively. They are adept at meeting the needs of those children in receipt of this funding through support, for example for speech and language, to enhance children's communication skills. For example, the 'forest-school' opportunities provide a time for rich discussions on a range of activities that rapidly improve the children's speech.

## School details

Unique reference number	118199
Local authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	10040922

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

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	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Katrina Rigby
Headteacher	Margaret Sanderson
Telephone number	01983 522 747
Website	<a href="http://www.stthomasofcantrcpri.iow.sch.uk/">www.stthomasofcantrcpri.iow.sch.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@stthomaspri.co.uk">admin@stthomaspri.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	8–9 December 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher, previously the deputy headteacher, started her role on 1 June 2017.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There is a before- and after-school club managed by the governing body.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is lower than the national average and is declining.
- The pupils at the school are predominantly from White British backgrounds.

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed pupils learning in all classes and considered the work in pupils' books to assess the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Some joint observations were undertaken with the headteacher.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the monitoring of teaching, the management of teachers' performance, minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding documents.
- The inspection team held meetings with governors and school staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors also spoke to pupils across all year groups about their learning.
- The inspectors listened to a selection of pupils read.
- The inspectors took account of the 67 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 45 written responses from parents. The inspection team also received and noted a letter from a parent.

## Inspection team

Richard Blackmore, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Rachel Goplen

Ofsted Inspector

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