Inspection of St Thomas' Catholic Primary School, Sevenoaks

South Park, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1EH

Inspection dates:	10 and 11 June 2025
The quality of education	**Outstanding**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Outstanding**
Personal development	**Outstanding**
Leadership and management	**Outstanding**
Early years provision	**Outstanding**
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The head of school of this school is Geraldine Leahy. This school is part of the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Annmarie Whittle, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Caroline Stockmann.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Thomas' Catholic Primary School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged St Thomas' Catholic Primary School to be outstanding for overall effectiveness, before it opened as an academy. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils make a meaningful and lasting contribution to this caring school community. They embody the school values through the courtesy and compassion they show. Pupils act as excellent role models for younger pupils and those new to the school. They demonstrate high standards of conduct in lessons and breaktimes. As a result, a deep sense of calm pervades the school. Pupils have trusted staff they know will deal with any concerns they have. This means pupils feel happy and safe. Pupils thrive in this positive atmosphere.

Pupils work very hard to help others in school and beyond. They work together to choose local and national charities they want to support. Pupils then plan a range of fundraising activities. All pupils, including children in Nursery, visit residents of local care homes and share stories and activities with them. They take great pride in their work for others.

Staff have exceptionally high expectations of pupils. Pupils work hard to meet these expectations. Their work shows they develop a deep understanding of the curriculum content they learn. Pupils become confident and independent learners. Pupils achieve very well. This prepares them effectively to flourish in their next steps.

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

The school knows its pupils very well. It uses this knowledge to design a highly ambitious curriculum that meets the needs of pupils. Teachers clearly identify the vital curriculum content they want pupils to learn. Pupils build on this deeply over time. This helps pupils to recall and apply their learning accurately.

Staff identify the needs of pupils precisely. This includes pupils who are new to the school. Teachers use this information to design high-quality support for pupils. For example, pupils who speak English as an additional language are paired with pupils who can model language effectively. This quickly breaks down any barriers to learning that pupils face. As a result, pupils learn the skills and knowledge they need to flourish.

Pupils develop an array of skills and knowledge across the curriculum. They write very accurately in a variety of styles. Pupils recall mathematical concepts they learn and apply them with precision. Pupils' understanding becomes increasingly sophisticated over time. For example, in science, children in early years can identify the specific habitats animals live in. By Year 6, pupils describe confidently how animals adapt and change to thrive in these habitats.

Teachers are experts in the subjects they teach. They explain learning clearly. This helps pupils to understand precisely what they need to be successful. Staff model language precisely. This helps pupils, including those in early years, to discuss their learning confidently. The checks that teachers make on pupils' understanding are systematic. This helps teachers quickly identify pupils who may need additional help. Teachers design high-quality activities to help pupils address any gaps in learning. This support is very effective.

Pupils love reading. This starts in Nursery, where children experience an array of songs and stories. Older pupils read deeply and often. Pupils discuss the books they read excitedly. The teaching of phonics is excellent. Skilled staff ensure that pupils learn the sounds and letters they need. Pupils who fall behind receive expert support to catch up. As a result, pupils become very confident and fluent readers. The books that pupils read match the sounds they learn precisely.

The school has high expectations of behaviour. Staff apply them consistently. Staff ensure that pupils have strategies to regulate their emotions independently. Consequently, pupils manage their own behaviour very effectively. One pupil said, 'We are kind to everyone,' and this was evident in pupils' conduct. Pupils love learning, and this is clear in the purposeful atmosphere and pupils' excellent attendance. The school ensures it quickly identifies those who may need additional help to attend frequently. The support they receive is timely and very effective. Attendance for these pupils improves as a result.

The work to support pupils' personal development is of the highest quality. The curriculum expands far beyond the classroom. Pupils develop a range of skills through the popular clubs the school offers. Teachers carefully select trips and visits that enhance and deepen pupils' learning. Pupils have deeply mature attitudes towards difference and diversity. They are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Staff work in the best interests of pupils. They receive well-designed training and support that allows them to carry out this work with expertise. Leaders at all levels monitor the curriculum carefully and support staff in refining their work over time. Governors and trustees ensure they know the school well. This allows them to offer challenge and support in equal measure.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	141157
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10341779
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	211
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Caroline Stockmann
CEO of the trust	Annmarie Whittle
Headteacher	Geraldine Leahy
Website	www.saintthomas.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected.

Information about this school

- St Thomas' Catholic Primary School is a voluntary-aided Catholic school. The most recent inspection of its religious character, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, took place in December 2021. The school's next section 48 inspection will take place within eight school years.
- The school currently uses no alternative provision.
- The school's headteacher and senior leadership team have changed since the last inspection.
- The school manages breakfast and after-school clubs to provide wraparound care for pupils.
- The school has opened a Nursery class since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements

(quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of the school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection team met with the headteacher as well as with other leaders and staff. The lead inspector held a conversation with the CEO and representatives of the trust. The lead inspector also held a phone conversation with a representative of the diocese.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, science and design technology. For each deep dive, the inspectors 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 pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector considered the views of parents and carers through their responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The inspectors spoke to staff and pupils during the inspection and took account of staff responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- 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.

Inspection team

Gavin Thomas, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Ian Howie	His Majesty's Inspector

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