School report

Inspection of St Thomas A Becket Catholic Primary School

3 Tutts Barn Lane, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN22 8XT

Inspection dates:	22 and 23 February 2022

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy learning in this friendly and compassionate community. Everyone is included and feels like they belong. Each morning, pupils arrive with happy smiles. They are excited to see their friends and teachers. Parents and carers appreciate the warm welcome that their children receive from staff. The school's 'learning characters' are an important part of daily life. These motivate pupils to persevere, work with others and become resilient learners.

Pupils are encouraged to be independent and responsible. Children in early years show thought and care towards others. Pupils are proud of the leadership roles they hold. These include sports leaders, liturgy leaders, school prefects and school council representatives. They enjoy taking part in the different clubs and activities that are available.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils are polite, and courteous. They behave well in lessons and around the school. Those pupils who need support to manage their feelings and emotions get the help they need. Pupils feel safe in school. They understand that bullying is not tolerated here. Pupils, and children in the younger years, value how trusted adults will listen and help them to resolve any worries they may have.

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

Leaders and governors are deeply committed to ensuring that each pupil flourishes and succeeds in everything they do. They have high ambitions for children, from the early years through to Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are successfully included in all aspects of school life. Careful identification ensures that tailored support is provided to help them learn well. Where appropriate, leaders work with external professionals to make sure these pupils get the help they need.

Leaders ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND, benefit from an interesting, broad and stimulating curriculum. In most subjects, leaders have identified clearly the essential knowledge they want pupils to learn. They have ordered this knowledge carefully so that pupils progress well through the curriculum, knowing and remembering more over time. Leaders successfully link what children learn in the early years with the subjects taught in other year groups. However, the content and order of the curriculum in history, geography and art are not as precisely defined. Leaders are taking action to address this.

Teachers have high expectations. Pupils generally concentrate well and try their best in lessons. In early years, children carefully follow the well-established routines. Lessons are lively and engaging because teachers explain things well. Teachers ask questions that make pupils think carefully. Pupils relish sharing and talking about what they know about the different topics they learn.

Leaders promote a love of reading. Children in Reception Year are immersed in books and engaging reading activities. This helps to promote children's speaking and listening skills well and enhance their vocabulary. Leaders provide older pupils with a diverse and varied selection of texts to read and enjoy. Pupils take pleasure in visiting the well-stocked library or the book corners in their classroom. One pupil said, 'We just can't wait to take a book home to share with our families.'

Pupils become confident and fluent readers. Learning to read starts as soon as children join Reception Year. Staff are well trained. They deliver the phonics curriculum effectively. Pupils read books that help them practise what they have learned. Staff identify any pupil who is falling behind and provide extra support to help them catch up quickly.

Pupils' personal development is well catered for. Leaders provide pupils with a rich variety of ways to learn about their role as responsible citizens. For instance, pupils regularly raise funds for charities, collect and donate food to the local food bank, sing at events in the community and write postcards to the residents at a local care home. Pupils and children also learn about their rights and responsibilities. They support each other kindly and show a deep understanding of fairness. Leaders have prioritised supporting the positive mental well-being of pupils. Children in the Reception Year pay close attention to the needs of others.

Governors are skilled and knowledgeable. They show an unfaltering commitment to pupils and staff. Governors know the school well. They assure themselves that leaders' actions to develop a coherent and well-sequenced curriculum in all subjects are robust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders place high importance on keeping pupils safe. Suitable checks are made on all adults who work with the children in school. Staff are well trained. They are vigilant in identifying and recording any concerns they have about a pupil's well-being or safety. Leaders respond to issues swiftly and sensitively. They work closely with external agencies to provide additional support for families, when required. Governors maintain a sharp oversight. Pupils feel safe and happy here and parents confirm this. Through the curriculum, pupils learn about keeping safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not made sure that the curriculum in history, art and geography is sufficiently well sequenced. Pupils do not learn as well as they could in these subjects. However, it is clear that leaders are already taking action to address this. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can complain to Ofsted.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	114577
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10211649
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	438
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co-chairs of governing body	Jemma Harvey and Elizabeth Oram
Headteacher	Paul Beverton
Website	www.stthomasbecketcatholicschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is a Roman Catholic voluntary-aided primary school. The infant and junior schools amalgamated in August 2017.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. The last section 48 statutory inspection took place in December 2016.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2019. New co-chairs and a vice-chair of the governing body were appointed in November 2021.
- The school is currently using one alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils.

- The lead inspector met with six governors, including the co-chairs of the governing body. She also met with a representative from East Sussex local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, computing and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils informally.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including the additional free-text responses.
- Inspectors considered responses to the pupil survey. They met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally during social times and in lessons.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and school development plan, pupil premium and catch-up funding plans.

Inspection team

Louise Walker, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michelle Lower	Her Majesty's Inspector
Clare Wilkins	Ofsted Inspector

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