

Inspection of St Thomas More Roman Catholic Primary School, Middleton, Rochdale

Evesham Road, Alkrington, Middleton, Manchester M24 1PY

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils describe their school as friendly, happy and safe. They know that staff care for them and will resolve any issues between peers effectively.

Pupils know that everyone is welcome at their school, they demonstrate this through the respect they show each other. Staff make sure that they support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. This ensures that they can meet the high expectations set for all pupils. As a result, pupils achieve well in most subjects.

Most pupils behave well in lessons and at playtimes. They are polite and well mannered. Staff support pupils to engage in a range of activities at playtime, such as sports, games and den building, which pupils enjoy.

Pupils have opportunities to apply for a range of leadership roles. They value the opportunities to contribute to school life through acting as school council members, leading worship, looking after the school environment and raising money for charity. Pupils understand how these roles help to prepare them for later life and take their responsibilities seriously.

Pupils enjoy and benefit from a range of trips and visitors, which have been carefully planned to bring the curriculum to life and provide wider opportunities.

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

The school has made sure that the curriculum provides an appropriate level of challenge to all pupils. Leaders have high expectations of what children will achieve, which is reflected in most of the school's external outcomes.

The school has effective systems for quickly identifying pupils with SEND and for providing the extra support that they need. As a result, pupils with SEND access the full curriculum and are supported to succeed.

In 2023, pupils in key stage 2 did not achieve as well as the national average in writing. Pupils in key stage 1 phonics also did not achieve as well as the national average. Since then, leaders have engaged with external support to bring about improvements to the curriculum and pupils' achievement. As a result, the standards of writing and phonics in school are now much higher.

The school's approach to teaching phonics enables pupils to succeed. Pupils quickly become confident and fluent readers. They are passionate about reading and enjoyed sharing some of the books which they have recently read with the inspectors. Teachers accurately identify the sounds which pupils know and identify if anyone is at risk of falling behind. There are clear strategies in place to support pupils who need to catch up and keep up. All staff are trained in the phonics approach and apply this training well to teach the programme as intended.

In a small number of curriculum subjects, pupils' recall of what they have learned is not consistently secure. This is because the school has not explicitly identified the core knowledge which they need pupils to remember and practise.

Leaders have designed an approach to checking pupils' learning which provides an accurate view of pupils' performance, while balancing the workload of staff. In some curriculum subjects, the checks are well used to identify pupils who need more support and to ensure that this support has the desired impact. In a small number of subjects, the checks are less helpful, as the school has not been clear on the precise knowledge that needs to be checked.

In the early years, children are well supported to engage and learn by excellent adult interactions. Adults think carefully about the way that they talk to children, to promote the development of communication and language. Children play purposefully and with sustained attention. Recent changes to the structure of the early years means that reception and nursery are now taught in mixed-age classes. Leaders think carefully about how teaching will still meet the needs of mixed-age pupils, enabling all children to do well.

Pupils apply themselves well to their learning. They have positive attitudes and learn to be resilient to setbacks. Pupils do report that their learning can occasionally be disrupted by other pupils. They are, however, confident that this is always appropriately addressed by staff.

The school provides a range of trips and visits, which stick in the memories of pupils and help learning to come to life. For example, pupils recall with enthusiasm their trip to a Viking workshop and could share what they had learned.

Across the school, pupils know what it means to be 'the best they can be'. Leaders have carefully thought about how the school's curriculum and wider offer helps pupils to develop into positive citizens, who make contributions to wider society.

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 small number of curriculum subjects, the school has not explicitly identified the information that pupils must remember. This means that teaching is not always focused on making sure that this knowledge is consistently remembered and regularly recalled.

The school should ensure that teachers are always clear on what the core knowledge is for each topic, so that pupils more successfully remember it.

- Assessment in a few curriculum subjects does not clearly identify what pupils remember. This means that teaching does not always build on what pupils already know. The school should ensure that assessment in these subjects more accurately identifies what pupils know, so that teachers can use this as a starting point for their teaching and address any gaps in learning.

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	105820
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10347988
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	331
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Louise Williams
Headteacher	Joanne Butterworth
Website	www.stthomasmorererc.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 April 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic school. It is within the diocese of Salford.
- The last section 48 inspection of the school took place in June 2017. The next inspection is due in the 2024/25 academic year.
- The school offers breakfast and after-school provision.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

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 a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other leaders and staff.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and the diocese.
- The lead inspector observed pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and for staff.
- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, early reading, science, music and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also spoke with leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- The inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation documents and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Alex Reed, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Katie Thornton	Ofsted Inspector
Kevan Naughton	Ofsted Inspector

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