

# Inspection of St Thomas More RC Primary School

Erith Grove, Easterside, Middlesbrough TS4 3QH

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Inspection dates: 20 and 21 February 2024

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
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Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
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Personal development	<b>Good</b>
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Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
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Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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The executive headteacher of this school is Elizabeth King. This school is part of Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Hugh Hegarty, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Joseph Hughes. The executive head teacher, Elizabeth King, is responsible for this school and St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, a Catholic Voluntary Academy.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are proud to attend St Thomas More RC Primary School. This is a welcoming and inclusive school. Pupils celebrate the kind and caring attitudes pupils and staff have towards each other. Pupils feel safe. The care they receive from staff is key to the warm relationships shared across the school community. There is a strong sense of belonging here shared by pupils, staff and leaders. Leaders are tenacious in supporting pupils and their families.

Leaders and staff have high expectations and ambitions for all pupils here. The curriculum matches these aims. The aims and ambitions are also shared by those responsible for governance. Pupils rise to the expectations set by leaders. Pupils can articulate how they are building their knowledge and skills over time.

School values, such as respect and justice, are woven into school life. Pupils understand how these values have a positive impact on their development and their learning. Pupils have risen to new behaviour expectations. Pupils learn in calm and focused classrooms.

Leaders prioritise the wider development of pupils. Opportunities to experience life in Britain and develop skills linked to citizenship are well planned. Visits to London and the Houses of Parliament help pupils understand life in modern Britain. Pupils enjoy and value these opportunities.

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

Leaders are passionate about raising aspirations for pupils in the school. A well-planned and sequenced curriculum is enabling pupils to gain the skills and knowledge needed to reach their potential. Leaders understand the school community they serve very well. The curriculum and the wider offer of the school, such as school visits, are connected effectively.

Staff receive appropriate training so that the curriculum is implemented skilfully. The small steps pupils need to be successful are carefully mapped out. This starts when children join the early years. What children need to know and do builds as they move through into reception year and beyond. The planning of the curriculum, alongside clear structures to the school day and lessons, benefit the pupils who attend here.

Pupils explain and understand their learning well. For example, in physical education (PE), pupils understand how previously taught skills are now helping them to play sports with more precision. Leaders plan the checks they make on pupils' learning with purpose. This happens during lessons through questioning and through well-structured retrieval work across the curriculum. Where needed, assessment also helps teachers plan purposeful intervention work.

Leaders have a diverse reading spine which is designed to encourage pupils to read more widely. Older pupils recall and talk about class novels they have studied over the years with enjoyment. Children in early years benefit from a curriculum rich in story and song. Teachers use the chosen phonics scheme well to introduce and revisit phonics sounds. Pupils demonstrate that they can read the sounds they know and apply them to words with confidence. The books that early readers use allow pupils to read and blend the sounds they know and remember. However, the books do not enable pupils to practice their fluency well.

Leaders are effective in securing the right support for pupils where it is needed. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported effectively. Careful adaptations, such as the use of different resources or pre-teaching to introduce new learning, help pupils with SEND achieve alongside their peers. Support for pupils' well-being is highly regarded by staff and pupils. Pupils know they have key staff they can talk to and help understand their emotions. Pupils are proud of their achievements linked to understanding their feelings and behaviours. They reflect on this work maturely.

Pupils benefit from calm and focused classrooms. Rules, rewards and consequences are clear for everyone. Pupils enjoy working towards weekly recognition of their achievements, such as the 'cup of kindness.' Leaders have rightly re-established expectations linked to behaviour across the school community. Pupils recognise how behaviour systems are fair and equitable. This links to the inclusivity of the school.

Pupils are proud of the kindness that they show to each other. This starts with children in early years who play and learn together harmoniously. Leaders' precise understanding of the school community helps pupils be ready for their next stages in development. Pupils know and understand how to keep themselves safe in the local community. They are vigilant to dangers they might face as they get older. This includes online safety too.

Those responsible for governance, including trustees and local governors, share the same aspirations as school leaders. They work together with school leaders effectively so that pupils achieve well. Staff are proud to work in this inclusive team. They are well supported by leaders and the trust through professional development opportunities.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The pupils at the earliest stages of reading have books which do not enable them to read with increasing fluency. When pupils read, they lack fluency and automaticity and this prevents them from establishing a love of reading from the

earliest opportunity. The school must ensure that when pupils practise their reading they are given books that support them to become fluent readers.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	142376
<b>Local authority</b>	Middlesbrough
<b>Inspection number</b>	10297427
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	204
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Joseph Hughes
<b>Executive Headteacher</b>	Elizabeth King
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://stm.npcat.org.uk">https://stm.npcat.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	2 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust.
- The executive headteacher came into post in January 2021.
- The school is a member of the Catholic Diocese of Middlesbrough and has a Christian character.
- Its most recent section 48 inspection was in June 2019. The school was judged good. Due to the pandemic, section 48 inspections were suspended and the timescales for reinspection have been extended by up to eight years.
- The school uses two registered alternative education providers and one unregistered alternative education provider.
- The school offers a breakfast club.
- The school has nursery provision for three-year-olds.
- The executive headteacher leads this school and St Joseph's Primary School, a Catholic Voluntary Academy.

## 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.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Prior to the inspection, the lead inspector reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance and previous Ofsted inspections.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and PE. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers and teaching assistants. They spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors listened to pupils at the early stages of reading with a familiar adult.
- 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.
- Inspectors gathered views of parents informally in person and formally through responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text responses. The views of staff were considered through the staff survey and through meetings with them. Pupils' views were considered through a pupil survey and through pupil meetings.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives from the board of trustees, the local governing board, the diocese and other representatives from the trust including the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classes, at breakfast club and during breaks and at lunchtime.

## Inspection team

Emily Stevens, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Deb Ward	Ofsted Inspector
David Milligan	Ofsted Inspector

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