

Inspection of St Thomas of Canterbury School, a Catholic Voluntary Academy

Chancet Wood Drive, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S8 7TR

Inspection dates:	3 and 4 June 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The headteacher of St Thomas of Canterbury School, a Catholic Voluntary Academy is Louise Clements. The school is part of St Clare Catholic Multi 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 (CEO), Stephen Davies, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Kevin Smith.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since May 2014. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

At St Thomas of Canterbury School, pupils thrive in a welcoming and inclusive environment. Strong relationships between staff and pupils foster trust and warmth. Pupils feel safe and valued, knowing their concerns will be listened to and addressed with care. The school is committed to creating a community where every pupil belongs, growing both academically and personally.

The school's expectations for success are high. Pupils respond with enthusiasm and achieve well. The school aims to develop pupils who are ambitious and curious with a developing confidence and independence. To achieve this, learning is structured to ensure steady progress and lasting knowledge. Pupils work well in groups and use equipment successfully. They focus on producing high-quality work because they want to do their best.

Pupils' behaviour is generally positive. They treat one another with kindness and respect. The school's core values of ready, respectful, and safe guide pupils well. This helps to shape a harmonious and secure environment. Bullying is rare, but when issues arise, they are addressed swiftly and effectively.

By the time pupils leave the school, they are well prepared for future challenges.

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

The curriculum is ambitious. From the early years through to Year 6, the knowledge that pupils should learn is clearly set out. Pupils talk confidently about what they have learned previously.

Children in the early years develop essential skills in communication, language, mathematics and reading through structured teaching and play-based exploration. This prepares them well for the next stage in their learning.

Mathematics is taught well, with regular opportunities to revisit learning to strengthen fluency, reasoning and problem-solving. Pupils across the school confidently use subject-specific vocabulary. They demonstrate a deep mathematical understanding.

Reading is a high priority. The comprehensive phonics programme is skilfully taught, ensuring pupils become confident, fluent readers. Any pupil at risk of falling behind receives swift and effective support. Pupils enjoy reading.

The curriculum does not help pupils to develop their early writing skills. Pupils attempt longer writing tasks before mastering grip strength, fine motor control and correct letter formation. This leads to persistent handwriting errors that affect confidence and progress.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge, particularly in mathematics and reading. In these subjects, teachers consistently use effective strategies to support learning. From the early years upwards, the school quickly identifies pupils with special educational needs

and/or disabilities. It works closely with parents, carers, and outside agencies to meet these pupils' needs. This is particularly effective in 'The Hive,' where pupils receive individualised teaching and well-structured support to help them succeed.

While the wider curriculum is well structured, the choice of activities does not always support pupils effectively. Some tasks are not well matched to pupils' needs, making it difficult for some pupils to access learning, while others are not sufficiently challenged.

The school has clearly defined expectations for pupils' behaviour. Behaviour occasionally falls below leaders' expectations at unstructured times of the day. Leaders are continuing to work with all staff to ensure consistency throughout the school day. Pupils enjoy school, and positive attendance levels reflect this. The school actively addresses absence by analysing trends and offering personalised support for families where needed.

Leaders take a proactive approach to supporting pupils with specific social and emotional needs, ensuring they receive targeted interventions and counselling to help them manage their behaviour and emotions effectively. Pupils enjoy visiting 'The Ark,' where a calm, sensory approach is used to help them learn.

Beyond the academic, the school fosters responsibility and confidence. Pupils learn to be kind and respectful. They learn about age-appropriate relationships. Pupils know how to be physically healthy and how to stay safe, including online. They engage in charity work, develop financial skills and access mental health support. The school provides a range of enrichment activities, such as musical and sporting opportunities, to nurture pupils' talents and interests. Pupils gain an understanding of fundamental British values, diversity, and equality, which helps them to engage thoughtfully with the wider world. These broad experiences support pupils to develop resilience, creativity, and independence over time.

Leaders are committed to delivering the best education for all pupils. Leaders are mindful of staff workload and well-being, creating a supportive working environment where staff feel valued and appreciated. Trustees and governors provide strategic oversight, ensuring high standards, financial stability, and pupils' safety. They maintain a close partnership with leaders, providing both challenge and support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, the learning activities chosen to do not consider the strength of pupils' understanding of the key knowledge they have been taught. As a result, pupils do not progress through the curriculum as intended. The school should ensure that staff have

the knowledge and expertise to select activities that meet pupils' needs and depth of understanding of the knowledge they have been taught.

- The English curriculum does not set out a clear sequence for the learning of writing transcription. As a result, pupils develop writing habits that include letter formation errors, which become embedded over time. The school should refine the early writing curriculum to set out clearly the knowledge needed for early writing transcription.

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	138828
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10346463
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	231
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kevin Smith
CEO of the trust	Stephen Davies
Headteacher	Louise Clements
Website	www.st-tc.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	20 and 21 May 2014 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of St Clare Catholic Multi Academy Trust.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for up to 11 pupils. This is called 'The Hive.' It caters for pupils with physical disabilities. All pupils in this provision have an education, health, and care plan.
- There has been a significant change to staffing, including leadership since the last inspection. The headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in January 2022.
- The schools runs a breakfast and after-school club on site.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- This is a Catholic primary school in the Diocese of Hallam. The school received a section 48 inspection in January 2019. The school's next section 48 inspection will take place within eight school years.

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 provision 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and geography. For each deep dive, 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.
- 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 met with the chair of the trust board.
- Inspectors met with the CEO of the trust.
- Inspectors met with a representative from the diocese.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the local governing body.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and spoke to some staff about their workload and well-being.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils and spoke with groups of pupils about their views and experiences.

Inspection team

Tracy Duffy, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Matthew Vickers

Ofsted Inspector

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