

St Thomas' CofE Primary School

Parkgate Road, Stockton Heath, Warrington, Cheshire WA4 2AP

Inspection dates

16–17 October 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have sustained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.
- Leaders, governors and staff have high expectations for pupils' achievement. The positive relationships that are at the heart of the school create a happy and purposeful environment in which pupils thrive.
- Leaders have brought about improvement to pupils' progress and the standards that they reach in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress because of effective teaching by staff who know their capabilities well. Occasionally, work is not matched closely enough to the needs of some middle-ability pupils.
- Staff use their expert knowledge to plan activities that capture pupils' interests and promote their learning well.
- Published results for 2017 and provisional results for 2018 show that pupils reach standards above those of other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Their conduct in lessons and around school is of a high standard. They have very positive attitudes to their learning.
- Pupils enjoy school and make good strides in their personal development. They show respect for others. Some pupils' understanding of faiths and cultures other than their own is limited.
- Leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics is developing. It is not fully effective in promoting further improvement.
- Parents and carers speak highly of the school. They typically comment on the caring and inclusive ethos of the school and their children's good progress.
- Leaders provide a broad and interesting curriculum that captures pupils' interests and promotes their good progress. This is enriched by regular visits and after-school activities.
- The early years is well led. Children in Nursery and Reception classes make good progress from their starting points.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the roles of leaders in subjects other than mathematics and English to ensure that they promote improvement in their subjects more effectively.
- Ensure that teaching more closely matches the needs of middle-ability pupils.
- Ensure that the curriculum provides more opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of faiths and cultures other than their own.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school has an ambitious and inclusive ethos, based on strong Christian values. Leaders and staff have high expectations for pupils' achievement. Relationships between leaders, staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Pupils say that they enjoy school. Pupils engage well with their learning and respond well to staff's expectations for their excellent behaviour and good progress.
- Leaders and governors took prompt and effective action following the school's disappointing outcomes in 2016. The impact of leaders' work can be seen in the improvements to progress and standards in the outcomes at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. The provisional outcomes for 2018 indicate that this improvement has continued.
- The strong and effective leadership of the headteacher has helped to ensure that these improvements have taken place, despite a significant change of staffing in 2016. In September 2016, five out of seven staff were new to the school, including the deputy headteacher.
- Leaders have developed a cohesive staff team. Relationships are positive, and staff feel valued and supported. All those who responded to Ofsted's survey said that they were proud to be a member of staff at the school.
- The leadership of teaching is good. Staff value the training that they receive, which leads to improvements in teaching and pupils' progress. For example, following the disappointing outcomes in 2016, staff have attended training in the teaching of mathematics, which has improved their subject knowledge and resulted in improvements to pupils' progress and the standards that they reach.
- The leaders of English and mathematics have a deep understanding of their subjects. They closely monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their subject areas. They have promoted improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their subjects effectively.
- Most leaders of other subjects are new to their roles since the last inspection. They have benefited from training to develop their understanding of the role. Most have an overview of standards in their subject and are developing action plans to further promote progress. However, the leadership of some subjects is at a very early stage. It is too early to see the impact of work to bring about improvements.
- Leaders provide an interesting, varied curriculum. Pupils who met with inspectors commented that they 'learn lots of new interesting things'. Pupils' learning is enriched through visits and extra-curricular activities to broaden their skills and knowledge. For example, pupils visit local sites, such as a historical textile mill, and take part in after-school clubs, such as drama and Zumba.
- Pupils learn to respect others and develop a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in society. However, some pupils show a limited understanding of faiths and cultures other than their own.
- Leaders make good use of additional funding for the small number of disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

Funding is used well to provide support for individual pupils and to improve their progress.

- Leaders ensure that the primary school sport premium funding is used effectively to provide staff training and to ensure that pupils learn to swim by the end of Year 6. Pupils also take part in sporting competitions and attend a range of after-school sports clubs.
- Parents hold the school in high regard. Responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, and from parents who communicated their views by text message were very positive. A typical comment from parents was, ‘My child is happy, confident and making great progress.’ Parents typically praised the strong leadership, the warm and caring ethos of the school and the positive relationships within the school. The vast majority would recommend the school to another parent.

Governance of the school

- Governors are dedicated and knowledgeable about the school. They share the commitment of leaders and staff to provide the best quality of education for pupils.
- Governors make effective use of their skills and knowledge to provide both challenge and support to school leaders. Governors with relevant expertise support middle leaders well in developing their roles. For example, they are effectively supporting the work of the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the early years leader.
- Governors hold leaders to account, asking searching questions about leaders’ actions and the impact of the school’s work. Governors keep a close eye on how funding is used.
- Governors have a good understanding of their responsibilities and duties to keep pupils safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is a high priority in the school. Staff, leaders and governors are vigilant. All staff receive regular training to ensure that they have an up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues and are alert to possible concerns.
- Record-keeping is thorough. Any referrals to the local authority are made in a timely manner to ensure that pupils’ needs are met promptly.
- Pupils report that they feel safe. All parents who responded to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, agreed that their child feels safe in school.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is characterised by positive relationships. Pupils feel valued and secure, and this promotes their confidence in learning. Pupils enjoy their learning and are keen to work hard.

- Teachers provide activities that interest pupils and promote their engagement in learning. For example, Year 6 pupils showed a keen interest in their learning about life in ancient Greece. They explained to inspectors that, as well as learning about life in Athens and Sparta, they have made models of figures to be used to make a stop-motion animation of a historical battle scene.
- Teaching provides challenge to extend pupils' learning. For example, in mathematics, pupils are questioned well to develop their deeper thought and reasoning. During a problem-solving activity, Year 2 pupils were challenged to think whether the number would be bigger, and why.
- Staff know pupils' skills and capabilities well. On most occasions, staff use this knowledge effectively to adapt their teaching. When completing a writing task, Year 3 and Year 4 pupils responded well to questions tailored to their understanding of the use of grammar.
- At times, work is not as closely matched to the needs of middle-ability pupils. Work is sometimes too challenging, with the result that pupils' learning slows.
- Phonics is taught systematically and effectively. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to apply their skills in their reading and writing. Year 1 pupils showed a high level of engagement in their daily phonics session. For example, they were keen to suggest more words which had an 'oo' sound.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning. They engage well in their tasks and are keen to do well. Many spoke enthusiastically to inspectors about their work.
- Pupils display positive relationships with staff and each other. They cooperate well together to share ideas and complete activities. Pupils who spoke with inspectors typically commented that school was a place to 'share ideas and work together'.
- Pupils play an active part in the life of the school. They relish their roles and responsibilities in school, such as being members of the school council, as 'play leaders' and as members of the school's 'ethos group'.
- Pupils' understanding of British values is enriched by activities such as their involvement in charity work and visits from a Member of Parliament.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is fostered well. Pupils are very accepting of each other and are developing mature, respectful attitudes. The school's work on topics such as Black History Month helps to broaden pupils' understanding of equality. Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures. However, this learning is not secure, as some pupils display a limited understanding of cultures and faiths other than their own.
- Pupils learn about the importance of being healthy. Activities such as those to promote mindfulness contribute to their positive mental health and resilience skills.
- Pupils show a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when

online. They report that they feel safe in school. They say that bullying is very rare and that they are confident that they could speak to staff if they had any concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct in lessons and around school is exemplary. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They listen very closely to teachers' instructions and display a clear understanding of the school's behaviour rules.
- All staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and pupils are self-disciplined. As a result, standards of behaviour are excellent. Incidents of poor behaviour are very rare.
- Attendance is in line with national averages. Persistent absence has shown a marked improvement from above the national average in 2016 to below the national average in 2017.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed that pupils are well behaved.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- As a result of effective teaching, pupils make good progress over time across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Current pupils are making good progress throughout the school.
- By the end of key stage 2, the provisional outcomes for 2018 show that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard and the proportion reaching the higher standard were above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents an improvement on the previous year and also from 2016. Progress has also improved during this time and is in line with other schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of key stage 1 has improved since 2016 to be above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2017, a lower-than-average proportion of pupils attained greater depth in reading and mathematics. Provisional results for 2018 show that this proportion has risen to above the national average for both subjects and is in line with the national average in writing.
- Phonics is taught well and, as a result, current pupils make good progress. The proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been consistently above the national average since the last inspection. By the end of Year 2, all pupils have met the expected phonics standard.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Older pupils report that they read often and for pleasure. Younger pupils say that they enjoy reading. They show a good understanding of books and stories. Current pupils make good progress in reading, which is reflected in their improved standards at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- The small proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school make good progress, due to effective support tailored to their needs. The number of disadvantaged pupils in each

year group is too small to make a meaningful comparison with the progress of other pupils nationally.

- The small proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their varied starting points. The SENCo makes timely interventions to support their needs. Pupils receive individual support which promotes their good progress.
- The most able pupils make good progress, due to teaching which challenges them and extends their learning. This good progress is reflected in the increasing proportion of pupils attaining the greater-depth standard at the end of key stage 1 and the higher standards at the end of key stage 2.
- Although good overall, the progress of middle-ability pupils is not as strong as that of higher-ability pupils. This is because teaching is not as consistently effective in meeting their needs.
- Scrutiny of pupils' books and school information show that current pupils make good progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. In some subjects, such as computing, progress is not as closely monitored and therefore progress is not as strong.
- Pupils are well prepared for the transfer to high school, due to their good progress and their good personal development.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter Nursery and Reception classes with skill levels that are typical for their age. Most reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has been above national figures since the last inspection. An increasing proportion of children exceed this standard, particularly in their listening and early reading skills. This represents good progress. Children are well prepared for the transfer to Year 1.
- Early years is well led. Leaders have an accurate view of the provision's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders ensure that staff have a close knowledge of individual children's capabilities. Children's progress is carefully tracked to ensure that no children fall behind and that teaching meets their needs.
- Children are happy and secure in their surroundings. They engage well in the varied activities provided, showing good concentration skills. Children show independence as they select their own activities.
- Staff provide activities that capture children's interests. Children showed enthusiasm for activities relating to the book 'The Tiger Who Came to Tea'. They showed enjoyment and perseverance as they decorated their box of 'tiger food'. Some were keen to write the word 'tiger' and staff supported them well to use their phonics knowledge to do so.
- Children behave extremely well. They are sensible and attentive at snack time and respond quickly to requests to tidy away. They learn to use equipment safely.
- Children show positive relationships with staff and each other. They cooperate well in the outdoor area and play imaginatively. Staff's positive approach contributes to children's high levels of self-esteem and confidence.

- Staff and leaders have established a positive relationship with parents. Staff make home visits before children join Nursery. Parents are involved in assessments of their children's learning and are invited to share their children's 'wow' moments with staff. This positive partnership has a positive impact on children's progress.

School details

Unique reference number	111318
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10037783

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Speed
Headteacher	Ian Moss
Telephone number	01925 268722
Website	www.st-thomas.co.uk/
Email address	stthomas_primary@warrington.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 March 2014

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is average.
- The school is designated as a Church of England primary school. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in October 2014.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning throughout the school. In addition, inspectors scrutinised pupils' workbooks and listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the chair of the governing body and six other governors, the headteacher and other senior leaders. The inspectors also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of information produced by the school, including information on pupils' progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance, procedures for safeguarding and the school's own evaluation of its work. Inspectors considered reports to the governing body, minutes of governors' meetings and the school's plans for further improvement.
- Inspectors considered the 64 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the views of 63 parents expressed via text message to Ofsted.
- Inspectors also took account of the 14 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 41 responses to the online pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Elaine White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Zarina Connolly

Ofsted Inspector

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