

St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School

Sherwood Avenue, Bradley, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD2 1RQ

Inspection dates

5–6 June 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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- All leaders, including governors, demonstrate dedication to providing a positive, safe and exciting school experience for all pupils.
- Leaders and staff have successfully addressed the school's low performance in reading. Extensive ranges of activities and strategies to enthuse pupils in reading and support them in developing their skills are having a positive effect.
- Most pupils currently in the school are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Although standards of attainment are below those seen nationally at the end of key stage 2, they are improving. The progress that disadvantaged pupils are making is more varied. Leaders have not checked the achievement of these pupils as a group and some gaps in attainment and progress between these pupils and others remain.
- Governors carry out their roles with passion, pride and integrity. They celebrate and challenge the work of leaders and understand the accountability of their position well.
- The strong relationship between staff and pupils is a strength of the school and has a direct impact on the pupils' very good behaviour.
- Phonics teaching in key stage 1 has improved and most pupils enter key stage 2 able to read with appropriate fluency.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They enjoy the different experiences and opportunities that the school provides and readily take part in as many of these as they can.
- Pupils' attendance continues to be good and is just above the national average. Pupils enjoy school and do not want to miss a day.
- Safeguarding is effective and pupils' welfare needs are well met due to the conscientious work of leaders.
- Detailed plans for improvement and frequent monitoring and evaluation are in place. However, these are not consistently precise nor related to each other, so some necessary checks on the school's work are not thorough enough to ensure rapid improvement.
- Provision and teaching in the early years need improvement. Leaders do not have an accurate view of the varied progress pupils make through their time in early years. Many children are not well prepared for Year 1.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen senior leadership and management by:
 - sharpening plans for improvement, highlighting key priorities and linking these closely to monitoring and evaluation procedures, so that where any underperformance lies across the year, it is quickly identified and addressed
 - checking the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils as a group, within classes and across subjects, so that support can be directed to where it is most needed, ensuring that the gap in attainment and progress between these pupils and others diminishes more rapidly.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in the early years by:
 - ensuring that leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in early years, so that they can direct, and check the effectiveness of, support and improvement appropriately
 - making sure that assessment systems are fit for purpose, well understood by leaders, and inform all adults in the setting of children's starting points across the curriculum and the next steps they need to take
 - improving provision and planned activities, particularly outdoors, so that children of all abilities engage in a wide variety of opportunities to explore and develop their skills across the curriculum, and especially in reading, writing and mathematics
 - supporting all adults in further developing their understanding of the early years curriculum and in using effective questioning to develop and deepen children's understanding, knowledge and skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is unwavering in his vision to ensure that all pupils have a happy, healthy and positive start to their school years. All leaders and staff commit to this vision. Staff morale is high. Many staff comment on the positive atmosphere within the school, and when one teacher said, 'I love this school – this is the best job I have ever had!' many others enthusiastically agreed.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work effectively together, and with other able and dedicated senior and middle leaders, to promote the school's strengths and address any weaknesses. The good subject knowledge of subject leaders, the consistent implementation of new strategies and leaders' regular checks on teaching and learning across key stages 1 and 2 are ensuring that pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is improving.
- This year, the leaders for reading and writing are highly effective in their role. They have clearly identified what needs to be done to ensure that a higher proportion of pupils reach the expected standard in reading and writing. They have put a wealth of engaging, purposeful and well-planned strategies in place to support pupils' enjoyment and skills in reading. They have made sure that reading is high profile around school, taking every opportunity possible to promote authors, high-quality books and story-telling. Pupils can be found reading throughout the day in classes, in dedicated reading areas, in the story hut, on the playground or in the reading tent. As a result, pupils' high levels of engagement in fiction and non-fiction reading, and their quickly developing skills, are now becoming strengths.
- Realising that pupils needed to develop stronger skills in mathematical reasoning and problem solving, the mathematics leader and senior leaders have consulted with the local authority to ensure that staff are fully trained in how to meet the demands of the current mathematics curriculum. The mathematics leader can demonstrate the strides that are being taken in pupils' work in this area, but is honest and accurate in her view that this work and direction needs to continue.
- Leaders have recently devised an assessment system for pupils in Years 1 to 6 that is working well. It is well understood by staff and used throughout each week to record pupils' achievement and inform teachers' planning about what pupils need to learn next. The new system for assessing children in the early years is not being used as effectively.
- School leaders are keen to create and maintain good links with other schools and the local authority to validate their work and share ideas for school improvement. For example, the school's partnership with other schools in the North Huddersfield Learning Community provides opportunities for leaders to confirm their checks on the quality of teaching and learning.
- The leader for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has a good understanding of her role and of how best to support these pupils. She has made sure that the pupils' progress is checked carefully from their starting points and therefore knows which teaching interventions are most successful. She works with teachers to ensure that additional support is targeted

effectively. As a result, most pupils are making steady progress in their learning.

- The pupil premium funding is used to provide learning mentor support to address academic and welfare needs and enrichment opportunities across the curriculum for disadvantaged pupils. Teachers understand which pupils in their class are defined as 'disadvantaged' and therefore eligible for support through this funding. They direct support to ensure that disadvantaged pupils' emotional and social needs are well met. However, although leaders check the progress that individual pupils are making, they have not rigorously checked and analysed the academic performance of these pupils as a group. As a result, although these pupils are generally making progress, leaders have not identified that in some cases the gap between these pupils and others is not diminishing, and have not made the necessary adaptations to plans of support to respond to this.
- Senior leaders have increased the number of different leaders across the school making checks on the quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 to 6. However, the information in the improvement plans is not always precise enough to ensure that all of the areas requiring most improvement are addressed swiftly and thoroughly. In addition, monitoring and evaluation activities are not related to the identified priorities for improvement well enough to check improvements are being made. Therefore, some areas of underperformance, such as in early years and for disadvantaged pupils, are not improving rapidly enough.
- The ambition leaders and staff have to deliver an interesting and inspiring curriculum is visible inside and outside the school building. From the wide range of visits and visitors to support class topics to the outdoor opportunities in the community garden or on the 'BMX' track, pupils are enthused by activities that widen their experiences, knowledge and language skills.
- As part of leaders' attention to delivering a broad curriculum, staff aim to motivate and inform pupils about the world of work. Pupils confidently apply for, accept appointments in and carry out their jobs as librarians, photographers, trolley assistants and book monitors, to name a few. Payments such as small items of stationery are eagerly received, after paying the small amount of 'tax' required by the school for community items. This starts to instil pupils with the values of, and rewards for, working hard.
- As well their learning and reflections in the Christian faith, pupils have regular opportunities to learn about other faiths and cultures. Strong moral values are modelled and delivered well by adults; pupils are developing a good understanding of how to be a good citizen as a result.

Governance of the school

- Governance is a strength of the school. Governors, many of whom are well established in their posts, understand the need to support leaders in keeping abreast of changes in national expectations in education. They know that many of the pupils have complex needs and backgrounds, but are careful not to use this as an excuse for any underperformance. They know that they need to keep raising expectations, to ensure that the progress these pupils make is excellent, so that pupils can achieve at least the expected standards by the time they leave the school.

- Governors are very clear about their role in checking the work of leaders, and their accountability for government funding and ensuring that leaders are creating a culture of effective safeguarding. However, they are not provided with clear enough information about the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils to be able to accurately evaluate whether the pupil premium is having the intended impact or not.
- The warmth and support governors offer the school is tangible, but this does not mean that they are afraid to challenge leaders when it is necessary! For example, they know that the quality of education in the early years needs further improvement and are receptive to advice and external support in how to do this.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. An efficient and effective team of safeguarding leaders and mentors ensures that the systems and procedures in place are well understood by all staff. All staff receive regular training and updates in safeguarding and all are well informed about what to do if they have a concern. The team is highly vigilant about potential risks, for example within the community, and works in partnership with families and external agencies to ensure that appropriate support is put in place when needed.
- Records of concerns and ongoing work are thorough and checked frequently. Staff, such as the safeguarding mentor, have regular 'catch-ups' with vulnerable pupils and provide additional support and activities, for example for pupils who are bereaved.
- The curriculum is used to promote how pupils can keep healthy and safe. This work is supported by visitors coming into school and good partnerships with professionals in the community, such as the local police and firefighters.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have worked with leaders to meet the expectations of the national curriculum after disappointing results at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 and 2017. Teaching is good overall in English and mathematics and pupils are, once again, making good progress as a result.
- Teachers use the school assessment systems well to identify gaps in pupils' learning in English and mathematics and adapt their teaching as a result. They plan activities to match the needs of different ability pupils and most use effective questioning and good modelling to move pupils' learning on. Adults' high expectations impact positively on pupils' attitudes to learning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants in key stage 1 model sounds in phonics well. They have established engaging routines in lessons to which pupils respond well. Pupils make good progress in developing their reading fluency and applying these skills in their writing.
- In reading, teachers give pupils clear direction in improving their reading fluency alongside developing their comprehension skills. Leaders and staff have made sure that reading has become an enjoyable part of everyday life for pupils. High-quality class texts are linked to learning across other areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils

reading 'The Borrowers' had produced high-quality models of the Borrowers' house, labelled diagrams and written engaging narratives about the family. Consistency in the teaching of reading skills, such as how to deduce information and explore ideas about the author's intent, is having a positive effect on the progress pupils are making. This, married with opportunities such as the weekly visit to buy a book from the reading tent for a pound for pupils to build up their own home libraries, is helping to instil in pupils a lifelong love of, and success in, reading.

- Teachers and teaching assistants use the purposeful work in reading to support pupils in developing their writing skills. An emphasis on improving and widening pupils' language is apparent in many pupils' current work in writing. Strong teacher modelling of different writing styles is helping pupils to know how to edit and improve their own work. Pupils say that they enjoy writing and most take pride in the work they produce.
- In mathematics, teachers have continued to develop pupils' good understanding of number strategies. Additionally, they have made sure that they are giving pupils more opportunities to test out their skills, work with practical resources and collaborate about their answers. For example, during the inspection, a class of key stage 1 pupils were engrossed in using a variety of resources to respond to mathematical investigations. Activities were well matched to pupils' needs and support staff were using effective questioning and praise to ensure that lower-ability pupils were equally successful in their task.
- Visits, visitors and specialists, such as the teacher for outdoor learning, enhance learning across the curriculum. During the inspection, pupils were gripped in their learning and debate about plastic bags and the effect they are having on the environment.
- Pupils with additional needs are supported with activities that are well-matched to the next steps they need to take. Additional adult guidance and individual and small group intervention sessions are implemented when needed.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The supportive and celebratory environment that leaders and staff have created builds pupils' confidence. Pupils are eager to talk about their learning and their school and are welcoming to visitors and new pupils. They are very proud of their school.
- Opportunities such as applying for positions at the job centre encourage pupils' wider participation in school life, as well as developing skills that will be greatly beneficial as they grow up. Now that such systems are well established, adults are starting to encourage pupils to be more independent, so that pupils can show more initiative, rather than waiting for adults to direct them.
- A large number of pupils attend the school's breakfast club, where they happily take part in different activities and enjoy breakfast with their friends. In a similar focus on well-being, school lunches promote healthy choices and pupils are taught about how to have a balanced diet. A wide range of physical activities add to this work in developing

healthy lifestyles.

- The school's strong sense of community is spoken about by pupils, staff and governors. Pupils say that they enjoy the togetherness of assemblies, particularly those that celebrate their achievements.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school because of the care and support adults offer. They are given clear rules, which they know are there to help to keep them safe. Pupils and parents say that bullying does sometimes occur, but pupils are definite in their view that 'the grown-ups in school always sort it out'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Leaders have created a culture where respect and care for each other are high profile. The positive relationships fostered between pupils, and pupils and staff, create an eagerness among everyone to be their best and make positive contributions. Where any behaviour is less than good, staff deal with it effectively and support improvements being made. Consequently, any disruptions to learning are minimal and very brief.
- Pupils listen carefully and are responsive to adults' instructions. In class, they display good attitudes to learning and they are generally patient and kind to one another. At less structured times, such as break and lunchtime, leaders have made sure that pupils have plenty of activities to keep them busy, and these sessions are, pupils say, a very enjoyable time of the day. Pupils who consistently display good behaviour are trusted with a 'freedom pass', where they can make responsible choices, for example about where they eat lunch or which facilities they want to access at lunchtime.
- Pupils are keen to attend school regularly and on time because of the attention adults give to making school enjoyable. Leaders reward good attendance with praise and certificates and follow up absences in a supportive but assertive way. Persistent absence is well below the national average, and attendance over the last few years has been in line with or better than the national average as a result.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- After a period of improvement, outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 2 declined after the last inspection in 2014. Now that leaders have addressed the difference in the new national expectations and raised the bar in achievement, particularly in reading, most pupils are now, once again, making good progress through their time in school.
- End of key stage 1 data and pupils' current work show that a similar proportion of pupils to the national average reach the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Where standards were lower in reading in 2016, good teaching ensured that these improved in 2017.
- After lower than national average results in phonics in 2015, leaders made sure that staff members in key stage 1 have appropriate training and resources to deliver phonics effectively. As a result, a higher proportion of pupils reached the required phonics standard at the end of Year 1 in 2016 and 2017. The work of current pupils in key stage 1 shows that this improvement has been sustained.

- Across school, a lower proportion of pupils reach greater depth in their learning than pupils nationally. Leaders have identified this and pupils' work in English and mathematics this year shows greater attention to ensuring that pupils have work that is well matched to their needs: the proportion of pupils working at greater depth is gradually increasing.
- A good understanding of the barriers that the pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities may have to their learning and careful plans to overcome these are ensuring that most of these pupils make good progress.
- The progress that disadvantaged pupils make, particularly in reading, has been consistently below the national average. Pupils' work generally demonstrates that they are now making better progress, but gaps between these pupils and others in the school remain in some subjects and year groups.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The early years setting has gone through changes in the learning environment, staffing and assessment systems in recent years. Leaders do not have an accurate enough view of the systems in place and the progress children are making from their various starting points. Expectations of what children can achieve are not high enough. Leaders' direction and the quality of teaching in early years requires improvement.
- Areas of provision, particularly those outdoors, are not well enough planned to ensure that pupils of all abilities can engage in purposeful learning and move forward in their learning. Opportunities for pupils to independently try out their English and mathematical skills are particularly limited. For example, during the inspection, a large group of children, particularly boys, spent much time running and climbing on the climbing frame, as there were no purposeful activities planned to engage them. The gap in skills and stages of development between boys and girls on entry to early years is not addressed.
- Adults in the early years are united in the care and kindness they offer to ensure that children make a smooth and successful transition to school. However, many opportunities are missed to build on children's knowledge, understanding and skills. Adults speak to children warmly, but do not responsively ask open questions to provoke children's thinking and develop their independence and vocabulary.
- A lack of robustness in assessment systems means that gaps in children's learning in some areas of the curriculum are not identified and addressed quickly enough. Higher-ability children in particular do not have clear enough direction to help them sustain high standards.
- The safe and calm environment adults have created, and their good attention to promoting and praising positive behaviour, has resulted in children behaving well and cooperating well with each other and with adults. Children are keen to do their best for the adults in the setting. Behaviour is good.
- As in other areas of school, books are high profile in Reception. Adults make sure that children have directed time to write independently and follow the adults' modelling. However, adults are not consistently accurate in their modelling of sounds in phonics. In addition, opportunities to correct pencil grip and letter formation are often missed

and so children's misconceptions are not addressed. As a result, many children have much catching up to do when they enter key stage 1.

School details

Unique reference number	136109
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10047551

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	455
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Silva Scott
Headteacher	David Rushby
Telephone number	01484 226557
Website	www.stthomas.org.uk
Email address	office@stthomas.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 March 2014

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- About half of the pupils are of White British heritage. An above-average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are identified as receiving support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is slightly above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics.

- The school runs a breakfast club and provides a number of enrichment opportunities.
- The school is part of the North Huddersfield Learning Community, a partnership of schools who work together to improve provision in each school and across the locality.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons across a range of subjects in all classes. Most of these observations were carried out jointly with the senior leaders.
- During visits to lessons, the inspectors spoke with pupils and looked at their work to find out more about how well they are learning.
- Meetings were held with pupils and the inspectors talked informally with pupils around the school. The lead inspector listened to some pupils read and talked with them about reading. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school was observed.
- Inspectors met regularly with the senior leadership team. Meetings were held with the early years leader, safeguarding leaders, the lead teachers for English, mathematics and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, as well as curriculum leaders. The lead inspector met with representatives from the governing body and the local authority learning partner.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including leaders' evaluation of school performance, school development planning, and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors also reviewed the minutes of meetings of the local governing body and information relating to safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors met with parents before the school day and considered the 53 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupils' questionnaires.

Inspection team

Kate Rowley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lynda Florence	Ofsted Inspector
Janet Keefe	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018