

Featherstone Purston St Thomas CE (VC) Junior School

George Street, Featherstone, Pontefract, West Yorkshire, WF7 5BG

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The way in which this vibrant and caring school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Links with the church are strong and pupils' artwork is of the highest quality.
- All groups of pupils achieve equally well, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, those supported by pupil premium funding and the most-able.
- Good teaching ensures pupils enjoy their lessons. Teachers provide interesting and engaging lessons which motivate pupils to learn.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Movement around school is calm and orderly.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school and have confidence in adults to take care of them.
- Attendance is above average.
- The headteacher leads the school well and is ably supported by all staff. There are clear systems in place to check how well the school is doing and to bring about further improvements.
- The governing body is well led and provides an increasing level of support and challenge for the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although teaching is good it is not yet outstanding. Marking does not always give pupils enough information about how to improve their work and too often spelling and grammatical errors go unchecked.
- Provision for writing is not as strong as for reading and mathematics. Assessment procedures, monitoring and opportunities for pupils to practise a range of writing styles are not consistently good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 12 lessons or parts of lessons, two of which were jointly observed with the headteacher and assistant headteacher. Inspectors looked at a range of pupils’ work and heard a number of pupils from Year 3 and Year 6 read.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, groups of pupils, the Chair of Governors and a local authority School Improvement Adviser.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school’s data on pupils’ progress, and records relating to pupils’ behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account 21 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and letters received, and spoke informally with a number of parents. The views of staff and pupils were also considered.

Inspection team

Christine Millett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Doreen Davenport

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Thomas' is an average-sized junior school. Pupils join the school from two infant schools.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above the national average as is the proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The acting headteacher who was in post at the time of the previous inspection is now the substantive headteacher. There have also been a number of changes to staffing in the last two years.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding in order to raise levels of attainment, particularly in writing, by:
 - continuing to ensure accuracy in the assessment of writing
 - ensuring the marking of pupils' work informs pupils clearly how to improve and that they are then given time to follow up teachers' advice
 - developing further pupils' skills in spelling, grammar and punctuation and expecting these to be applied to writing in all subjects
 - providing a wide range of opportunities for writing in a variety of styles
 - ensuring the monitoring of the teaching of writing by senior leaders is rigorous and includes samples of writing in other subjects to ensure consistency.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils transfer from their infant schools having reached standards that are broadly in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- From their individual starting points, all groups of pupils make good progress during their time at St Thomas' so that by the end of Year 6, attainment is above the national average in mathematics and reading. However, attainment in writing is a little below that expected. The school believes that this is because teachers' assessment of writing has been over-rigorous but this is not yet demonstrated. Lesson observations and scrutiny of work show that standards in writing are below those for reading and mathematics.
- In 2013, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels improved, particularly in reading. Attainment in spelling, grammar and punctuation was in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils making and exceeding expected progress is close to, and often above, national figures. Progress in reading and mathematics has been more rapid than that in writing. This is also the case in most classes in the school. School data and work in pupils' books support this view.
- There is little difference in the progress made by different groups of pupils. The school's commitment to equality of opportunity has ensured that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar levels of progress as other pupils. This is as a result of the good level of support they receive through one-to-one and small group work. Specific activities which include higher levels of challenge for the most-able pupils ensure that they, too, achieve well.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding achieve particularly well. In 2013, in national tests at the end of Year 6, this group of pupils reached standards that exceeded those of eligible pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics at the higher levels ensuring that any gaps in attainment in mathematics and English, between these pupils and their classmates, are closing rapidly.
- Reading is well taught and pupils develop an enjoyment of books. Those pupils heard to read did so fluently and with expression. They are able to work out unfamiliar words using a range of skills. Pupils confidently discuss their favourite authors and stories. They have access to a wide range of reading materials and are heard to read often. However, the very attractive and well equipped school library is under used.
- Pupils are developing healthy lifestyles and physical fitness through the school's physical education programme and additional sporting activities. They benefit from teaching by school staff and outside coaches.
- Pupils' artwork is of an exceptionally high quality and they make outstanding progress in this area.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching across the school, and in all subjects is good. Relationships in lessons are a very positive feature and pupils show a willingness to learn. Pupils talk of 'learning while having fun' and 'learning new things every day'.
- In the best lessons teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ask pupils searching questions to get them thinking and determine how much has been understood.
- Teachers know their subjects well. They have a good understanding of pupils' ability levels because they make good use of information about how well pupils have learned to help them plan lessons.
- Classrooms and corridors are bright and welcoming spaces. Pupils' work is attractively displayed showing that it is valued. Teachers prepare lessons that interest pupils and make good use of

information and communication technology. An imaginative range of resources and authentic artefacts are used to bring learning to life. Good use is made of the local area to enhance learning.

- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and identify where errors have been made. However, they do not always give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work. Pupils are not always given time to correct their work. For example, incorrect spelling, grammar and punctuation often go unchecked and as a result, the same mistakes are sometimes repeated. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use and develop skills being learned in English lessons when writing in different subjects. Consequently, the range of writing is too narrow with missed opportunities for writing meaningfully for different purposes and for different audiences.
- Teaching assistants are used well to support individuals or small groups. This ensures that disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those eligible for pupil premium funding are not left behind.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is promoted extremely well through the strong relationships in classes, high levels of collaboration and respect for the opinions of others, as well as the range of subjects taught.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour overall is good and at times exemplary. The school places a strong emphasis on the development of good behaviour from entry to Year 3 onwards. As a result, most pupils quickly learn and accept the school's expectations of behaviour in lessons and around school.
- In the best lessons, pupils show excitement and enthusiasm for learning. They respond quickly to instructions from adults so no time is wasted. The school is often complimented on the behaviour of its pupils by visitors to school or when on school trips.
- Pupils are courteous, friendly and respectful. They are proud to be members of their school and appreciate the good level of care and education provided. They talk happily about their favourite lessons and enjoy working together in groups. As one pupil commented, 'seeing the teachers smile gives you a good feeling.'
- Pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given and are always ready to lend a helping hand. They wear their badges of office and awards with pride. Those on the school council 'try to make the school better for everyone' and Year 6 buddies help the Year 3 children to settle in. Pupils also often take part in events within the parish.
- Pupils from all backgrounds get on well together. Discussions with pupils show that they have a clear understanding of bullying in its different forms. Pupils stated that it was very rare because the headteacher had 'put a stop to that.' They were confident that whatever their problem, someone in school would help them solve it.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school and, in lessons and assemblies, learn how to keep themselves and each other safe. They are aware of that care needs to be taken in everyday situations such as using the internet, crossing roads and handling fireworks.
- Links with external professionals support the school well in meeting the needs of the pupils whose circumstance make them most vulnerable.
- Attendance has improved year-on-year and is now above average. Of the small number of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, most agreed that their children were happy at school, felt safe and were well looked after.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides good leadership for the school and has successfully guided the school through challenging times. She is well supported by staff and the governing body. They work

together to ensure pupils achieve as well as they can in a happy and caring learning environment.

- The appointment of an additional assistant headteacher has strengthened the senior leadership team. Middle managers have clearly defined roles and all contribute well to whole-school development.
- The school's view of how well it is doing is accurate. Senior staff and governors are clear about its strengths and areas for improvement. The school has the ability to continue to improve.
- The quality of teaching and pupils' learning in lessons are checked regularly by senior leaders and teachers are held responsible for the success of their pupils. Staff are helped by linking their performance management targets to opportunities for further training to help them continue to develop their skills.
- The school uses a tracking system that helps staff see how well pupils are progressing. Underachievement and gaps in learning are quickly recognised and extra support put in place where necessary.
- The school has identified achievement in writing to be an area for development and has started to put systems in place to ensure that assessments are more accurate. However, the quality of marking in pupils' books and the range of writing opportunities in other subjects are not scrutinised thoroughly by senior leaders to ensure that, whenever writing is taking place, teachers' expectations of the quality of writing are always the same.
- The range of subjects taught is carefully chosen to promote good achievement and personal development. However, as yet, writing is not fully promoted across all subjects. A wide range of enrichment activities such as sport, music, art, visits and visitors bring learning to life. These experiences, alongside weekly acts of collective worship led by representatives from local churches, provide opportunities for reflection and contribute greatly to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupil premium funding is being used wisely to reduce class sizes, provide individual support and purchase additional resources for literacy. It is also used to reduce the cost of outings so no pupils miss out on these valuable learning experiences.
- The recent sports grant has been used well to extend pupils' physical and sporting activities. One pupil spoke of 'brilliant PE lessons' because of the specialist teachers and wider variety of sports on offer.
- The school has a positive and welcoming atmosphere where all pupils are valued equally. There are no signs of discrimination and all pupils have access to the full range of activities.
- Parents are welcomed into the school and attendance at parents' meetings is high. The school has worked successfully with parents to improve pupils' attendance. Most parents who responded to the online questionnaire expressed positive views with the large majority saying they would recommend the school to other parents.
- The local authority provides support for the school and governing body as necessary. The school also buys in its own specialist support.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has benefited from a local authority review. Governors support the school well, are conscientious and willing to attend training sessions in order to fulfil their role. Governors look at school assessment data and use them to make comparisons against similar schools locally and nationally. This enables them to ask important questions about school improvement. They use this knowledge to make decisions about staffing and to make sure that pay is linked to teachers' performance. Governors make sure that finances are used in a way that supports pupils' learning effectively. For example, they know how the pupil premium funding is spent and how well eligible pupils are doing as a result. They have also been involved in the allocation of the new primary sport funding. Governors ensure that statutory duties are met and arrangements for safeguarding meet current requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	108249
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	429498

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Hanson
Headteacher	Debra Randall
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2009
Telephone number	01977 723560
Fax number	01977 723561
Email address	headteacher@st-thomas.wakefield.sch.uk

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