

St Thomas' Church of England Primary School

Huddersfield Road, Newhey, Rochdale, Lancashire, OL16 3QZ

Inspection dates 11–12 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well in both their personal and academic development. By the end of Year 6 pupils are achieving above average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is good or better in all classes and the well-planned curriculum meets the needs of pupils effectively.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and the small number entitled to support through pupil premium funding, make similar progress to other pupils because they receive a good level of individual support with their learning.
- Since the last inspection, leaders', including governors', checks on classroom practice have improved the quality of teaching which has helped pupils to learn well and ensured improved achievement of all groups of pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils like coming to school and say that they enjoy their learning. They show a great deal of respect for others and work hard in lessons.
- Parents are pleased with their children's education and how well they are cared for.
- Governors are proud of the school and are not afraid to ask the staff challenging questions about the quality of education the school provides for pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are occasions when pupils are not clear enough about what they are expected to achieve in lessons and do not have enough time to complete tasks.
- Teachers' questioning does not always help pupils to think deeply about what they are learning.
- Teachers' marking and verbal feedback to pupils do not always help them to understand what they have to do to improve their work. Sometimes, pupils do not respond to the marking.
- Middle leaders are not skilled enough in using assessment information to support their monitoring of teaching and achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 lessons or part-lessons led by teachers, including a joint observation with the headteacher. He observed in all the classes, as well as groups of pupils supported outside the classroom.
- The inspector spoke with a small group of parents and took account of the 36 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as talking to parents informally during the inspection. The inspector took account of the school's own parental surveys.
- The inspector observed teaching in a number of short reading sessions at the start of the day. He listened to pupils in Years 2 and 6 read individually and met with a group of pupils.
- The inspector spoke with four members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and to a representative of the local authority. He also spoke to school staff, including senior and subject leaders.
- The school's work was observed and the inspector looked at documentation, including policies relating to safeguarding and behaviour, information on pupils' progress, attendance figures, the school's improvement planning and records of checks carried out by leaders on the quality of teaching. He observed playtimes and lunchtimes, as well as looking at the school's website.
- Work in pupils' books was reviewed during classroom observations and the inspector scrutinised, in detail, pupils' books from Years 2 and 6.

Inspection team

Andrew Morley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Only a very small proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional government funding allocated to the school for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families or those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A lower than average proportion of pupils speaks English as an additional language.
- Pupils are mainly classified as White British.
- In 2013, the school met the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that more is outstanding by:
 - making sure that pupils are consistently clear about what they are expected to achieve in lessons and have more time to practise and reinforce what they are learning independently of their teachers
 - giving pupils time during lessons to think about their learning and to respond to their teachers' suggestions on how their work might be improved further
 - further developing teachers' questioning skills to help the pupils think more deeply about their work
 - sharing the outstanding practice evident in teaching across the school.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that subject leaders use effectively all information about the progress of pupils and the quality of teaching and learning to enable even better monitoring of achievement and the quality of teaching.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The majority of children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills typical of those expected for their age, but an increasing number have weaknesses in their language development. From these starting points, pupils make good progress throughout the school. By the end of Key Stage 2, they reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are improving and above the national average.
- Children make good progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage. They establish good listening and cooperation skills as well as enjoying exploring and playing with a range of materials. They benefit from good space and resources as well as skilful teaching.
- Pupils continue to make good progress across Key Stage 1. Standards in reading and writing have been consistently above average. Teachers have worked hard to ensure that mathematics is now at the same standard.
- By the time they leave St Thomas, pupils are achieving standards of attainment which are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This was clear from pupils' work and from the school's systems to track the progress of individual pupils in English and mathematics.
- Taking account of their different starting points, the proportion of pupils making and exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics compares favourably with the national average. This represents good achievement.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because of the additional support provided, particularly the small-group learning sessions.
- The most able pupils are now also making good progress because of the high expectations of their teachers and their own motivation to succeed.
- The progress of the very small number of minority ethnic pupils, especially those pupils who speak English as an additional language, is also good and reflects the effective level of care and support they receive from the school.
- The additional funding for the small number of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium is used well and provides good extra support for learning through small-group and one-to-one sessions. The attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is in line with their peers in school in both English and mathematics and is better than their peers nationally in both.
- Reading is given a high priority in school. Pupils enjoy reading and a large majority leave school as fluent, accurate and expressive readers.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have high expectations of the progress pupils are capable of making.
- Teaching in all subjects, including in mathematics and English, is usually good with examples of outstanding practice. A majority of the teaching observed during the inspection was of a good standard; some was outstanding.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, good provision ensures that children enjoy, and are motivated in, their learning. Adults take every opportunity to extend children's language and numeracy skills by frequently asking them about the things that they are doing. Children make good use of the indoor and the outdoor spaces to develop children's skills. An example of this was in a lesson in which the children had great fun and made good progress in exploring buildings.
- Pupils' learning is particularly strong when teachers have good subject knowledge and ensure they are engaged. In a mathematics lesson, pupils in Years 5 and 6 were extremely motivated and challenged to solve a problem using a whole range of mathematical concepts. Pupils cooperated well, helped each other, made outstanding progress and produced work of a high

standard. The most able pupils concentrated well and responded eagerly to personal challenges such as working out higher-order number problems during the lesson and so reached their potential.

- The teaching of reading is well supported by the regular teaching of letters and sounds, and extra support programmes are used effectively to support less able readers.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and also the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language, is well planned and organised. The teacher with responsibility for these pupils is passionate about ensuring that they do well. A mixture of whole-class, small-group and individual sessions is used effectively to help these pupils make good progress.
- The quality of teachers' marking of pupils' work in books varies. Some is of a good quality, but there are occasions when marking, and spoken feedback in lessons, do not always give pupils enough detail about what they need to do to improve their work. When good feedback is given, pupils do not consistently respond to this advice and this prevents them from making the best possible progress.
- Most of the teaching makes sure that pupils know what it is that they are expected to learn within the lesson. However, this is not consistently the case. Sometimes, teachers' questions are not specific enough to encourage pupils to think more deeply about what they are learning. Occasionally, pupils do not have enough time to complete the given work successfully, which slows their progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are very polite and courteous. They show respect for others, for example, in the way they play together in the playground. In most lessons, pupils concentrate and stay involved in the activities they are given.
- The school greatly benefits from the attitudes and maturity of the older pupils. They understand that they are role models for the younger children and take their responsibilities, including, 'playground pals' and 'reading partners' seriously. The 'playground pals' show great maturity in their role to ensure that younger children are looked after on the playground and around school.
- The pupils further enhance the school in the way they take responsibility, such as being a member of the school council. Council members work well together and their determination to improve the school is exemplified by their detailed plans to improve the outdoor space.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe and this is evident at lunchtime where children take great care in what is quite a small playground space. Pupils enjoy playtimes which are very happy and secure for all.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Safety is promoted effectively by the curriculum. The 'internet safety day', which was attended by both pupils and parents, was a wonderful experience, with all understanding the dangers and how to stay safe on the internet.
- Pupils know about different kinds of bullying, such as physical bullying and name-calling, and say such instances are rare. Pupils with behavioural difficulties find it hard to act responsibly at times. However, they respond very positively to the school's consistently applied rules and their behaviour has shown improvement over time.
- Pupils are keen to achieve well. They often work purposefully and do not give up easily if the work is difficult. Their commitment is demonstrated by their learning logs, which they complete at home to a very high standard. They mostly listen carefully to their teachers but, when work is not demanding enough, their attention wavers.
- Pupils' enjoyment of St Thomas School is reflected in attendance that is above average. 'We like our school because it's fun and we get to do lots of sports and everyone is kind', is a typical view of the pupils.
- Parents are supportive of the school and those who responded to Parent View indicated that they are pleased with the behaviour of the pupils and how the school deals with bullying.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has worked in partnership with all the pupils, staff, governors and parents to bring about the changes necessary from the last inspection and to provide the pupils with rich and varied experiences. This includes improvements to the way behaviour is managed, and the provision of a wide range of very well-attended lunchtime and after-school clubs. Ensuring that pupils achieve their potential is the biggest achievement and, more recently, there is evidence that all pupils are making faster progress.
- Senior leaders know their school very well and identify accurately the priorities for improvement.
- The school has developed effective systems to check the quality of teaching and uses the information well to ensure that teachers are provided with the training they require in order to improve their practice. Targets are set clearly and reviewed regularly. As a result, teaching and pupils' achievement have improved since the last inspection. However, there is outstanding practice in the school which, as yet, is not used to its potential to improve teaching and learning in all classes.
- Pupils' progress is checked regularly. The progress of all pupils, including the most able and pupils with special educational needs, is looked at closely and those who fall behind the expected standard are given the help they need to catch up.
- Middle leaders are beginning to take responsibility for checking the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements in their subject, with the aim of helping staff to increase progress further. However, these middle leaders do not currently access enough information about pupils' achievement to help them maximise their impact on improving teaching and pupils' progress.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity successfully. This is demonstrated by the way that all groups of pupils make good progress. The curriculum follows a thematic approach linking subjects to areas of study. Pupils appreciate these links and there are good examples of writing across a range of subjects. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of extra-curricular clubs and educational visits.
- There are many opportunities to broaden pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The varied programme of visits and trips and the links with outside organisations extend pupils' cultural awareness well.
- The school is engaged in a range of partnerships, such as the Rochdale Anglican Federation and the Pennine Cluster of Schools. These partnerships involve staff and pupils working on a range of school improvement initiatives that have supported improvements in teaching.
- The primary school sports funding is used to provide specialist sports coaches to deliver physical education lessons alongside school staff and to provide extra sports equipment in school. Pupils and staff benefit from the extra professional development offered by specialist coaches. Parents are very appreciative of the success of this initiative.
- Parents are increasingly involved in the school and appreciate the learning events which support them in helping their children with their learning. They greatly appreciated the 'internet safety day'.
- The local authority offers light touch support as a result of its confidence in the school's performance.
- All safeguarding requirements are met and health and safety are priorities within the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very committed to the school and its success and have a thorough knowledge of its strengths and areas for development. This is achieved through their regular visits to the school and the good information they receive about its performance. They support and challenge the school in equal measure so that there is a sharp focus on pupils' achievement. They carefully monitor how effectively leaders use the pupil premium funding to support learning.
 - Members of the governing body undertake training, for example, in data analysis, and this means that they are able to question school leaders knowledgeably about teaching quality. Governors fulfil their statutory duties well, carefully assess the headteacher's performance annually and, increasingly, link salary progression to teachers' performance. They know what

the school is doing to tackle any underperformance.

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	105824
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	430988

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Emerson Whitworth
Headteacher	Rebecca Williams
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2012
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