

St Thomas CofE (VC) Primary School

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

Inspection dates 20–21 March 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------|
| 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.

- Each child is treated individually and learns within the context of an extremely caring ethos. Pupils have time to reflect on moral and social issues.
- From their well below average starting points, pupils' achievement is good. By the time they leave Year 6 their standards are broadly average.
- Pupils' achievement has improved from satisfactory to good since the last inspection in 2011. Pupils are currently making sustained and rapid progress.
- Teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. Good use is made of the outdoor space on the site around the school to develop pupils' learning further.
- All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and as a result, pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and towards all who work in school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say that they feel extremely safe and cared for in school. Parents and staff agree.
- The headteacher has been inspirational in improving the school's performance. He has had a strong impact on improving the quality of teaching and raising the achievement of all pupils.
- The systems in place to assess pupils' progress are meticulous. Pupils who are identified as underachieving can, therefore, be quickly identified and given extra help.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those eligible for the pupil premium make good progress because they are supported effectively.
- The governing body is knowledgeable about the school and fully involved in raising the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Together, with the senior leaders, the school has the capacity to continue to improve.
- Parents think highly of the school and the work of the staff. They feel both welcomed and valued in school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The majority of teaching is not yet outstanding.
- The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress is not consistently high, especially in mathematics and writing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 18 parts of lessons, including one joint observation with the headteacher. Pupils were also observed working in the outdoor learning areas within the grounds of the school site. In addition, inspectors reviewed pupils' workbooks and listened to a number of pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, senior leaders and pupils. A representative of the local authority and parents also spoke with the inspectors.
- A number of documents were analysed, including the school's own data about the progress of current pupils' planning and monitoring documentation, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance. An analysis of how the pupil premium and the primary school sport funding are spent was also undertaken.
- Account was taken of the 33 completed staff questionnaires and the 23 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors observed pupils moving around school outside lessons, including in the dining room at lunchtime and on the playgrounds during breaks.

Inspection team

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Barbara Martin, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Mary Lanovy-Taylor | Additional Inspector |
| Jenny Firth | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- An above average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Mixed white and Black Caribbean pupils are the largest group.
- Pupils whose first language is not, or believed not, to be English is below average.
- There are no disabled pupils in the school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor targets, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club each day.
- This school opened in September 2011. It is a new school created from the amalgamation of an infant and junior school, which were based on the current school's site but operated independently of each other.
- The school is involved in partnership work with the North Huddersfield Learning Community to develop learning in local schools by offering support to pupils and their parents.
- In recent years, the school has experienced disruption in staffing, including senior leaders.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the overall quality of teaching from good to outstanding by continuing to share the already outstanding practice in the school.
- Increase the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress, especially in mathematics and writing by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve so that more reach above average levels of attainment
 - consistently providing the most able pupils with work that challenges them fully
 - making sure that pupils have enough time to correct their mistakes in their books to further their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good because pupils make good progress from their previous starting points on entry into school. Progress between year groups and other groups in school is good.
- Attainment for all subjects has been steadily rising in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 since 2011 and at a faster rate than for pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. The broadly average attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and the just below average attainment at the end of Key Stage 2, in the 2013 national tests, masks this steady rise in standards since the last inspection.
- Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge generally well below those typically expected for their age. They settle quickly into school and make good progress from their starting points and enter Year 1 with broadly average skills, although some are still below this.
- Achievement is good in Key Stage 1 and pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Attainment in 2013 in the end of Year 2 tests was above average in reading, close to average in mathematics and below average in writing. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 check of their knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics) was broadly similar to the national results. Despite the upward trend in attainment since 2011, pupils did not gain the higher levels in mathematics or writing.
- In Year 6 in 2013, pupils' attainment was just below average in mathematics and writing and better in reading and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Few pupils gained the higher levels in writing and mathematics in the national tests but did better in reading and English grammar. Pupils made expected progress in writing but not in mathematics. In reading, pupils made more than the progress expected of them.
- These results were lower than expected because one pupil joined and one left very close to the time the tests were being taken. Consideration needs to be given with regard to the disruption in their education for this particular cohort of pupils caused by the fact that they were members of three different schools in a short space of time. Their progress was also affected by staff absence during the same period.
- Recent data about pupils' progress show that a large majority of pupils are making accelerated progress in English and mathematics. This is as a result of improvements in the quality of teaching and the thorough assessment of pupils' learning.
- Achievement in mathematics is improving rapidly. Currently, most pupils are on track to make at least expected progress and a large majority to make more than that. Similarly, more pupils are on track to achieve the higher levels in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014.
- The progress and achievement of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is good. At the end of Year 6, in 2013, their attainment was slightly higher than similar pupils nationally and higher than their peers in the school in mathematics and writing. Their attainment was the same as their peers in reading and English grammar. No attainment gaps exist between pupils not eligible and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Overall, pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Their acquisition of the English language and their communication skills develop at a good rate across the school. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment compares favourably with similar groups nationally. A parent who spoke with an inspector said that her daughter entered school with no knowledge of the English language. "She made massive progress gaining a Level 6 in mathematics and Level 5a in literacy".
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups make good progress from their individual starting points. White and Black Caribbean pupils do better in writing and reading than mathematics. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6 overall they are two terms behind similar pupils nationally and a term behind their peers in the school.
- Those pupils with special educational needs do better than those in other schools nationally.

Pupils who are supported at school action do as well as similar pupils nationally, except in English grammar where they do better.

- Good achievement for different groups in the school clearly demonstrate the school's commitment to tackling discrimination and providing equal opportunities.
- The achievement of the most able pupils is good, but too few pupils reached the higher levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2013 in mathematics and writing.

The quality of teaching is good

- In the Nursery and Reception classes, children work and play happily together and show much enjoyment in all their exciting activities, especially when using the well-equipped outdoor area. There is a strong focus on developing the children's communication and social skills. They make good progress because of the good teaching that they receive.
- Highly-motivating activities capture and maintain pupils' interest which makes them keen to learn. Pupils' understanding is checked throughout the lesson and intervention, as necessary, is used to move the learning forward. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use questioning effectively to find out what pupils know in order to deepen their understanding further.
- Access to a rich outdoor learning environment enables successful learning by giving the pupils opportunities to explore, create and think critically. For instance, pupils were asked to make with a partner a home for a frog, using natural materials such as stones, twigs and leaves. Pupils delighted in this task, using their imaginative, creative and social skills to the full.
- There has been a strong focus on reading. Teachers make time to read high quality stories to their classes each day and this has encouraged a real enthusiasm for reading amongst the pupils. Adults discuss a book on a daily basis, with small groups of pupils to help them understand the meaning of the text, and as a result, pupils' skills in reading have improved. By the end of Year 6, pupils read with fluency, accuracy and confidence.
- There has been a greater emphasis on developing pupils' story writing skills this academic year. The creation of the story hub, a large, tent-shaped wooden building, built in the grounds of the school site, has enthused pupils and encouraged them to be keen talkers and writers. It contains a myriad of objects, for example, an old tin bath, ballet shoes, coloured bottles, a suitcase, a giant chair and a grandfather clock to encourage pupils to talk and write. Support for pupils' reading and story-telling take place in the story hub. Often actors dressed as characters, such as King Henry the Eighth and trolls visit the hub to make the learning even more exciting. Consequently, pupils' creative writing has improved.
- Achievement in mathematics has improved rapidly since 2013 because a greater emphasis has been placed on helping pupils to improve their calculation skills, which has given them the confidence to solve mathematical problems quickly.
- Teaching assistants and learning mentors effectively support all pupils, especially those that are finding their learning difficult. This targeted support enables these pupils to learn well.
- From Year 2 upwards, pupils have their own personal learning plan in place. Each pupil meets with their teacher every half term for quality feedback on their learning.
- Marking is consistently good across the school and pupils' work confirms the fact that all groups of pupils are making good progress over time. Teachers mark all the pupils' work and give advice as to the next steps in their learning. However, not all teachers provide pupils with the opportunity to respond to their comments so that they can correct their work and learn from their mistakes.
- Despite improvements in mathematics, writing and reading, expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve are not always high enough.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of the pupils is good. Behaviour has improved rapidly since this school opened.
- Pupils are proud of their school community. They arrive at school dressed smartly in their school uniform and are keen to contribute a great deal to the everyday life of the school. They readily apply for jobs of responsibility through the school's own job centre online. Currently, there are one hundred job vacancies filled, including, a newspaper editor, book and fruit monitors, and go-kart assistants, to name but a few. These various jobs help pupils become more responsible for their own behaviour.
- Pupils' average attendance and good punctuality are a measure of how much they enjoy coming to school. Typical comments from pupils are, 'Everyone is friendly here' and 'everyone is kind'.
- Pupils are keen to learn and present their work neatly in their books. They say, 'I like learning' and 'I learn lots of things here that I didn't know before'
- The pupils organise themselves well in the dining room. They respect the adults that work in the school and quickly follow their instructions. For example, on the playground as soon as the teachers' hand is raised, pupils stop talking promptly and line up quietly.
- Behaviour is managed effectively in a preventive way. For example, the learning mentors set out role play areas and other equipment in the Key Stage 1 playground so that the pupils are fully engaged in cooperative play at break times.
- Pupils say that behaviour is usually good and there is no bullying. They talked about some of the types of bullying, but had less knowledge about mobile phone and homophobic bullying. They said that there was some name calling but that these were rarely racist comments. A few racist incidents have, however, been noted this term
- Pupils respond well to the spiritual, moral and social guidance they receive. Relationships between pupils and teachers and between pupils are excellent.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. There is great care to consider all aspects of risk. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school and the vast majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire believe their children are safe and well cared for in the school. There have been no exclusions during the last two years.
- A small minority of pupils, often boys in upper Key Stage 2 find it difficult to behave on some occasions. The school manages this effectively by using additional staff to support these pupils should the need arise. Consequently, disruptions to learning in class are rare.
- The school also works with families and outside agencies to help those pupils who demonstrate challenging behaviour. The breakfast club makes a valuable contribution to pupils' well-being and plays an important role in ensuring that they get a calm start to the day and that they are ready to learn.

The leadership and management are good

- The quality of leadership at all levels is good, including governance, and has resulted in the improvements that have been made in teaching and pupils' achievement since the last inspection.
- The headteacher has high ambitions for the school. He has successfully merged the two previous schools together and raised pupils' standards. He has brought consistency to teaching and learning across the school. Staff now work together as a team and are proud to be working at the school. Parents say that they are 'happy with the way the school is run' and 'delighted with their children's progress.
- The headteacher is ably supported by the deputy headteacher who has an overview of assessing pupils' progress across school. New assessment procedures ensure that each pupils' learning plan is regularly reviewed and shared with the pupils. Pupils who are struggling to learn are identified early.
- School leaders have a good view of the school's strengths in the main and good plans in place to ensure improvement continues. The procedures for managing teachers' performance are good,

as are those for identifying training needs. Teachers have observed outstanding practice in the school but this could be extended to the benefit of all.

- The promotion of equality and tackling of discrimination are good. The thorough procedures for checking the progress of different groups enable leaders to identify quickly any disparity. This is shown in the way they have taken action to raise the attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium.
- There are good systems in place for checking the quality of teaching. Senior leaders observe and monitor teaching on a regular basis and this has helped to raise the quality of teaching over the past two years.
- The senior leaders have managed the absence of staff well by using this as an opportunity to let other teachers experience leadership roles. For example, currently two middle leaders are absent, two other members of staff have taken on these roles temporarily. They are developing their skills in leadership, while making an effective contribution to the school's improvement through regular observations of teaching and the monitoring of lesson plans.
- The curriculum is well led and managed. A new curriculum has been introduced with the intention of providing stimulating experiences in order to involve learners. Pupils are asked what they would like to learn and know about the themes chosen. The curriculum is further enhanced through a large number of extra-curricular activities and extended school provision. The after-school clubs consist of ballet, photography, hockey, gospel choir and others, such as musical theatre.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. It is built into various topics and as a consequence, pupils know the difference between right and wrong and have a good understanding of cultures and religions other than their own.
- The pupil premium funding has been used successfully to provide extra teaching support, resources, off site learning to places such as Oakwell Hall and workshops in the school to help families support their children's learning.
- The local authority has confidence in the school's leadership and as a result, support is light touch. A visit is arranged once a term to meet with the headteacher to review the school's performance.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is good. The governors make regular visits to their assigned classes in the school. They gain first-hand evidence of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. This helps them hold the headteacher effectively to account and evaluate the leadership of teaching accurately. Governors' good understanding of comparative data keeps them well informed about pupils' progress.
- The governing body fulfils its statutory duties effectively, such as ensuring that safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
- Governors have a clear understanding of how the premium funding is spent and the positive effect this is having on the achievement of eligible pupils.
- Governors have ensured that the primary school sports funding is used effectively to offer additional sporting activities and is developing teachers' skills further. The governing body is fully informed about the performance management of teachers and is aware of the link between pay and performance. Pay increases and promotion for teachers only occur if they are successfully promoting pupils' progress.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 136109 |
| Local authority | Kirklees |
| Inspection number | 425861 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 442 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Silva Scott |
| Headteacher | David Rushby |
| Date of previous school inspection | 10 October 2011 |
| Telephone number | 01484 226557 |
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