

St Thomas' Church of England Primary School, Stockport

Marriott Street, Stockport, Cheshire, SK1 3PJ

Inspection dates 11–12 June 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils are very proud of their school and say they feel happy, safe and secure there. They are polite, welcoming and friendly and are very good ambassadors for the school.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors or responded to the online questionnaire and the school's own survey expressed very positive views of the school.
- The very skilled, inspiring senior leaders are fully supported by staff and governors, all passionately committed to providing the best for every pupil. Attainment has risen over time and the quality of teaching is improving. There is strong capacity for further improvement.
- The early years provision gives children a good start to their learning.
- The outstanding care shown to every pupil, especially to those and their families who may be vulnerable, helps them to learn well.
- All groups of pupils achieve well, including those who are disabled, those with special educational needs and those who are disadvantaged. By the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Good teaching provides well-planned activities that pupils really enjoy. Behaviour is good; pupils are keen learners so they work hard and progress well.
- The rich curriculum promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well and teaches traditional British values. Pupils become responsible individuals, who respect and appreciate different cultures and religions.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching does not result in outstanding achievement. Staff sometimes accept work that is less than pupils' best. They do not enable more children in the early years to make more rapid progress in reading and writing.
- Attainment in writing lags behind reading and mathematics. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write for different purposes. At times, poor spelling and presentation lower the quality of pupils' work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed a range of lessons, including one observed jointly with the headteacher and another with the deputy headteacher. They visited group teaching sessions and the 'Stay and Play' morning in the early years.
- They examined current achievement data, the systems the school uses to gather an accurate picture of pupils' performance and looked at methods to monitor and check the quality of teaching.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils were inspected.
- Inspectors talked with a number of parents and held meetings with pupils, staff, members of the governing body and the representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team looked at pupils' books, observed pupils outside at break and lunchtimes, listened to pupils from Year 1 and Year 2 read and visited a guided reading session for Year 6 pupils.
- Inspectors looked at the 10 responses recorded online in Ofsted's questionnaire Parent View, the outcomes of the school's recent parent survey and the 19 questionnaires completed by members of staff.

Inspection team

Kathleen McArthur, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Doreen Davenport

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most primary schools. Pupil numbers have risen considerably since the time of the previous inspection.
- Two thirds of the pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from Pakistani, African and other backgrounds is rising.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is well above the national average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils who are or have been eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well above the national average.
- Early years provision is part time for children in the Nursery and full time for children in the Reception class.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Pupil movement into and out of the school is very high.
- The school offers a daily breakfast club.
- Since the time of the previous inspection, there has been a number of staffing changes and new governor appointments, including the Chair of the Governing Body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise the quality of teaching and learning to outstanding so achievement becomes outstanding in all subjects, but most particularly in writing, by:
 - giving pupils a greater sense of purpose and more opportunities to write for different audiences to make their writing more meaningful to them
 - ensuring pupils extend and develop their writing skills by using them more widely in different subjects across the curriculum
 - improving pupils' spelling skills
 - raising the expectations of all staff to ensure their pupils always write neatly and present their work well
 - accelerating progress in writing in the early years by enriching the learning environment both inside and outside with a focus on developing early writing.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders' very clear understanding of the school's strengths and what needs improving is seen in their honest evaluation and focused development plans. Staff morale is high, and they are fully behind leaders in the drive to make the school even better. Consequently, all groups of pupils achieve well and standards are rising.
- The school successfully ensures equality of opportunity for every pupil. Extra support for those who find learning difficult, or who may be vulnerable and the provision of many experiences pupils would not otherwise have, ensure they can participate in everything the school offers. There is no discrimination, and good relationships between pupils and with adults are found throughout the school.
- The quality of teaching is regularly checked by leaders who observe lessons, examine progress data and frequently scrutinise lesson planning and pupils' books. Staff are expected to implement improvements and leaders' findings lead to professional development opportunities that strengthen skills and eradicate any underperformance. However, the teaching of writing is not as effective as that of reading or mathematics.
- Senior leaders demonstrate high-quality teaching and management skills and are good role models for all staff. Middle leaders are becoming more effective, producing clear action plans for further developments.
- Good leadership in the early years has resulted in a rising proportion of children who reach a good level of development.
- Leaders make good use of pupil premium funds so disadvantaged pupils progress as well as, and very often faster than, their classmates. School data show that any small remaining gaps are rapidly closing.
- Sport funding provides additional facilities and skills that pupils really enjoy. For example, through knowledgeable sports coaching, staff have acquired new skills, more pupils participate in physical activities and learn the basis of a healthy lifestyle.
- Very well promoted spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means the school is a very happy, harmonious community. Pupils learn about democracy in action through the school council, led by an experienced school governor. They have a real say in school planning, for example the new library. Pupils share celebrations for the different religions represented at school and become increasingly responsible and respectful of different religions, lifestyles and cultures.
- The rich, well-planned curriculum is suitably adapted to enable each pupil to make good progress in all subjects and gain the numeracy and literacy skills they need across the curriculum and for the future. In addition, there are popular clubs and experiences, such as the French residential trip or visits to museums and the theatre.
- Parents are welcome partners and the school works hard to include those who may find it hard to be involved. As well as newsletters, messaging, the website and parents' evenings, staff are always willing to meet with parents to benefit their children.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective and meet all statutory requirements. Records are scrupulously maintained; there is information for parents and staff are all trained in child-protection procedures.
- The local authority provides light-touch support for this good school. It has helped leaders to develop more focused school self-evaluation and has provided governor training.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has recently been reviewed and strengthened and is increasingly effective. Governors know their school well. Visits to school, regular updates on achievement and reports from class teachers give them an informed basis from which to challenge, ask pertinent questions and hold leaders to account – for example, about what is being done to raise attainment in writing.
 - By using a range of data and class progress reports, governors compare the school's performance with other schools locally and nationally. They check how pupil premium funds are used, and know this is effective because disadvantaged pupils often outperform their classmates and do well in comparison with other pupils nationally.
 - Governors know about the quality of teaching and they ensure that salary rewards are only given when staff enable their pupils to learn well. They know how staff performance management leads to further professional development to improve both teaching and management skills of future leaders.
 - Governors make sure all pupils are well equipped for future life and that the school teaches them traditional British values in a safe, secure environment.
 - They know how the primary school sport funding is used to improve provision, such as regular sports

coaching. Pupil attendance at sports clubs and activities has increased due to the wide range on offer.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Inspection findings and school records show good behaviour is typical over time. Parents and pupils agree. Exclusions are rare and only used in the most extreme circumstances. There is no record of any discrimination. Behaviour management strategies are known and understood by all pupils, who say the warnings, star charts and traffic-lights system are all fair. They are particularly proud if they earn the right to have lunch on the 'golden table' on Friday.
- Learning proceeds smoothly in lessons due to the very good, supportive relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils' positive attitudes and their good, sometimes excellent behaviour in lessons contribute strongly to their good progress. They work happily in groups or with a partner, concentrate and keep trying because they enjoy learning and want to do well.
- All pupils benefit from outstanding pastoral care. Pupils and families who may be vulnerable receive sensitive extra support, often from the learning mentor and behaviour support assistant, or the school's strong links with external agencies. Consequently, they can participate fully and progress as well as their classmates.
- Attendance is average for the majority of pupils. For a significant minority, it remains below average. The school does all it can to boost the attendance of those pupils who find it hard to attend regularly and on time, with rewards and weekly competitions. This sends a clear message to pupils and families that education is highly important and vital for their future lives.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils clearly feel very safe and well cared for in school. They learn how to keep themselves safe on the busy local roads or in water and there are regular reminders about firework safety, 'stranger danger' and using equipment safely.
- Pupils say bullying is not a problem and they have not experienced any racist or homophobic comments. They know they can turn to any member of staff if they have a problem and described this with the comment, 'They always listen, we can tell them if something is bothering us.' Pupils understand different forms of bullying and what to do if they should experience any, for example cyber bullying, saying they would tell staff or their parents.
- Safeguarding records are scrupulously and securely maintained. Training in child protection and safeguarding is up to date, so every member of staff knows what to do if they have any concerns that a pupil may be at risk of suffering harm.
- The after-school 'Siblings Club', providing supervision so pupils can wait safely while their brothers and sisters attend a club, and the breakfast club, are examples of the school's high-quality care for all, and how it works to help parents.
- The school and site are clean, tidy and well maintained so pupils learn and play in attractive and stimulating surroundings, which adds to their enjoyment and good progress. Well-supervised activities, many led by the sports coach, keep them busy and active outside, and there are quiet, sheltered seating areas for pupils to enjoy.

The quality of teaching is good

- School records and inspection evidence confirm rapid improvement in the quality of teaching due to leaders' skilled use of monitoring and well-planned professional development. Consequently, all pupils progress well and attainment is rising.
- Many pupils told inspectors, 'We have really good teachers', and 'We have fun while we are learning'. Pupils enjoy their lessons, are keen learners and cooperate well with each other and staff, so no time is wasted and lessons proceed smoothly.
- Teachers make good use of resources and praise to motivate and capture pupils' interest and imagination so they progress well. They explain tasks clearly, build on what pupils already know and ask

questions that encourage and stimulate pupils to think hard, reason and explain. For example, pupils confidently supported their viewpoint when their teacher challenged them to use persuasive language in a debate about having school on Saturdays.

- Classrooms are well organised, with lots of prompts to help pupils, such as punctuation reminders and mathematical terms. However, in the early years there are few examples of letters, words or labels to help children as they start to read and write.
- Reading and mathematics are both taught well, but especially reading. This is evidenced in pupils' rapid progress in reading, which is promoted effectively through lessons in letters and sounds, guided reading sessions in small groups, enjoyable stories and the attractive variety of books in the new library. In mathematics, pupils are given tasks well matched to their ability plus lively challenges that extend their thinking and reasoning skills. The teaching of writing is less successful. Most pupils are confident writers but teachers do not always give them every opportunity to write for different purposes. They sometimes accept writing marred by careless spelling and poor presentation.
- The skilled and very committed teaching assistants are always deployed well. They make a strong contribution to the good progress made by all groups, especially those who find it hard to learn or who may be vulnerable.
- Assessment and tracking systems provide detailed information about how well pupils are doing. Staff use this information to plan work, to stretch those who find learning easy, or to spot where additional help is needed.
- Pupils understand the 'green for good and pink for think' marking code, and say teachers' comments are helpful. Work is usually marked thoroughly, with extra challenges and comments that pupils know they have to tackle in 'response time'. Homework is set regularly, and may be done in school if this is best for the pupil.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- School leaders are strongly committed to raising attainment for all pupils. Inspection evidence and school data show that attainment is rising and progress is speeding up in all key stages. All groups of pupils make good progress from starting points that are below those typical for their age. Many exceed the progress expected of them. When they leave the school, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The high proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual times means that each year group changes considerably over time, making it difficult to get a true picture of attainment and progress overall.
- Inspection evidence, school assessment records and the work in pupils' books show that those currently in Year 2 are working at or very close to the expected level for their age in reading and mathematics but their attainment in writing is below the expected level for their age.
- Attainment when pupils leave the school is typically very close to national averages in all subjects. In 2014, a small number of pupils attained the highest level, Level 6, in mathematics. Pupils currently in Year 6 have made good and, in some cases, outstanding progress over the year. This is due to high-quality teaching. School data show these pupils are working above the levels reached in all subjects in previous years.
- Writing lags behind reading and mathematics in all key stages. Pupils have limited opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences and some careless spelling and poor presentation lower the quality of their work. Frequent use of worksheets often reduces opportunities for writing in other subjects. Leaders have rightly focused on raising attainment and speeding up progress with additional support and experiences for pupils as well as staff training. The new library is stocked with high-quality books to stimulate ideas and give pupils a wider vocabulary to use in their writing. These actions have yet to make their full impact.
- Reading is taught well so pupils achieve well and progress accelerates rapidly through the school. Younger pupils learn letters and sounds (phonics) in small groups closely matched to their ability. In 2014, the proportion who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check was lower than the national average, reflecting how much pupils have to catch up from their low starting points. As a result, systems were tightened up and the quality of phonics lessons is now regularly checked. School records show pupils currently in Year 1 are progressing more rapidly in phonics than was the case in previous years.
- Attainment in mathematics has risen over time. In 2014, most groups of pupils made more progress than expected. Pupils enjoy tackling tricky problems. This was seen at first-hand by inspectors when

older pupils had to work out different values on an archery target.

- The most able pupils receive additional challenges to stimulate and extend their ability to think, reason and express their ideas fluently. For example, older pupils read *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, including 'between the lines' to infer meaning and put forward their arguments confidently.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs are well provided for. Good leadership ensures they receive trained support and help with their learning so they progress as well as their classmates.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well. They make good progress compared to non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. They often progress more rapidly than their classmates. In 2014, almost all Year 6 pupils were disadvantaged. Their attainment then was behind that of their classmates. Compared to other pupils nationally, they were a term behind in reading, two terms behind in mathematics and three terms behind in writing. Data show these gaps are rapidly closing due to careful use of pupil premium funds to provide well-targeted support.

The early years provision

is good

- Children enter the early years with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age, and often especially so in writing and number. At the end of Nursery, about half the children move to other settings and new children enter Reception. Some are from different pre-schools, while for others it is their first experience outside the home.
- Children make good progress from their different starting points as they move through Nursery and Reception. Just over half reach a good level of development at the end of their time in Reception, including those who are disadvantaged. Although this is below the national average, school data show the proportion is increasing each year. Children feel secure in school and know the routines so they are ready for further learning in Year 1.
- Good teaching provides well-planned activities in all areas of learning. Staff skilfully draw out children's ideas and build their language skills by participating in, but not directing, their imaginary play. The outdoor area has been improved since the time of the previous inspection and children love learning outside. For example, during the inspection, they enjoyed putting on their sun hats and packing their bags, counting equipment and discussing what they would do on their holidays.
- Children are very well cared for so they feel completely safe, secure and quickly gain confidence. They behave well and tackle their tasks enthusiastically. Nursery and Reception-class children work and play happily together outdoors, organising equipment and taking turns; they are willing to share so there is no interruption to their learning.
- Daily stories and sessions learning letters and the sounds they make prepare children well for reading and writing. However, there are few examples of letters, words or labels displayed for children to copy, use in their writing or to help them understand that print has meaning.
- Staff maintain 'learning journey' booklets for each child. They monitor and record progress thoroughly; they use the information to plan activities that reinforce and extend children's skills, and to provide extra help where needed. Teaching assistants contribute well to children's good start in school.
- Good leadership aims to improve outcomes for every child and ensure parents are fully involved in their children's learning. The regular 'Stay and Play' sessions are very well attended and parents say they are a good opportunity to see what their children do in school so they can help at home.

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	106109
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	461912

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Andrew Lythall
Headteacher	Jill Gray
Date of previous school inspection	9 January 2012
Telephone number	0161 4804742
Fax number	0161 4770662
Email address	headteacher@st-thomas.stockport.sch.uk

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



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.ofsted.gov.uk

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, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

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

© Crown copyright 2014

