

St Thomas CofE Primary School

St Thomas Street, Werneth, Oldham, Lancashire OL8 1SE

Inspection dates

6 June and 27–28 June 2017

| Overall effectiveness | Requires improvement |
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| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Requires improvement |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Requires improvement |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Outstanding |
| Outcomes for pupils | Requires improvement |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, the school's effectiveness in producing good academic outcomes for pupils has faltered.
- Over the last three years, outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics have been variable and often significantly below the national average.
- Outcomes and progress dipped further in 2016. The progress that pupils made in reading was significantly below the national average. The progress that pupils made in mathematics was also below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check has been well below the national average for the last three years.
- Over time, disadvantaged pupils do not perform as well as others nationally, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Subjects in the wider curriculum such as science, history and geography are not taught in sufficient depth. Some middle leaders of these subjects are very new to their roles.
- The quality of teaching across the school is inconsistent. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are not always high enough. Performance management targets set by senior leaders relating to pupils' progress are not consistently aspirational.
- Although knowledgeable about many aspects of the school, governors do not hold senior leaders rigorously to account.
- Leaders' feedback given to teachers after observations on teaching and learning does not focus enough on the progress that different groups of pupils are making.

The school has the following strengths

- Outcomes across the school are showing signs of improvement, particularly at key stage 1 and for disadvantaged pupils.
- Families in difficult circumstances receive excellent levels of care, guidance and support.
- Safeguarding is given high priority within the school. Overall, standards of behaviour are impeccable.
- Children get off to a flying start to their education in the early years.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and thereby outcomes for all groups of pupils by:
 - ensuring that teachers have the highest expectations of all pupils
 - ensuring that a greater number of pupils achieve the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics across both key stages and that this is sustained over time
 - ensuring that the proportion of pupils meeting the required standard in the phonics screening check continues to rise and, over time, becomes more in line with the national average
 - ensuring that all subjects in the wider curriculum are delivered in sufficient depth
 - continuing to diminish the differences between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - developing the role of middle leaders of the wider curriculum so that they regularly monitor the depth of each subject being delivered and the progress that pupils are making as they move through the school
 - ensuring that targets set for teachers with regard to pupils' progress are measurable and aspirational
 - ensuring that feedback given to teachers after observations of teaching and learning focus in more detail on the progress different groups of pupils are making
 - ensuring that the level of challenge offered by the governors is more rigorous.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because outcomes for pupils have declined since the last inspection and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is uneven. As a result, the school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on the academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are well aware of the challenges that the school faces. Both show a strong and steely determination to improve academic outcomes for pupils. They lead the school with honesty and integrity.
- Senior leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching and there is a range of training opportunities available to help staff develop their practice. However, the feedback given to teachers after lesson observations does not focus enough on the progress that different groups of pupils are making. In addition, the targets set for teachers as part of their performance management, relating to pupils' progress, are not measurable or as aspirational as they could be. As a result, teachers' expectations are not as high as they could be.
- The curriculum broadly meets the needs of pupils. It provides them with a varied range of enrichment opportunities which broaden their experiences and develop their vocabulary in a range of subjects. Some of the subject leaders of the wider curriculum are new to their roles, which they have taken to with energy and enthusiasm. However, systems to monitor subjects in the wider curriculum are at an early stage of development. As a result, some subjects are not delivered in sufficient depth or monitored closely enough with regard to the progress that pupils are making as they move through the school. British values are promoted well within the school, ensuring that pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Plans for improvement are clearly set out in the school development plan. Staff are aware of these priorities. They are proud to work at the school and there is a real sense of 'team spirit'.
- Senior leaders now ensure that the progress that pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics is more closely monitored and tracked. This is having a positive impact on improving outcomes in these subjects for pupils, particularly at key stage 1.
- Leaders of literacy and mathematics have a firm grasp on their subjects. Recent initiatives to improve outcomes, particularly in reading and mathematics, are beginning to bear fruit. Staff have accessed additional training to enhance their knowledge and skills, and an experienced lead teacher for mathematics has been appointed to provide additional support. In addition to implementing a new phonics scheme, positive changes have been made to the way in which guided reading sessions are delivered.
- The special educational needs funding is being spent well to ensure that the varied and diverse needs of this group of pupils are met. The funding is mainly used to provide additional staffing. This ensures that small group work and interventions are of good quality to have a positive impact on pupils' progress and achievement.
- The sport premium funding is used to good effect to help pupils be active and develop

a healthier lifestyle. Specialist coaches work with teachers to enhance their skills in delivering high-quality physical education (PE) lessons. Increased access to competitions and a wider range of sporting opportunities are achieved through the effective deployment of this funding.

- As a result of the recent review, much more careful thought and consideration is now given to how the pupil premium funding is spent. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the barriers to learning that this group of pupils face. This money is now being put to better use to support pupils emotionally, socially and academically.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and all that it does for their children. They find the staff 'open, friendly and approachable'. They appreciate the 'family atmosphere' that the school provides. Parents told inspectors that behaviour in the school is 'excellent'. They are particularly complimentary about the support given to them in times of crisis, and of the harmonious way that children from different cultures interact with each other.
- The website contains a wealth of information for parents. It is bright and easy to navigate. It is also available in a variety of languages, ensuring accessibility for all. However, at the start of the inspection a significant number of omissions with regard to the information that must be published were identified by inspectors. The school took swift action to address these issues and the website is now compliant.

Governance of the school

- Although knowledgeable about many aspects of the school, the level of challenge offered to senior leaders is not as rigorous as it could be and governors acknowledge this.
- Governors commissioned a recent review of the pupil premium funding. As a result, they now monitor more closely the impact of the funding and the progress disadvantaged pupils make.
- Governors have an understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are aware of the issues relating to the weaker progress of pupils at key stage 2, particularly in reading.
- Governors receive regular reports from the headteacher relating to the quality of teaching and the progress that different groups of pupils are making. However, they have not been effective in challenging the decline in pupils' outcomes in recent years.
- Safeguarding duties are taken seriously.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff have a good awareness of the indicators of abuse and procedures to follow should they be concerned about a child's welfare.
- Staff have also had training on the 'Prevent' duty. As a result, they are fully aware of any possible indicators of radicalisation, extremism and female genital mutilation.
- Appropriate checks are made on new staff and the single central record is kept

meticulously up to date.

- The school works well with parents and other stakeholders to ensure that children are kept safe.
- The school site is secure and visitors' credentials are closely checked.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent across the school and within subjects.
- Over time, teaching does not enable pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. Activities set do not always challenge pupils to do the best that they can, especially for those who are the most able.
- Expectations of what pupils are capable of doing are not consistently high enough. On occasions, the presentation of work in pupils' books is not of a high standard and goes unchallenged by teachers.
- The curriculum beyond English and mathematics is not developed in sufficient depth in some subjects and senior leaders recognise this. Pupils do not access a rich and deep curriculum in subjects such as science, history and geography.
- As a result of recent initiatives and tighter assessment, the quality of teaching in reading, writing and mathematics is now showing signs of improvement across the school, particularly at key stage 1.
- Relationships at all levels are respectful, and routines are well established. No learning time is wasted and lessons usually get off to a brisk start.
- Pupils are beginning to develop a love of reading. Some read with fluency and expression. Pupils recognise the importance of reading and told inspectors that 'being able to read is important because it helps us find out information'. Comprehension skills are good. For example, when inspectors asked a Year 2 pupil what 'gruel' was, without hesitation the reply came back 'a watery, thin porridge'. Some pupils are able to talk about the books that they like to read. Appropriate use is made of their phonics knowledge to sound out unfamiliar words. Many make use of the school library and read with their parents regularly at home. However, at times, the books that pupils read are too easy and do not challenge pupils. In addition, better use could be made of the book areas in some classrooms to promote pupils' love of reading.
- Pupils are becoming keen mathematicians. They engage well during mathematics lessons and have many opportunities to count and calculate. However, on occasions, the activities provided are not pitched at the right level to drive learning forward at a pace. As a result, learning for some pupils slows. In addition, opportunities for pupils to develop their problem-solving skills are not as well developed as they could be.
- Writing skills are developing well. Pupils write for a variety of purposes and across subjects. However, at times, the overuse of worksheets with small boxes prevents pupils from writing at length and in greater depth.
- Teaching assistants are a valuable asset to the school. They are well deployed, especially when working with small groups of pupils, including those who have special

educational needs and/or disabilities.

- Homework is appropriate to the age and development of the pupil. It is organised to meet the needs of pupils with regard to their faith and customs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Exceptional levels of care, guidance and support are offered to new arrivals into the country as well as those facing challenging and difficult situations. Working very closely with health visitors, nurses, social workers and counsellors, no stone is left unturned to ensure that the needs of vulnerable families and children are fully met in a quick and timely manner.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and they are very keen to learn, but at times the tasks set by teachers do not stimulate this learning. Those who spoke to inspectors clearly value the importance of education. Pupils typically commented 'teachers really help us with our education' and 'I always try to do my best'. All pupils wear their school uniform with pride.
- Pupils enjoy taking part in decision-making within the school. For example, as elected members of the school council, they take responsibility for organising events to raise money for charitable purposes.
- Older pupils also learn the importance of working collaboratively and as part of a team. By taking part in 'business enterprise schemes', pupils are given the opportunities to work closely together, listen to each other's opinions and make joint decisions.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying and the distress that it can cause. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare, but if it did happen adults in the school would soon sort it out.
- Pupils are very aware of online safety. They know the importance of not sharing passwords with anyone and of reporting anything suspicious immediately to an adult. The school also works very well with parents to develop their awareness of e-safety.
- Visitors to the school are made to feel very welcome and cannot fail to be impressed by the warm, friendly and caring ethos of the school. This enables pupils to grow in confidence, become independent learners and make wise decisions about their own well-being and safety.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Friendly children with happy, smiley faces are a credit to the school community and their families.
- Pupils are very well behaved both in the classroom and playground and as they move around the school. Instances of low-level disruption in class are very rare. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the school's behaviour management policy and of the

standards of behaviour that are expected of them.

- Pupils are very well mannered and are kind and considerate towards each other. Pupils from different faiths get along with each other exceptionally well.
- The school takes all necessary steps to ensure that pupils attend school on a regular basis. Any unexplained absences are diligently followed up. Such effective practice is having a positive impact on attendance rates. As parents explained to inspectors 'I only keep my child off for one day at Eid now, instead of two'.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because progress across the school, particularly in reading and mathematics, is too variable. Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics have been below or significantly below the national average in recent years.
- As a result of more rigorous testing, outcomes dipped in 2016. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 1 was below the national average, most notably in reading.
- The picture at key stage 2 is similar. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics was below the national average. Progress in reading was the weakest of the three 'core' subjects. Progress in writing was stronger, but it was below the national average in mathematics.
- From observing lessons, looking at work in pupils' books and listening to them read, it is evident that the tide is beginning to turn. There are some pockets of good practice, particularly at key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the work that teachers set does not consistently encourage pupils to think hard and to do as well as they are capable of, particularly the most able. Almost a third of the 21 pupils who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire were of the opinion that their teachers do not always give them work that challenges them.
- Outcomes in phonics are showing some signs of improvement. The school has introduced a more structured approach to the teaching of phonics, which has been embraced by staff. However, although improving, the proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the phonics screening check is still some way short of the current national average.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are also improving as a result of the actions taken following the recent review of the pupil premium funding. In 2016, the progress that pupils made in reading and mathematics was poor. However, the school's own assessment information shows that the difference with their peers across year groups and with others nationally is beginning to diminish. Furthermore, the number of disadvantaged pupils who met the required standard in the phonics screening check improved in 2017. However, senior leaders quite rightly recognise that more work needs to be done to further improve outcomes for this group of pupils.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making the progress that is expected of them, taking into consideration their very diverse needs. This is due to timely interventions, good-quality support and strong partnership working with

parents and outside agencies.

- The school recognises that outcomes in some subjects in the wider curriculum, such as science, history and geography, are not as good as they could be. This is because many of these subjects are not taught in sufficient depth and pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their subject knowledge.

Early years provision

Good

- Children come into the early years with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age. As a result of good teaching, children make good progress from their different starting points. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development is increasing each year, as is the proportion of children who exceed expectations typical for their age. As a result, a greater number of children are ready for their transition into Year 1.
- Children who do not achieve a good level of development access the early years curriculum in Year 1 to ensure that their needs are met.
- The leadership of the early years is good. The early years leader has a good awareness of the strength of the provision and of the priorities for further development.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and engaging. They share warm relationships with the children and are attentive to their needs. Children are obviously very trusting of adults and feel safe.
- Questioning is effective. This was exemplified well during a mathematics lesson to develop children's awareness of the mathematical concept of tallying.
- Children play happily alongside each other, sharing and taking turns as they learn and play. Standards of behaviour are good and progress is well monitored.
- The learning environment is bright and stimulating. Independent play areas are well set out and reflect the seven areas of learning. Children across early years have a large amount of space to move around freely and play in comfort. Resources are of good quality and accessible to the children, allowing them to make independent choices about their play.
- Positive relationships have been established with parents, helping to promote security and consistency in children's lives. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress and are encouraged to contribute to their learning records, which they can access online. Advice and support are also given to parents to support them in developing their children's learning at home.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no breaches to the welfare requirements.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 105698 |
| Local authority | Oldham |
| Inspection number | 10032384 |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 513 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Rev N Andrewes |
| Headteacher | Angela Knowles |
| Telephone number | 0161 633 0539 |
| Website | www.stthomaswernethprimary.co.uk |
| Email address | office@stthomaswerneth.oldham.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 17 April 2013 |

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a larger than average-size primary school.
- Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The large majority of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The proportion who have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The school currently meets the government's floor standards. These are the minimum

standards and the rate of progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics of pupils in key stage 2. The school did not meet the government's floor standards in 2014 and 2015. The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on the academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in most classes and across a variety of subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in a separate meeting and informally at breaktimes. They also listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in their books in a broad range of subjects.
- A wide range of documentation was considered, including the school's self-evaluation form, the single central record for safeguarding and information relating to the quality of teaching.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, other staff, members of the governing body and with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors held a separate meeting with parents.
- Account was taken of the school's own questionnaire to parents. Consideration was also given to the 19 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 21 responses to Ofsted's online pupils' questionnaire.

Inspection team

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Sheila Iwaskow, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Eithne Proffitt | Ofsted Inspector |
| Doreen Davenport | Ofsted Inspector |
| John Nixon, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |

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