

# Thomasson Memorial School

Devonshire Road, Bolton, Lancashire BL1 4PJ

## Inspection dates

6–7 March 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The newly appointed headteacher, with the strong support of senior leaders, has set a clear direction for the school. There is a very positive 'can do' approach in all aspects of the school's work, particularly in lessons. The current review of staffing is seeking to establish a restructured leadership and management team to see the school move towards even greater achievements.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is never less than good. Teachers are keen to share best practices and to benefit from any feedback they receive from senior leaders.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress from low starting points, particularly in language and communication. When pupils leave at the end of their secondary education, all move on to further education at local colleges. The most able pupils achieve up to five GCSEs including mathematics and English.
- The curriculum is broad and enriching. Pupils who have hearing impairment (HI) are encouraged at an early stage to develop their language and communication skills alongside those in literacy and numeracy.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions. They have wonderful attitudes to learning. They are polite and courteous at all times. They take on responsibilities willingly, for example if asked to take charge of recycling paper or when taking on the role of house team captain.
- The provision for early years is good. Children settle quickly to become confident and independent. Staff work well as a team and ensure that they get to know the children, including through effective systems for assessment and checking progress. Children are happy and safe in this provision. Children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, including HI, are included well.
- Governors have overseen a number of changes with success. They are ambitious for the school and are at the early stages of developing partnership working with a local secondary school so that provision and outcomes for secondary-age pupils can be improved. Work is also underway to develop 'The Lighthouse' (new key stage 3 provision for pupils who have more complex needs). In addition, they see the benefits in sharing best practices with a local primary school.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the provision and outcomes for secondary-age pupils by:
  - working in partnership with Sharples Academy to identify the staffing and resource needs of pupils who have HI
  - working in partnership with Sharples Academy to identify staff training required to meet the needs of secondary-age pupils who have HI
  - developing further the secondary provision for pupils who have more complex needs based at the primary site
  - agreeing and implementing an action plan to achieve the above.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
  - completing a review of staffing arrangements
  - agreeing a new leadership and management structure to meet the needs of the school's changed provision
  - extending partnership working into the local primary school so that best practices can be shared.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Governors and senior leaders have successfully managed a number of changes over the past two years to ensure that this is a good school. It has good capacity to improve further.
- Helpfully, governors have started a review of staffing to take account of recent changes. This should lead to a clearer, accountable leadership structure that will extend across the increased provision.
- The new headteacher has worked relentlessly with her senior team to maintain a focus upon high-quality teaching, learning and assessment. Good monitoring and checking systems are in place to encourage teachers and support staff to reflect on their work. There is a strong willingness among staff to share best practices and learn from each other. Leaders are working towards extending such practices in partnership with the local primary mainstream school.
- There is an extremely positive atmosphere at the school because staff enjoy their work and apply agreed policies and procedures with great consistency. For example, the use of oral communication along with signing enables pupils to engage confidently in their lessons. They feel important and valued and therefore rise to any challenges provided in the classroom.
- Staff appraisal is linked well to classroom performance. Teachers feel a sense of ownership when agreeing their annual objectives. Governors provide good levels of support and challenge when considering teacher applications to advance up the pay scale.
- Staff ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school's work. Pupils say they enjoy the chance to take responsibility for jobs around school, for example when the school council makes decisions to purchase additional resources for one of the classes. They talk knowledgeably about British values and how the concepts of tolerance and respect can be reflected in their actions.
- The curriculum is wide-ranging and enriching. The agreed whole-school topic approach provides good opportunities for pupils to use and apply their skills in literacy and numeracy in different contexts. These include subjects such as music, physical education (PE), swimming, art and design technology.
- Pupils spoken to say that they thoroughly enjoy the chance to attend a residential trip to the Anderton Centre, Rivington, where they tackle outdoor activities. They also attend musical events at the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester.
- Governors oversee the effective use of pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up and PE and sport premium funding. As a result, disadvantaged pupils and targeted Year 7 pupils have improved in their reading, writing and mathematical skills. Sport and PE provision has improved due to the involvement of specialist coaches working with school staff. Pupils have enjoyed additional swimming time over and above their usual quota.
- SEN funding is used well by governors. The school improvement plan contains a number of SEN-related actions which have been agreed and costed within budget

constraints. For example, governors allocate funding towards the purchase of audiological resources and equipment.

- The school has positive partnerships with two local schools. Leaders are keen to further enhance the provision and outcomes for pupils located at Sharples Academy. Pupils spoken to say that, while they enjoy their time at the school, they would benefit from an increase in room space, resources and levels of staff support.
- Parents and carers spoken to or who responded to Ofsted's parent questionnaire by text were mostly very positive about the school's work, praising the high-quality communication and support provided by caring staff.
- The local authority provides valued external validation of the school's work, especially when observing and reporting on classroom practices.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance is good.
- Governors are well informed about the school's work and are regular visitors to the school. They bring considerable expertise to their role: governing body membership includes retired educational practitioners as well as an experienced audiologist.
- Governors have an effective system of setting up working-party groups to address specific aspects of the school's work, for example when looking at the school's curriculum and its impact.
- Governors operate three committees, which they agree helps them to apportion roles and responsibilities efficiently. These committees report back to the full governing body. As a result, all governors are well informed about progress in school improvement.
- Governors provide good levels of challenge and support. For example, they question leaders about the possible impact of becoming an academy in regard to SEN funding levels, and they debate the content of school policies before signing them off.
- Governors attend local authority training courses and conferences so that they are up to date with current initiatives.
- Governors are fully involved in the strategic planning for the future development of the school's provision for pupils who have more complex needs. They have identified the need for additional staffing and resources for 'The Lighthouse' class to enable provision to extend into key stage 4.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated lead for safeguarding ensures that she is up to date with safeguarding initiatives such as the 'Prevent' duty, issues around female genital mutilation and keeping pupils safe online.
- The headteacher checks and signs the single central record on a termly basis and reports any issues to governors.

- Safer recruitment training has been completed by named governors. An inspector made a random check to confirm that recent applications had been suitably vetted.
- The designated safeguarding lead ensures that all staff, including caretaking and cleaning staff, benefit from up-to-date training. As a result, there is heightened awareness among staff about any safeguarding issues, for example if a pupil's behaviour changes. Staff raise any concerns promptly at staff briefing time.
- Exemplary records are maintained regarding any safeguarding concerns, alongside follow-up actions. As a result, the school is able to respond quickly to any further concerns or developments in a given case.
- Inspectors found good safeguarding procedures and risk assessments in the early years classes.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Teachers in all classes work effectively with support staff to create welcoming classrooms for all pupils. The use of a consistent communication and signing system encourages pupils to become confident and independent learners.
- All staff adhere to agreed policies for teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, they make effective use of assessment information from pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans to develop individual targets that inform their lesson planning. Pupils are fully included in this process. They know what they have learned and understood. This provides a firm basis for their next steps for learning in each lesson.
- Teachers provide activities which are pitched towards meeting individual needs and ability levels. As a result, pupils are challenged suitably in their learning. Staff encourage pupils to attempt new tasks, without intervening too early. Inspectors observed that this approach leads to greater independence, perseverance and resilience.
- Teachers celebrate pupils' work through classroom and corridor displays as well as through their assessed individual target-books. In this way, learning is a high-profile activity. Pupils spoken to state that they enjoy receiving praise and rewards during weekly school assemblies, where they aim to become 'pupil of the week'.
- Teachers are adept at ensuring that the key skills relating to literacy and numeracy are promoted well across different lessons. For instance, a display relating to a food technology topic showed how pupils were encouraged to write reviews about a school café or to record their findings when conducting a survey about chocolate.
- Teachers deploy support assistants and resources to good effect. For example, the use of a 'visual dictionary' enables pupils to access new vocabulary and aspects of grammar. Support assistants work skilfully to provide varied levels of support depending upon the needs of a pupil at a given time and the perceived level of challenge.
- Teachers of pupils based at the secondary site have good subject knowledge as well as experience in teaching pupils who have HI. They combine these skills to great effect so that the most able pupils engage well, for example when learning about the poetry of Seamus Heaney or when developing skills for independent writing.

- Pupils are included in secondary mainstream lessons through the effective deployment of support staff. They provide emotional as well as communication and signing support so that pupils can access learning. Pupils spoken to stated that they feel they would benefit from even more one-to-one or small-group teaching and support in mainstream lessons.
- Teaching and support in 'The Lighthouse' class are strengths. Staff are sensitive to the more complex needs of some of these pupils. They pitch resources and support appropriately to ensure that they get the best out of the pupils in terms of their engagement and learning.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

## **Outstanding**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils demonstrate exceptional resilience and independence from very early on. This is because they feel secure and happy in an environment where they thrive and enjoy learning. As a result, attitudes and behaviour in lessons are consistently good or better.
- Staff teams combine well to establish wonderful relationships with their pupils. They encourage social interaction in and out of the classroom. Pupils have learned how to have fun and learn at the same time. They are emotionally secure and trust the adults who care for them. This helps to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is never less than good.
- Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and to partake in a range of physical exercise, including swimming. They also participate with lots of enthusiasm in musical activities, such as rock drumming or the choir, which contribute well to their emotional well-being.
- Pupils spoken to state that there is little or no bullying. Older pupils take on the mantle of caring for and encouraging younger, less-confident pupils, for example if they are having trouble getting on with others at breaktime. Older pupils state that they feel safe and secure at the secondary school site and free from harassment.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour in all contexts is exemplary. This applies to both the primary and the secondary sites. They are invariably courteous and respectful, especially to adults and visitors to the school. They are appropriately friendly and curious. They exhibit excellent social skills.
- Each of the school environments is calm and welcoming. There have been no fixed-term exclusions over the past three years or any incidents of racist or homophobic behaviour. Inspectors observed no misbehaviour of any kind during the two days of inspection.
- Overall attendance compares very favourably with other special schools nationally.

Nonetheless, leaders maintain a close watch on attendance levels. Most absences are due to health-related factors or medical appointments in school time.

- Pupils' outstanding behaviour is a major contributory factor towards consistently good-quality teaching, learning and assessment.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Good

- All pupils who leave at the end of Year 11 move on to a local college. They attain entry level 2 or 3 qualifications in up to seven subjects, including English, mathematics, science and the Signature British Sign Language qualification. The most able pupils gain up to five GCSEs. Some go on to study A level or BTEC National Diploma courses when they go to college.
- Teachers ensure that, on entry to the school, pupils' reading, writing, spelling and mathematical abilities and needs are assessed. They use this information skilfully to set challenging targets and then check termly on pupils' progress towards these. Because teaching focuses upon individual needs and related targets, the great majority of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils are encouraged to use and apply their skills in reading, writing and mathematics across different subjects. For example, key stage 2 pupils searched for words in the past tense, such as 'used' and 'mixed', when learning about Christopher Columbus and the Aztecs during a topic on chocolate. They then started to learn about how to develop their chronological writing skills.
- Teachers follow the school's agreed policy for marking, for example when showing that pupils have moved from being 'supported by staff' to becoming 'independent'. Pupils' writing in the key stage 2 class showed that, from the starting point of simple labelling exercises and single sentences, pupils had improved and extended their independent writing in terms of accuracy, legibility, volume and content.
- Pupils in 'The Lighthouse' class showed good recall and understanding of what they had learned in a previous lesson about simple fractions. The most able pupils worked independently to construct and then label fractions in their workbooks. They worked collaboratively with less-able pupils to help in reinforcing their knowledge and understanding when sharing out pretend pizza.
- Reading is promoted well. Pupils are keen to read to an adult. They demonstrate a good grasp of phonics when reading or writing new words.
- Books in mathematics and other subjects provided evidence of progress over time. Teachers follow the school's agreed policy for marking, for example when showing that pupils had moved from being 'supported by staff' to becoming 'independent'. Pupils' writing in the key stage 2 class showed that from the starting point of simple labelling exercises and single sentences, pupils had improved and extended their independent writing in terms of accuracy, legibility, volume and content.
- Pupils located at the secondary site are provided with opportunities to attend mainstream lessons. For example, a group of Year 9 pupils showed good engagement and understanding in a lesson about household insulation. They benefited from the signing support provided by a support assistant. In other lessons, they benefited from

small-group work when studying the poetry of Seamus Heaney. They demonstrated a good understanding of metaphors and similes when communicating with staff about the meaning of some of the verses read.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children enter the school's early years provision with skills and understanding that are much less well developed than is typical for their age. Most make good progress in each development area by the time they enter the Year 1 class. They develop well socially and become independent and confident in their surroundings.
- The headteacher provides good leadership and deploys 'key staff' to ensure that all parents have a named person to contact if there are any concerns. Parents are kept up to date because they can access what their children are learning via their computers at home.
- The classrooms are welcoming and nurturing. Staff work well as a team to ensure that children receive the teaching, support and care that are needed. They ensure that children who have HI and their hearing peers socialise and interact well. For instance, children play on the climbing equipment together and respond well to skilled staff when developing their language and communication skills.
- Staff make good references to the current topic, in this case 'dinosaurs', when developing children's language and communication skills. In the Reception class, children are enthusiastic when looking at books. They begin to use early phonic skills when reading.
- The observation, assessment and recording of children's strengths and weaknesses in each development area inform the planned activities for each lesson. As a result, children's progress is well monitored.
- Children are encouraged to make their wishes known and to join in group activities, for example when stirring a mixture to make a cake. The most able children in the Nursery class are able to speak in full sentences, for example when talking about how police officers keep us safe.
- The youngest children develop their social, communication and fine motor skills when sitting together in small groups at 'snack time'. Staff take every opportunity to focus on the specific developmental needs of children so that they become more independent and less reliant upon adult support and help.
- The early years classrooms and outdoor areas are organised well to provide a wide range of activities and experiences. For example, the most able children are able to select a writing area to practise their fine motor skills and work towards choosing their most dominant writing hand. Other children are able to play interactive games on a computer or to help in a group baking activity.



## School details

Unique reference number	105276
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10049013

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Elphick
Headteacher	Lisa Lane
Telephone number	01204 333118
Website	<a href="http://www.thomasson.bolton.sch.uk">www.thomasson.bolton.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:lanel@thomasson.bolton.sch.uk">lanel@thomasson.bolton.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is central to the service for the sensory impaired within the local authority. In addition to pupils from Bolton, the school currently provides for pupils from Blackburn with Darwen, Bury, Lancashire, Manchester, Rochdale, Salford, Trafford, Warrington, Wigan and Blackpool.
- The school has undergone a number of changes over the past two years. The Nursery classes are now governor-led, which has resulted in staffing and funding changes. The hearing children in the Nursery are from the Bolton area. The school has taken 22 secondary-age pupils onto its roll, these pupils being based at the Sharples Academy. The primary site has added a small key stage 3 class that meets the needs of pupils who have HI and additional complex learning and behaviour difficulties.
- The school's secondary pupils do not attend any alternative provision.
- The headteacher is newly appointed, having been in an acting capacity since September 2017. A staffing review is currently underway, resulting from recent

changes in the school's designation to meeting the needs of pupils aged 11–16 years.

- The use of oral communication or Sign Supported English is integral to the school's teaching, learning and assessment approaches. Pupils have access to regular audiological assessments.
- Social links have been established with Devonshire Road County Primary School.
- Pupils are mainly of White British heritage, although the proportions from minority ethnic backgrounds and of those who speak English as an additional language are higher than the national average.
- The vast majority of pupils have EHC plans.
- The school has a higher than average proportion of disadvantaged pupils.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed lessons in all of the classes at the primary site and in a sample of lessons at the secondary site. Some of these observations were completed jointly with the headteacher or an assistant headteacher. Inspectors also looked at pupils' workbooks and spoke with pupils to assist in making judgements about their progress. They carried out a detailed analysis of the workbooks and folders of different groups of pupils throughout the two sites.
- Inspectors spoke formally and informally to pupils about their views of the school, provision for their safety and well-being, and the teaching and support they receive. Observations were made in different contexts of the school sites, including in the corridors, on the playground and at lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, five governors including the chair of governors, and two local authority representatives, one of whom provides external support to the school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan and review of its strengths and weaknesses. Other documentation seen related to subject improvement planning, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' progress, performance management of staff and checks made on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors took account of six free-text comments from parents as well as a recent school-based survey of parental views. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire to take into account. An inspector held three phone calls with parents at their request.
- There were no responses to the staff and pupil online questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Jon Ashley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mark Burgess

Ofsted Inspector

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

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](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

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

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2018