

Thornham St James CofE Primary School

Castleton Road, Thornham, Royton, Oldham, Lancashire OL2 6XT

Inspection dates

16–17 October 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has a strong commitment to the school and the local community. She is supported well by the deputy headteacher. Leaders and staff have high expectations and aspirations for pupils.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is reflective and honest. Leaders have accurately identified the school's strengths and priorities for improvement.
- Leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum. However, middle leaders do not routinely evaluate the subjects that they lead to ensure that teachers provide sufficient opportunities to develop pupils' subject-specific knowledge and skills.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 is above the national average in reading. However, some pupils do not apply their knowledge of vocabulary effectively in their writing. This hinders pupils' progress towards achieving the higher standard in their writing.
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 is in line with the national average. It is too soon to see if changes to teaching have improved the application of skills at a higher standard.
- Children in Reception settle quickly into well-established routines. They thrive in a calm and nurturing environment that contributes to their good progress. Children are prepared well for Year 1.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported well. They make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain because of the range of experiences that they have.
- Pupils are polite, confident and well mannered. Behaviour is good. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning contribute to the progress that they make. Pupils care about each other and play together harmoniously.
- Governors' knowledge and skills enable them to support and challenge leaders effectively.
- Most parents and carers comment positively about the school and the opportunities provided for their children, particularly in sport and music.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management further by ensuring that middle leaders check that pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop their subject-specific knowledge and skills.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning further by:
 - embedding the changes to the way mathematics is taught to ensure that pupils apply their knowledge and skills at a higher standard
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their vocabulary knowledge in greater depth, particularly in their writing in key stage 2.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher leads the school effectively. She is supported well by the deputy headteacher and the local authority. There have been significant changes in recent years. This is due to the retirement of several experienced members of staff. Successful appointments have ensured continuity in teaching, and high expectations have been maintained across the school. Staff and leaders have a shared drive and enthusiasm. They are committed to providing the very best education for pupils. Staff morale is high, and staff feel valued and well supported by leaders.
- Leaders have accurately identified the areas for improvement, particularly in mathematics. Changes to the way mathematics is taught have been implemented successfully. Training for staff has had a positive impact on improving teachers' subject knowledge. Leaders ensure that staff share their expertise and skills to develop good practice further. It is too soon to measure the impact on outcomes for pupils in mathematics at the end of key stage 2, particularly for those pupils working at a greater depth.
- Leaders' effective monitoring of pupils' learning ensures that they understand the reasons behind the dip in progress for pupils in writing, particularly at a greater depth. As a result, leaders have created a language-rich environment throughout the school, using high-quality texts as a stimulus. For example, in Year 1, pupils spoke enthusiastically about the book 'The Creakers' by Tom Fletcher, describing the plot and characters in great detail. Despite pupils being confident and competent readers, some pupils do not apply their vocabulary knowledge in their writing effectively. This hinders the progress that some pupils make, particularly in writing at a greater depth.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that is broad and balanced. The curriculum is enriched through trips and visitors to school. For example, in history, pupils visit the site of a local Roman staging post to research how Roman soldiers lived when they were in England. A pupil who spoke to the inspector said, 'It must have been a shock to come to Oldham after living in Italy where it's warm.' Middle leaders check to ensure that the curriculum content is covered. However, they do not ensure that pupils can develop their knowledge and skills systematically and in depth in their respective subjects.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The school's '5 Rs' – reasoning, reflective, resilient, resourceful, respectful – are woven through the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Leaders provide a range of opportunities to broaden and enrich pupils' experiences. For example, the school orchestra and choir have won local awards for contributions to music and for their performances in local competitions.
- The special educational needs coordinator shares her expertise effectively. This ensures that staff have the skills to quickly identify pupils who are struggling with their work. Leaders ensure that pupils receive the help that they need to make good progress and to catch up by working in small groups or individually within the classroom. Leaders evaluate the impact of the help that pupils receive and make changes when necessary.
- The additional funding for physical education and sport is used effectively. Coaches are

employed to develop teachers' skills in a variety of sports. Pupils benefit from the high-quality training that they receive to hone their own skills, for example as cross-country runners and footballers. The trophies displayed in the school foyer are a testament to pupils' success in local competitions. For example, the school are recent cross-country champions and winners of the local football league.

- The small proportion of disadvantaged pupils are supported well by staff. As a result, they make good progress. Leaders identify pupils' barriers to learning, particularly their social and emotional needs. Leaders work closely with other agencies and charities. This ensures that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the help and guidance that they need.

Governance of the school

- Governors bring to their roles a broad range of skills and knowledge. This means that they can challenge leaders and hold them to account effectively. Members of the governing body receive training to ensure that they remain up to date with new initiatives. Governors are clear about what the school needs to do to improve further.
- Members of the governing body check that the information that they receive from leaders is accurate. Governors speak with staff and pupils to check the impact of the actions leaders have taken. They are ambitious for the school and they have high expectations. Governors are proud to be part of the school community.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Appropriate checks are in place to ensure that adults in the school are suitable to work with children. Staff know how to identify any potential signs of abuse and neglect. They know the procedures to follow if they have any concerns about pupils. Regular updates ensure that staff remain vigilant about any concerns for vulnerable pupils.
- All records are informative. They are maintained securely. Leaders work with external agencies effectively to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils and their families receive appropriate help and guidance.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is effective, and teachers create a calm and focused atmosphere within school. This enables pupils to concentrate on their learning, particularly in open spaces, and contributes well to pupils' good progress.
- The positive relationships fostered by staff effectively enhance pupils' good attitudes to learning. Pupils enjoy school and rise to the high expectations set by staff. Pupils take pride in their work and in their achievements.
- Teachers use assessment information effectively to identify the next steps in pupils' learning. Teachers quickly identify when pupils are struggling and ensure that pupils get the help that they need to catch up quickly.
- Activities accurately meet the needs of the majority of pupils. However, in some

classes, teachers do not always provide opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to solve problems in greater depth.

- Teachers carefully plan activities that are beginning to expand the vocabulary pupils use in their written work. Pupils do not routinely apply this vocabulary in their written work, particularly the most able pupils in key stage 2. In Year 5, pupils have been investigating some of the words that have been removed from the Oxford English Dictionary. As a result of the exposure to a wider range of vocabulary, pupils are beginning to be more creative and reflective in their writing. An example of a poem that a pupil has written about a buttercup describes it as 'unforgettable once seen, a picture forever in your mind'.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported well by staff because of the high-quality training that staff receive. As a result, pupils make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Staff use questions skilfully to encourage pupils to refine their ideas and expand their explanations. Pupils respond positively to these discussions, particularly in their compositions, and know how to improve the quality of their work.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Phonics is taught systematically and consistently from Reception. Pupils apply their phonetic knowledge effectively in their reading. They are becoming confident, competent readers.
- Carefully selected texts are used effectively by teachers to enrich pupils' understanding of other curriculum subjects. Teachers provide opportunities to expand pupils' understanding further through practical first-hand experiences, for example trips to the museum of science and industry. However, teachers do not routinely provide pupils with opportunities to develop subject-specific knowledge and skills in any depth.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The positive relationships fostered between staff and pupils are strong. Staff know the pupils well. Pupils feel safe in school because they know adults care about them and will listen to them. Younger children know that the older pupils will look after them.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including online. Pupils understand the importance of keeping fit. They enjoy the healthy snacks provided at playtimes.
- Pupils' care and respect for each other are promoted well through carefully thought-through activities. For example, in assemblies, pupils are encouraged to reflect on the things that they can do to help someone to feel happy. Pupils articulated their ideas well to inspectors. Pupils understand how their actions have an impact on others and they behave accordingly.
- Older pupils take their responsibilities seriously as members of committees, as lunchtime monitors and as 'playground pals'. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said: 'It's like applying for a job. If you are successful, you have training so that you know what to do and do the job well.'

- Pupils enjoy the challenges that they are given. A pupil who spoke to the inspector said: 'I'm ready to take it on and if I get it right, I feel really proud, but if I don't, then I try again.' Pupils are developing a resilience that will prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take. They are confident that, if bullying did happen, it would be dealt with quickly. Pupils play together well. They are courteous and considerate to each other and to adults.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite, confident and well mannered. Their conduct around school contributes well to the productive learning environment embedded within the school.
- Pupils work cooperatively together. They take pride in their work. They support and encourage each other. Their positive attitudes to learning contribute successfully to the good progress that they make.
- Pupils' attendance is consistently above the national average. Staff follow up swiftly when pupils are absent, particularly the most vulnerable pupils. Very few pupils are persistently absent from school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018, a small proportion of pupils joined midway through upper key stage 2. Leaders ensured that this group of pupils had the social and emotional help that they needed to aid their transition into school. Although leaders identified the gaps in learning for this group, there was not enough time to ensure that they caught up with their peers. This had a negative impact on the outcomes in 2018. Pupils' attainment in mathematics dipped to be in line with the national average. Pupils did not make the progress that they should towards the higher standards in relation to national figures.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling has remained above the national average figures for the past three years. However, there has been a dip in the progress that pupils make in their writing, particularly at the higher standard.
- The school's own assessment information for current pupils shows that the majority have the knowledge and skills appropriate for their age in English and mathematics, including the small proportion of disadvantaged pupils. This is supported by the work that inspectors saw.
- Work in pupils' mathematics books is well presented and shows that they take pride in their work. Older pupils are beginning to articulate the processes and skills that they use to solve problems in mathematics. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of basic mathematical skills are secure. Pupils are making good progress. However, there are variations in the opportunities that pupils have to apply their knowledge and skills at a greater depth, particularly in mathematics.
- Pupils' good comprehension and inference skills and vocabulary knowledge have a positive impact on the good progress that they make in reading. Pupils enjoy reading.

They are confident, competent readers. Pupils are able to articulate effectively what they are reading. However, some pupils do not apply their vocabulary knowledge effectively in their written work, particularly the most able.

- Pupils effectively apply their English and mathematical knowledge and skills in science. Work in pupils' books highlights the good progress that they make in science. Pupils' attainment in science remains above the national average at the end of key stage 2.
- Leaders do not assess the impact of teaching on pupils' learning in other curriculum subjects to evaluate pupils' development of subject-specific knowledge, for example as historians and geographers.
- The proportion of pupils who have met the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 remains in line with the national figure. Pupils who are struggling are given the help that they need to catch up quickly in Year 2. Pupils apply their phonetic knowledge effectively in their reading and writing. As a result, attainment for the majority of pupils in key stage 1 is above the national average in reading and writing, including at a greater depth.
- Assessment information indicates that the small proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making good progress from their starting points because of the help that they receive.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders have a good understanding of how young children learn. Most children enter school with skills and knowledge typical for their age, although the proportion below this level is increasing.
- The majority of children attend a number of local nursery providers before starting school. Leaders work closely with the largest private provider throughout the year with a well-thought-through programme of visits and activities. Staff foster positive relationships with parents in the first few weeks of the autumn term. Staff explain to parents what their children will be learning at school and how parents can help them at home, for example with reading and phonics.
- Children settle quickly into well-established routines. Parents who spoke to inspectors commented positively about how happy their children are coming to school every day.
- Teaching is effective and activities support children's learning well. Staff develop pupils' vocabulary effectively. For example, staff encouraged children to describe the feel and texture of the resources that they were using to make models of hedgehogs and owls, including words such as 'spiky', 'sharp', 'soft' and 'fluffy'. Teachers sensitively correct any mispronunciation.
- Children are happy and engaged in their learning. Behaviour is good and children play well together and help each other in a calm and nurturing environment which contributes effectively to children's positive attitudes to learning.
- The outdoor environment is shaped well to support purposeful learning effectively. Staff promote high levels of cooperation and communication. For example, a group of children were working together enthusiastically with towers, drainpipes and balls. Staff used questions skilfully to encourage children to think carefully about what they were

doing, challenging them to develop their ideas, for example 'I wonder how you could make the balls roll further.' Children listened to each other's ideas, offered encouragement and congratulated each other when the outcome was successful.

- Leaders have established successful assessment procedures. Staff gather information from a range of activities to accurately identify the next steps in children's learning. They work with colleagues to check that their judgements are correct. Teachers identify children who are struggling. They work with them one-to-one or in small groups to give them the help that they need to catch up quickly.
- Teachers' high expectations have ensured that the proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of Reception has increased consistently over the last three years and remains above the national average. Children are prepared well for Year 1.
- Children are safe and risk assessments are carried out daily, especially in the outdoor activity areas. Staff have all received the appropriate training and all statutory requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	105692
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10052867

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kristy Nuttall
Headteacher	Margaret Johnson
Telephone number	01616 331 578
Website	www.stjamesthornham.oldham.sch.uk
Email address	mjohnson@stjamesthornham.oldham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	March 2007

Information about this school

- The school is situated in a semi-rural area of Royton between the towns of Oldham and Rochdale.
- Children join the school with average levels of attainment and the range of ability has widened over the years.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who are supported by an education, health and care plan is broadly in line with the national average.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms to observe teaching and pupils' learning and behaviour. The headteacher and deputy headteacher joined inspectors on some of these classroom visits.
- Inspectors observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at playtimes. Inspectors met formally with a group of pupils and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and members of staff. They also met with three members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding. They took account of school information about pupils' outcomes and scrutinised pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day. They took account of the 75 responses to Parent View, including free-text comments.

Inspection team

Amanda Stringer, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sandie La Porta	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Metcalfe	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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