

Inspection of St Thomas' Church of England Primary School Stockport

Marriott Street, Stockport, Cheshire SK1 3PJ

Inspection dates: 17–18 September 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

St Thomas' Church of England Primary School is a safe and welcoming place to learn. Staff know the pupils and their families well. Staff and pupils are proud to belong to this school. Parents and carers feel that school staff support them well, especially if their child needs extra help because they have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Staff, governors and pupils show their commitment to living out their values by the respect they show to each other. Leaders make sure that pupils make a positive contribution to their local community. Pupils take an active part in events at their parish church and in Stockport.

Leaders have made sure that pupils are interested in their learning. However, they have not made sure that pupils do as well as they can in all subjects. Pupils enjoy the activities that teachers plan for them, especially art. However, pupils need to do better in their reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils do not catch up quickly enough when they fall behind in reading.

Pupils behave well. Staff make sure that pupils are rewarded when they make good choices. Pupils are confident that adults will sort out any bullying if it happens. Leaders have made sure that pupils feel happy while they are at school.

Children settle quickly in the early years. They are well prepared for key stage 1.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders welcome all pupils into the school. This includes pupils who have experienced difficult times in their lives. Stockport local authority is grateful for the work that leaders do in supporting pupils and their families.

We saw that pupils behave well St Thomas' Church of England Primary School. This is because teachers have taught pupils how to keep calm. Pupils enjoy the reflection time that they have at the start of every teaching session. This helps pupils get ready to learn and supports their well-being.

Leaders make sure that pupils have the chance to take part in lots of activities that help develop personal qualities. For example, we listened to Year 6 pupils talk about their recent residential trip. They enjoyed working in teams to solve problems and try out adventurous activities.

Teachers plan a wide variety of trips and visits that give pupils a better understanding of the diverse world around them. Pupils take part in a range of activities, such as singing in the 'One Voice' event or visiting a local mosque. Pupils enjoy attending the music and sports clubs that are available. Many pupils go to the breakfast club. The calm and nurturing atmosphere prepares pupils well for the day ahead. Pupils were keen to talk about the many art projects they have taken part in.

They are proud that their work is displayed in public places around Stockport.

In the early years, we saw that children are well supported by adults, who make sure that they learn as they play. Children chat and work happily with each other. They are keen to explore the activities that teachers plan for them. Teachers make sure that these activities move children's learning forward. Leaders also make sure that children with SEND achieve well. However, leaders have not made sure that teachers continue to build on the good start that children have in the early years when they enter key stage 1.

In the early years, children are taught phonics well. However, pupils in key stage 1 do not develop their phonics knowledge well enough. By the end of key stages 1 and 2, pupils do not achieve as well in their subjects as other pupils do across the country, especially disadvantaged pupils. Some pupils are not well prepared to move on to secondary school.

Leaders make sure that teachers plan activities that interest pupils. However, they do not make sure that teachers help pupils to know more and remember more in all subjects. In science, for example, pupils forget easily what their teachers want them to remember. Leaders plan to improve other subject areas but this has not taken place yet.

The quality of leadership varies between different subjects. Some subject leaders do not know how to improve the quality of the curriculum in their subject areas. The lack of strong leadership means that pupils do not do as well in some subjects as they do in others. Teachers are not clear about the steps of learning for each subject. They also are not sure what part their teaching plays within these steps. Teachers do say, however, that leaders take their well-being seriously.

Leaders have not improved how often pupils come to school. Some pupils miss a lot of school when there is no good reason for this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders understand the school community well. They understand the challenges some families face. They know how to ensure that these families have the right support. Staff receive regular training. They understand how to spot signs that may show that a pupil is suffering from harm.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They frequently learn about keeping safe online. They know that they should not share personal information. Leaders have made sure that pupils learn about local risks, such as the harmful effects of drugs.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils do not make enough progress in their phonics knowledge in key stage 1. This means that they are not well prepared for key stage 2. Leaders need to ensure that teachers plan focused teaching activities that move pupils on more quickly from previous assessments. All staff need to share the same sense of urgency to make sure that pupils who are falling behind receive timely and effective intervention.
- Pupils in key stage 2 do not make enough progress in their reading. They are not accurate or fluent readers. This means that they cannot access the curriculum as well as they should. They also struggle completing comprehension tasks. Some pupils give up easily when answering questions. This is because they do not have strong enough knowledge of the reading skills they need. This is clear when pupils are trying to answer questions that rely on knowing how to infer, deduce or retrieve information from challenging text. Leaders must ensure that teachers plan the right kind of activities that will help pupils improve these skills.
- The quality of leadership varies between subject areas. Leaders need strong subject knowledge so that they can guide and support others. Leaders need to produce clear plans for each subject area. This needs to make clear what pupils need to know in each year group. This also needs to be organised so that it helps pupils build up their knowledge over time.
- Senior leaders need to demonstrate greater urgency in bringing about improvement in how well pupils do in key stage 1 and key stage 2. They accept explanations given to them too readily about why pupils have not done as well as other pupils across the country. They have not ensured that these pupils catch up. This is particularly true for the high number of disadvantaged pupils in the school. The gap is still too wide between pupils at St Thomas' and pupils in other schools.
- Attendance is very low for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. In this area, leaders have not had high enough expectations. They do not regularly track the attendance of groups of pupils. Leaders are not clear which groups of pupils need to be the focus of their work. Leaders need to engage the hardest to reach parents to improve pupils' attendance.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	106109
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10087926
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mr Roger Salt
Headteacher	Mrs Jill Gray
Website	www.st-thomas.stockport.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	June 2015

Information about this school

- This school is a Church of England primary school. The last section 48 inspection was carried out on 23 March 2017. The school was graded as satisfactory.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We spoke with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher (who is also the special educational needs coordinator), a group of governors (including the chair of governors and the vice chair) and a representative from the local authority. We also talked with the new headteacher who will be replacing the current headteacher when she retires later this year.
- We looked at a range of documentation for safeguarding, including: the school central record of staff and visitors; training records of staff; records of safeguarding; and samples of records of individual pupils.
- We carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, art and science. We talked to leaders of these subject areas. Deep dives are the methodology by which inspectors identify why a subject is as it is. They entail: discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, looking at examples of children's work, discussions with

teachers and discussions with pupils.

- We observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. We observed them in assembly and as they moved around the school.
- We also spoke to pupils about their experiences at school.
- We looked at the nine responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey to find out their views of the school. We spoke with parents as they dropped off their children at school. We also visited a meeting for parents about reading.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Steve Bentham

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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