

Inspection of St Thomas' CofE (A) Primary School

Poplar Drive, Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST7 4HT

Inspection dates: 3–4 December 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

What is it like to attend this school?

St Thomas' CofE Aided Primary School prides itself on developing the whole child. This is a distinctly Christian school. Staff promote the school's values and pupils' behaviour in and around school is very good.

Leaders have high expectations that pupils will become confident and independent learners. Also, that they will be well prepared for their future lives. Some subjects such as history and French are not as well planned and sequenced as others. It is clear from the actions that leaders have already taken to address these subjects that they are in the process of bringing this about.

Pupils benefit from well-chosen experiences that make learning more interesting. These include residential visits and a trip to Blists Hill Victorian Town. Pupils are able to join in a range of activities such as street dance club and take part in the Young Voices choir.

Pupils are happy to come to a school where they feel safe and well cared for. Pupils say that if bullying occurs, teachers listen to what has happened and sort it out.

The school makes sure that all pupils are included. The school takes great care to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

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

School leaders, governors and staff all want to provide the very best education for pupils. Teachers ensure that learning activities are practical and interesting. Most build on pupils' previous learning in that subject.

Children in the Nursery, and in the Reception class, make a good start. The Nursery, which is on a different site, follows the school's policies and procedures. These help to keep children safe. Staff are well trained. There are plenty of opportunities for children to develop their early mathematics vocabulary, for example the 'tiny' mouse and the 'large' Gruffalo when listening to the story by Julia Donaldson.

The Reception class is well organised. There are opportunities for children to read and write through play. Children can write their 'wish list' to Father Christmas and dress up as characters from the Christmas Nativity story.

Children in the early years can learn well inside and outside of the classroom. There is the right amount of support from adults. British values such as individual liberties are evident, as children choose their own snack, activities and behaviours.

The teaching of phonics and reading is well led and managed. Well-trained staff teach phonics daily. The books that pupils take home are carefully matched to the phonic sounds they know. Pupils who fall behind have well-focused support to help them read. Most pupils read fluently by the end of key stage 1.

Teachers use their knowledge and enthusiasm to plan and deliver lessons well in other subjects. Occasionally, they do not consider how the knowledge and skills of the most-able pupils can be developed further. This is particularly the case in science.

In both history and science, skills are less developed than pupils' understanding in those subjects. For example, older pupils are not confident explaining the different types of scientific enquiry or how they would set up a fair test.

Subject leaders within the school are increasingly being given the responsibility to develop the areas they are accountable for. Different subjects are at different stages of development. Not all year groups and subjects are planned and delivered to the same high standard as others.

The SEND coordinator (SENCo) is well qualified. Teachers understand the different needs of the pupils in their classes. Support for pupils with SEND is effective.

Leaders make appropriate use of the funding available for disadvantaged pupils. Teachers are clear about who these pupils are and plan activities and use resources to meet those pupils' needs.

The recent federation between St Thomas' and the King's High School is increasing the school's capacity to share good practice. Leaders, including the new federation of governors, are ambitious for the school's future. The executive headteacher and head of school make a good team. Many parents say good things about the new leadership structure. Most staff enjoy working at the school and agree that leaders ensure that their workload is manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know that safeguarding pupils is very important. Leaders train staff so they know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils' well-being or safety. Records show that leaders understand the needs of vulnerable pupils. Quick responses provide support for pupils and their families when needed.

Leaders and governors check staff are suitable before they begin work at the school.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, both in their locality and when using the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Subject leaders within the school are increasingly given ownership of their subjects. The foundation subjects are at different stages of development. Leaders

should ensure that all of the foundation subjects are planned and delivered to the same high standards as the core subjects.

- In science, the curriculum ensures that pupils' knowledge develops well over time. However, pupils' scientific skills are not as well developed. Pupils need to regularly undertake different types of scientific enquiry so their science skills are well-developed by the time they leave the school.
- Occasionally in some lessons the learning needs of pupils of different abilities are not taken into account. Teachers need to ensure that the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged so that they can make more progress.

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	124380
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10131737
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	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Shemilt
Executive headteacher	Emily Verow
Website	www.st-thomas-kidsgrove.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 January 2016

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection there have been significant changes to the school structure and staffing. These include two headteachers leaving, plus an interim headteacher. From the 1 November 2019 the school has taken on St Thomas' Nursery so it is now part of the school. St Thomas' has formed a hard federation with Kings Voluntary Aided High School and has an executive headteacher across both schools. St Thomas' also has a head of school who is responsible for the day to day running of the school.
- Children start school either part time in the Nursery or full time in Reception.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors focused on the following subjects during the inspection: reading, writing, science and history. The inspectors visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, examined teachers' plans and talked with pupils and staff about the way these subjects are planned and taught. The inspectors also looked at planning and work from some other subjects and spoke with pupils, staff and parents about the school curriculum.

- The lead inspector examined external performance data about the school and looked at the school's website.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils, staff, leaders, parents and governors about safeguarding arrangements and routines at the school. They examined the record of employment checks on school staff.
- The inspectors watched pupils' behaviour in class and at other times during the day and spoke to parents, staff and pupils about behaviour.
- During the inspection, the inspectors had formal meetings with the executive headteacher and the head of school, subject leaders, the SENCo, governors, teachers and pupils. The inspectors also talked informally with pupils and parents to gather information about school life. The lead inspector had a short conversation with the director of the Lichfield diocese.
- By the end of the inspection, there were 42 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The inspectors considered these and looked at the 20 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Heather Phillips, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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