

# Inspection of St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

Rainford Road, Windle, St Helens, Merseyside WA10 6BX

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Inspection dates: 3–4 March 2020

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The previous 'outstanding' judgement reflected the school's overall effectiveness in May 2009 under the relevant inspection framework at that time.

The new judgement of 'good' reflects the current framework as well as any changes at the school since the last inspection.

The school has not been inspected for over 10 years, which is longer than the five-year maximum interval between inspections. Changes in school effectiveness may have happened at any point in that period. The long time between inspections is because the law changed in 2011; it made outstanding schools exempt from routine inspections.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Children in the early years and pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are happy. They enjoy their lessons and wide choice of after-school activities such as performing arts and science club. They gain much new learning from their educational trips. Pupils with whom we spoke told us of the beauty and atmosphere that they experienced in their recent visit to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and then the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral.

Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They achieve strongly because of the high expectations of leaders and staff. A typical pupil comment was: 'We learn something new at school every day.'

Pupils correctly described the school as peaceful. In classrooms, pupils behave sensibly. Pupils said that they feel safe at the school. They told us that staff deal promptly and successfully with the rare issues of bullying and misbehaviour by pupils.

Pupils' relationships with their friends and staff are positive. They are polite and keen to meet with visitors, such as inspectors. Pupils respect other people. They are proud of their school. They agreed when one pupil said of the school: 'We're a family. We respect everyone for who they are and what they do.'

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

Leaders and staff teach pupils about equality; for example, they celebrate disability awareness. Leaders and staff treat pupils equally, for instance making sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are included fully in school activities. Staff give reasonable support to these pupils and to those who are disadvantaged to ensure that they learn well at the school. Pupils learn about the importance of supporting elderly people and raising charitable funding for those in need. Teachers discuss topical world issues with pupils. Pupils develop high aspirations for their future careers.

Because of the help of their parents, carers, staff and school volunteers, pupils achieve well in their reading by the end of key stage 2. They enjoy reading the work of authors such as Cottrell-Boyce and Horowitz. They learn the meaning of fascinating new words such as cacophonous and synchronisation from other books. Older pupils told me how pleased they are with leaders' recent investment in providing a good range of information books and fiction books in the school library. Pupils said that the library is calm. Even so, staff's provision of books for children in the Nursery and the teaching of reading in the early years and key stage 1 should be better planned. Some books used for pupils to practise their reading do not match their knowledge of phonics. Some staff's knowledge of the teaching of reading is underdeveloped.

Most of the time, pupils' behaviour is good, which means that teachers and teaching assistants can focus on teaching the curriculum.

Pupils throughout the school speak with confidence, clarity and fluency. In mathematics, pupils achieve well, including in their knowledge of mathematical vocabulary. Leaders and staff are improving pupils' knowledge and skill in expressing their ideas in writing in different subjects. Staff inspire pupils to write through the stories that they share. In Reception, staff give children lots of meaningful opportunities to become skilled writers.

The new headteacher leads the school with clear vision and an accurate understanding of the work of staff and pupils. She is working successfully with staff to set out much more logically what they intend for pupils to learn in each curriculum subject. In some units of work, pupils know and remember essential information that teachers teach. For example, in geography key stage 2, pupils understand the characteristics of climate zones and biomes. However, teachers sometimes plan pupils' work less well in some subjects. For instance, sometimes, staff are unclear which vocabulary to teach. At other times, teachers plan activities that do not ensure that pupils remember important knowledge.

Parents and carers overwhelmingly support the work of the school. Staff really value the support and direction that the headteacher gives them. Staff morale is high. Teachers feel that their workload is reasonable. Governors give effective challenge to leaders about the curriculum.

In the early years, staff plan much of the curriculum reasonably well. For instance, children have worthwhile opportunities to develop their physical control and strength through a wide range of outdoor activities. Even so, some school leaders lack understanding of the curriculum and teaching in Nursery and Reception.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff have a clear and well-informed understanding of safeguarding. They take pupils' views seriously and respond appropriately to protect pupils from harm. Older pupils told me clearly about the school's emergency lockdown procedures. They understand how to stay safe when walking along local roads. They know to be sensible about making public comments online, because as one pupil said to me: 'The internet is written in ink.'

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Sometimes staff do not plan which vocabulary to teach to pupils. Some planned activities do not help pupils to remember the knowledge that they need. Some leaders lack understanding of the curriculum in the early years. These

weaknesses hold back children's and pupils' and staff's understanding. Leaders should make sure that all subjects are planned with equal care and detail from Nursery to Year 6. These steps will help staff to ensure that all children and pupils develop a deep knowledge and understanding in each subject.

- Some of staff's planned teaching and the provision of books for children and pupils should be better. This weakness holds back the effectiveness of the curriculum for early reading. Leaders should make certain that all staff understand recent national research about phonics and reading. Staff should improve how they plan the curriculum for books/early reading. Children and pupils will then be more able to make a stronger start to their reading in a range of subjects.

## 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 are the school and you are 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	104809
<b>Local authority</b>	St Helens
<b>Inspection number</b>	10122147
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	206
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Kevin Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lyn Rawlinson, interim headteacher
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-thomasofcanterbury.st-helens.sch.uk">www.st-thomasofcanterbury.st-helens.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 May 2009, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school's governing body runs a nursery on site offering 16 places for three- and four-year-olds. This provision is operated under community powers of section 27 of the Education Act 2002.
- The interim headteacher has been appointed to be the substantive headteacher from April 2020.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- We spoke with some parents and considered the 88 responses from parents to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire.
- We spoke with several groups of pupils about their experiences at the school.
- We spoke with teachers and teaching assistants about their work. We reviewed responses from 30 staff to an Ofsted questionnaire.

- We did deep dives in reading, writing, mathematics and art and design. We looked at curriculum documents, met with leaders, visited some lessons and spoke with staff. We spoke with some pupils and looked at examples of their work. I listened to some key stage 1 pupils read to a member of staff. I looked at the provision of books in the early years.
- We also looked at the curriculum in science and geography.
- We spoke with senior leaders about support for pupils with SEND and about the school's work to provide for all pupils' personal development.
- We checked a sample of school records about safeguarding. We asked leaders, governors, staff, pupils and parents about safety at the school.
- On the first day of the inspection, all key stage 2 pupils were away from school on an educational visit.

### **Inspection team**

Tim Vaughan, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Tina Cleugh

Ofsted Inspector

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