

# Inspection of a good school: St Thomas à Becket Church of England Aided Primary School

High Street, Tilshead, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP3 4RZ

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Inspection date:

22 September 2021

## Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

St Thomas à Becket School is a happy place where pupils feel safe and valued. Pupils' positive attitudes reflect the school's Christian values of respect and friendship. Pupils told inspectors they look after one another and that older children 'enjoy making younger children feel at home'. Pupils enjoy learning and attend regularly.

However, some curriculum plans do not focus well enough on developing pupils' knowledge over time. Pupils have gaps in their knowledge in some subjects. The reading curriculum is not yet enabling pupils to read as well as they should.

Leaders make sure that this small school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their character and interests. Pupils relish taking on leadership roles, such as head boy or girl. Trips, clubs and visitors broaden pupils' experiences. Pupils are responsible and caring. They have a strong sense of right and wrong.

Pupils behave well because staff have high expectations. Staff respond effectively to rare incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils of all ages play happily together. Pupils told inspectors that bullying hardly ever happens and staff take their concerns seriously. Parents appreciate how well staff know and care for their children.

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

There have been recent and significant changes to leadership and governance. Leaders are focusing on the right things and making positive changes. However, it is early days. Staff morale is high.

Leaders are prioritising reading. Pupils learn to read right from the start of Reception Year. Staff teach new sounds in a logical order. Pupils experience a wide range of texts and authors and enjoy story time. However, there are still some weaknesses in the school's approach to the teaching of phonics. Staff subject knowledge is not consistently strong. Pupils do not practise and use their phonics well enough. Pupils who find reading difficult do not get precise support to meet their needs. The books they read to adults are sometimes too hard. This prevents these pupils from becoming fluent and confident readers.

In key stage 2, teachers challenge older pupils to read and discuss demanding texts in class. Many pupils have developed a love of reading and read widely for pleasure. New approaches to teaching are helping pupils to think deeply about what they read. However, the curriculum for older pupils who struggle with reading is not well organised. These pupils are not catching up quickly enough.

Leaders have introduced a well-structured mathematics curriculum from Reception Year to Year 6. Leaders have identified what they expect pupils to know and remember right from the start. Pupils practise and revisit important mathematical knowledge. The science curriculum is also well planned and sequenced. Pupils use scientific vocabulary accurately.

In some subjects, curriculum planning lacks detail about what pupils need to learn, remember, and use. Learning is not clearly sequenced to build on what pupils have learned before. For example, pupils do not develop their knowledge of the chronology of important events in history. This prevents pupils from securing the key concepts and ideas they need to remember over time.

When subject plans are implemented well, teachers check what pupils know and adapt their teaching to plan suitable tasks. However, staff do not check consistently what pupils remember from their previous learning. This hinders the progress pupils make.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive strong support. The special educational needs coordinator knows pupils' needs well. As a result, pupils receive well-planned support. This enables them to access the full curriculum.

Pupils appreciate the school's work to support their personal development. Pupils learn about democracy by voting for school councillors and debating issues in class. Pupils are keen advocates of the school's values. They understand the importance of equalities and fairness towards others. Working with the local community has helped pupils to make a positive contribution to the wider world. Leaders have planned a wider range of activities now that national restrictions have been lifted. For example, pupils have elected to run a community cafe to thank the local community for their support during the pandemic.

Increasingly, governors understand their roles and responsibilities. However, their work to improve their own systems for gathering information about the school's effectiveness is at an early stage. As such, they do not have a fulsome view of the impact of leaders' actions to improve the curriculum.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that actions leaders have taken to improve early reading, the wider curriculum and the effectiveness of governance may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are trained to recognise signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. Leaders keep clear and accurate records and review them regularly. Concerns are acted upon swiftly. Everyone is vigilant and alert to changes in pupils which may cause concern. Staff work closely with other professionals. This supports pupils and their families to get the help they need. Leaders make sure that pupils learn about risk through the curriculum. For example, leaders have prioritised teaching pupils how to stay safe on the internet. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy, safe relationships between peers.

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

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

- The phonics curriculum is not implemented consistently well. Some pupils do not learn the knowledge they need to decode new words effectively. Pupils who need support to catch up, including older pupils, do not practise and rehearse phonics well enough. The books pupils read aloud to adults are sometimes too difficult. Leaders need to ensure that all staff get the specific training they need so that pupils at the early stages of reading get appropriate support and catch up.
- In some subjects, leaders have not identified precisely enough the important knowledge that pupils should know and remember. Teachers do not plan sequences of learning which build pupils' understanding of important concepts and content. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans in all subjects are precise and consider all the knowledge and skills pupils need to progress well.
- Governors do not currently hold leaders to account sufficiently for the quality of the curriculum that pupils learn. The curriculum does not enable pupils to do as well as they could. Governors need to develop their understanding of the school's curriculum so that they can assure themselves of the quality of education pupils receive.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 22 June 2016.

## 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 126416  |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Wiltshire   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10199873  |
| <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> | 38  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body  |
| <b>Chair of governing body</b>             | Jardine Broom   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Chris Light   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.st-thomas-a-becket.wilts.sch.uk/">http://www.st-thomas-a-becket.wilts.sch.uk/</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 22 June 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005   |

## Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average primary school. Pupils are organised into three mixed-age classes.
- The school is a voluntary aided Church of England school in the Diocese of Salisbury. Its last section 48 inspection took place in June 2016.
- Since the last inspection, there have been some significant staffing changes. An interim headteacher took up post in September 2021. The current head of school took up post in September 2021.
- There have been changes in the governing body. A new chair of governors was appointed in July 2021.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with the interim headteacher, the head of school, subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and groups of staff. The lead

inspector met with two representatives from the governing body, including the chair, and met with the local authority regional school improvement and excellence lead.

- An inspector spoke to some parents at the start of the day.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils from Years 1, 2, 3, and 4 read to an adult.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and science. They talked to teachers who lead these subjects. They visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. Additionally, inspectors reviewed teachers' planning and pupils' work in history and geography, and spoke with pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors considered how well the school protects pupils and keeps them safe. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Inspectors spoke with pupils to gain their views about the school.
- Inspectors considered five responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, including four free-text response, and nine responses to the staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Claire Mirams, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

David New

Ofsted Inspector

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