

Inspection of a good school: St John's VA Church of England Primary School, Thornham

Thornham Lane, Slattocks, Manchester M24 2SB

Inspection dates:

19 October 2022

Outcome

St John's VA Church of England Primary School, Thornham continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, parents and carers who spoke with inspectors are proud to belong to this welcoming school community. Pupils described the many opportunities that are available to them, such as clubs, taking on leadership roles and learning outdoors. They said that staff help them to get better at learning. Pupils said that if they uphold the school's values and try their best, they can achieve anything.

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. They ensure that all pupils benefit from a well-thought-out curriculum. Children in the early years and pupils in key stages 1 and 2 achieve well. Their learning in class, coupled with their wider development, ensures that they are ready for their next stages of education. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are included in all aspects of school life.

Pupils know how leaders expect them to behave. Pupils behave well in class and around the school. They take good care of each other. Older pupils know their younger 'buddies' well and make sure that everyone is safe and happy at breaktimes.

Pupils describe staff as kind and caring. Pupils trust leaders to deal with any incidents thoroughly, including bullying. Leaders make sure that when pupils are unkind to each other, they say sorry and put things right.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious and interesting curriculum. Children in the early years and pupils in key stages 1 and 2 develop a secure body of knowledge as they progress from the Reception Year to Year 6.

Leaders ensure that the school's curriculum matches the ambition of the national curriculum. Leaders make sure that pupils build up their knowledge well as they progress from one year to the next. This is especially important as many pupils are taught in mixed-age classes and remain in the same class for two years.

In a small number of subjects, the guidance that leaders provide for teachers does not make clear enough the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn at different points. At times, some teachers try to cover too much new learning in lessons. This confuses some pupils. It makes it harder for these pupils to recall what they have learned previously. At these times, pupils are less able to build securely on what they already know to acquire new learning.

In most subjects, leaders ensure that teachers know what pupils need to learn and the order in which pupils' learning needs to happen. This is especially true for reading. Leaders ensure that all pupils become accurate and fluent readers by the end of key stage 2. Pupils look forward to times when they can read their own books or listen to their teacher sharing high-quality class texts. This helps pupils to develop their vocabulary which supports their learning across the curriculum.

Children begin to learn phonics as soon as they start in the Reception Year. Once children in the early years or pupils in key stage 1 have a firm grasp of phonics, they begin to build their fluency in reading. Children and pupils benefit from regularly practising the sounds that they have learned with suitable reading books. Skilled staff support pupils across the school well to develop secure reading knowledge.

Leaders make sure that if pupils struggle with their reading, or join the school after the Reception Year, they receive focused support to help them to catch up with their peers. All staff are well trained to quickly identify any gaps that pupils have in their phonics knowledge. This enables staff to provide the most appropriate support for these pupils in the first instance.

Leaders support teachers effectively in identifying pupils who may have SEND. Teachers are adept at pinpointing which aspects of learning pupils with SEND need help with. These pupils achieve well as a result.

Children in the early years benefit from the positive example that their classmates in Year 1 set in how to behave. Pupils and children focus well on their learning. This enables them to learn without disruption.

Leaders place a high priority on pupils' wider development. The positive attitudes that pupils develop about themselves and each other contribute well to the school's welcoming and supportive culture. Staff provide effective support so that pupils develop confidence in their own abilities. Pupils are respectful when speaking about others who may be different to themselves. However, their understanding of cultures beyond their own experience is limited. They are not as well prepared as they should be for living in modern Britain.

Governors provide effective support and challenge to leaders so that they continue to provide a high-quality education for all pupils. Leaders carry out regular checks on how well the curriculum is delivered. Staff feel well supported by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff and governors are well informed about how to keep pupils safe. Staff have a clear understanding of how to identify potential safeguarding risks that pupils might face. They ensure that leaders responsible for safeguarding are quickly alerted when they have a concern about a pupil. Leaders make sure that vulnerable pupils receive the timely support they need.

Pupils benefit from accessing the school's outdoor wooded area. Here they learn how to use tools and equipment safely. Pupils apply their learning to their outdoor adventurous play. They are also knowledgeable about how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of foundation subjects, leaders have not clarified what they expect pupils to learn as well as they have in other subjects. In these subjects, pupils do not remember what they have learned previously as well as they should. This makes it more difficult for pupils to build on their prior knowledge as they progress through the school. Leaders should ensure that teachers are clear about what pupils need to learn and remember in these subjects.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils develop a secure understanding and appreciation of a wide range of cultures. This limits how well pupils are prepared to live in a modern and diverse society. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum supports pupils to develop a secure understanding of cultures other than their own.

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 an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2014.

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.

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	105806
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10241923
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Janet Abbott
Headteacher	Rebecca Hunter
Website	www.thornhamce.rochdale.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Diocese of Manchester. Its last section 48 inspection took place in November 2017.
- Leaders make use of one unregistered alternative provider for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school. They spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. They also spoke with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation relating to safeguarding. This included the school's central record of staff and visitors, staff training records, records of safeguarding and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.
- An inspector listened to pupils reading to a familiar adult.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, art and design, and history. They spoke with the curriculum leaders of these subject areas. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime. They observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school. Inspectors scrutinised leaders' records of pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. They considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text responses.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils and to Ofsted's online survey for staff.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Clare Baron

Ofsted Inspector

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