

Inspection of St Thomas' Church of England Primary Academy

Mattox Road, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV11 3TG

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Thomas' Church of England Primary Academy as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Thomas' Church of England Primary School is a happy and welcoming place. It is very distinct in its community spirit. Pupils are proud to attend. They live out the school's vision of 'growing, learning and shining together with God'. They talk excitedly about their learning and how they enjoy supporting others.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils work with determination in the classroom and achieve well as a result. They are polite and courteous to adults and their peers. They behave well. They show respect towards one another and visitors.

In the early years, children settle in well and quickly make friends. Pupils know there are trusted adults they can talk to. Leaders and staff deal swiftly and effectively with any concerns, including bullying. Pupils feel safe at school.

Pupils enjoy the many opportunities the school has on offer, such as learning to play the ukulele. They take their leadership responsibilities seriously. These roles include being a member of the school's junior leadership team, discussing improvements to the school and fund-raising. Year 6 librarians look after the library and create displays to promote reading for pleasure.

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

Leaders have developed a broad and ambitious curriculum. They ensure that the curriculum enables all pupils to achieve well. Subject leaders have identified the key knowledge that pupils need to learn. Lesson sequences enable pupils to build knowledge and skills. For example, in geography, pupils' knowledge builds securely over time. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils can name the features of a river, having learned about this from classroom lessons and fieldwork.

The teaching of reading is a high priority in school. Leaders have developed an effective reading curriculum. Phonics teaching begins in Reception and continues through key stage 1. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 2, most are fluent readers. Teachers provide extra support to any pupils who fall behind. Staff match reading books to the sounds pupils know. This helps pupils to develop their confidence and fluency.

Pupils talk excitedly about reading and know a range of authors. They appreciate that the school provides a wide range of books to choose from. They receive praise for the reading they do. Pupils enjoy listening when their teachers read to them each day.

Teachers regularly check and assess pupils' learning. They address errors and misconceptions. They make sure pupils know and remember more over time.

Leaders attend training to deepen their knowledge of different curriculum areas. They then use their subject expertise to support teachers. This support for implementing the curriculum is well established in several subjects, but not all. In a few subjects, staff's subject knowledge and confidence are not as strong as they might be. This means that the way in which staff explain new learning and select resources are not always ideal. When this happens, pupils do not learn as well as they could.

Pupils with SEND are identified on entry to the school. Leaders make sure they receive the support that they need. They access the same curriculum as their peers. When necessary, staff make helpful adjustments to ensure work is matched closely to pupils' needs. Pupils with SEND thrive and take part fully in school life.

The wider curriculum engages pupils and supports their personal development. Leaders aim to bring learning to life and give pupils valuable experiences. Pupils talk enthusiastically about enrichment opportunities, such as going on trips. For example, to support their study of the history of canals and the Black Country, staff take Year 5 pupils to a local living history museum.

Most pupils attend well. However, a minority of pupils have high absences from school. This means that they miss important parts of their education. Although leaders have taken steps to improve this, their actions have not been wholly effective. Currently, leaders are strengthening their systems to support all pupils to attend school regularly.

Governors and trustees understand their roles and carry them out effectively. They are very involved in school life and know the school well. They are well informed about school improvement, contribute to school improvement priorities and provide challenge and support. They fulfil their statutory duties. They hold leaders to account and ensure that safeguarding practices are robust and clear.

Staff feel well supported and enjoy working at the school. They say that leaders are mindful of their workload and that 'school leaders and trust leaders are excellent at supporting workload and well-being of all staff'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure staff receive regular safeguarding training. Staff understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Leaders and staff spot pupils who need early help or are at risk of harm. They record information about concerns to build an understanding of pupils' needs. When necessary, leaders act to protect pupils, including working with other agencies and parents.

The academy trust and governing body keep a close check on the quality of safeguarding. Leaders make the right checks on staff who join the school.

Pupils feel safe. They learn about road safety and how to make the right choices when using the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers' subject knowledge is not as strong in a few subjects as it is in others. This means that pupils do not make as much progress in these subjects. Leaders are in the process of providing more training for staff. Leaders should check the impact of this training so that they are assured these changes are making a positive difference to pupils' long-term learning.
- Leaders have not fully implemented a rigorous approach to ensuring all pupils attend regularly. This means that some pupils continue to miss too much school, which hinders their learning. Leaders should ensure that effective strategies to improve attendance are fully in place.

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	145396
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	10256955
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Coles
Headteacher	Fiona Beardsley
Website	www.stthomasceacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Thomas Church of England Primary Academy converted to become an academy school in September 2018. When its predecessor school, St Thomas' Church of England Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school is a Church of England primary school. It is part of the Diocese of Worcester. The last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 took place in March 2018.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection 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 completed deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics,

art and design and geography. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons, including in the early years, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with staff and pupils.

- Inspectors reviewed information about other curriculum subjects and considered a range of information about pupils' personal, social, health and economic education.
- Inspectors listened to some pupils read to staff.
- Inspectors met with some parents, considered correspondence from parents sent to Ofsted and reviewed responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors spoke by telephone with an external consultant about the school's work.
- The lead inspector spoke with the chair of the governors, other governors and members of the trust board.
- Inspectors met regularly with the chief executive officer, the deputy chief executive officer and the associate headteacher of the academy trust.
- Throughout the inspection, inspectors spoke with several groups of pupils, including pupils with SEND, to hear their views of their education, as well as about behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of staff and pupils and considered their responses to the Ofsted surveys.
- Inspectors evaluated safeguarding by speaking with leaders, staff, pupils and parents. They reviewed a sample of leaders' records. Inspectors reviewed the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures.

Inspection team

Lynda Townsend, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Janice Wood	Ofsted Inspector

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