

Inspection of St Thomas' Church of England Infant School, Woolton Hill

Woolton Hill, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 9XF

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 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	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils describe this as a friendly school. They strongly feel that 'anyone can fit in here'. Pupils are keen to learn. Their enthusiasm creates a purposeful buzz around the school. The values of 'wisdom, courage and respect' are applied to their learning, as well as to their friendships.

The school motto of 'let your light shine' sums up leaders' high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. Pupils take pride in meeting these. They are kind to each other and listen to teachers respectfully. They look forward to celebrating their achievements in assemblies.

Leaders are determined to offer pupils an irresistible invitation to learn. To achieve this, each term starts with an exciting 'hook' experience to spark interest in learning. Pupils animatedly recalled a recent example of a visit, which gave them a close encounter with bird of prey.

The school's Christian values are evident in the way that staff nurture and value every pupil. Pupils like that they all know one another. Being part of this small and happy community helps them feel safe. They are not worried about bullying. They have great trust in adults to listen to any worries and to help them if they need it.

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

Leaders have diligently focused on revising the school's curriculum. They want to ensure that learning is ambitious, purposeful and inclusive. Leaders are committed to making sure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), will succeed and achieve all they are capable of. New subject leaders have collaborated with specialists to develop their subject knowledge and expertise. They have shared their learning across the federation to carefully sequence the curriculum. There has been thoughtful consideration of the important knowledge, skills and learning behaviours that pupils need to be taught. This work also makes sure that pupils in Year 2 are well prepared to make a smooth transition on to their next stage of learning.

Children get off to a strong start when learning to read. Effective phonics teaching in Reception gives them strong foundations for learning. Children confidently sound out letters and write words by themselves. Teachers support pupils well in Years 1 and 2, and they become increasingly fluent and accurate readers. Leaders ensure that pupils' reading books are closely matched to the sounds they have learned. Those who struggle to read enjoy extra sessions. These are expertly led by adults, who boost pupils' self-esteem effectively as they help them keep up.

Leaders possess a sound understanding of the differing needs of pupils with

SEND. They are focused on quickly identifying any additional needs pupils may have. They get support in place quickly. Many staff are skilled at making effective adaptations to learning for pupils with SEND when they need it. This means that they learn well alongside their classmates.

There is a focused approach to ensuring that children make a successful transition into Reception. Staff know children well, and they are happy in their environment. Curriculum thinking is mapped out to ensure that children in Reception learn everything they need in preparation for Year 1. However, not all adults have enough expertise to make the most of every learning opportunity the environment could offer. Sometimes, moments to develop children's vocabulary, communication and language skills are missed, meaning they do not learn as much as they could.

Pupils are proud to take on leadership roles in school. They enjoy being librarians and voting for house captains and school councillors. Leaders have a strong ambition: to develop pupils' character and sense of responsibility. Currently, opportunities for pupils to learn about different ways of life are limited. Leaders know this and have plans to deepen pupils' understanding of the world through rich experiences. They have already begun this work by introducing the 'six strands' approach through which they intend to prepare pupils for the wider, diverse world.

Pupils mostly behave well. They are motivated to learn and are courteous and polite. At playtimes, they are kind and inclusive. They have great fun playing games and enjoying the freedom of the outdoor space. Provision for pupils' social and moral development is rooted in the school's Christian values. They appreciate the opportunities to attend celebrations in the church.

Governors have worked closely with leaders and the school community to establish the new vision and values. They bring a wealth of expertise and dedication to their roles. This is used to support leaders to create a school where staff and pupils flourish.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture that focuses on keeping pupils safe. All staff are well trained and have a secure understanding of possible risks to pupils. Adults promptly identify any concerns about pupils' well-being or safety. Leaders are swift to take effective action when concerns are raised. This action ensures that pupils and their families get any support needed.

Staff know the pupils well, and pupils feel confident that they are safe in their care. A clear and sensitively organised safeguarding curriculum teaches pupils how to identify risks themselves. This helps pupils learn how to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In the early years, the activities provided do not always help children achieve leaders' curriculum aims. This means there are missed opportunities for children to learn and build their knowledge over time. Leaders should ensure that all adults have the necessary skills and expertise they need to prioritise the right activities and approaches so that all children are ready for key stage 1.
- Opportunities for pupils to learn about different ways of life are currently limited. Consequently, pupils' depth of knowledge and understanding about people from different religions and ways of life could be further developed. Leaders are aware of this. They now need to implement their new curriculum plans to provide pupils with a wider range of learning experiences to broaden their understanding of cultures, beliefs and ways of life that are different from their own.

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	116328
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10256340
Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sarah Rolls
Headteacher	Paul Davies
Website	www.stthomasinfant.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a member of the Diocese of Winchester and has a Christian character.
- A Section 48 inspection was carried out in November 2019. The school was graded as excellent.
- The school is a partner school in the federation of The Schools of Woolton Hill, which also includes Woolton Hill Junior School. This federation was formed in 2020. Both schools share the same governing body.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.

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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, subject leaders, teachers, and teaching assistants.
- The lead inspector met with governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and outside during social times.
- The inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records and policies, speaking to staff and governors and discussing this with pupils.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents shared through Ofsted Parent View. They gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including school improvement documentation and governing body minutes.

Inspection team

Jo Petch, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Linda Jacobs

Ofsted Inspector

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