

Inspection of a good school: St Thomas the Martyr Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Highgate Road, Up Holland, Skelmersdale, Lancashire WN8 0HX

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 February 2023

Outcome

St Thomas the Martyr Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

At St Thomas the Martyr Primary School, pupils, and children in the early years, are well cared for by staff. Teachers warmly welcome the pupils each morning on the playground. This helps pupils to feel settled and safe in school.

The school's motto of 'May all that we do be done with love' is lived out through the strong relationships between staff, pupils, parents and carers. Pupils are happy to be in school.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour. Pupils behave well. They are keen to learn. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well across all subjects. Pupils enjoy having their achievements recognised on the superstar board.

Pupils enjoy being with their friends at playtimes and act kindly towards one another. They are keen to chat to visitors and they talk positively about their school. When any incidents of bullying or name calling happen, staff are quick to address them.

There is a plethora of additional activities that extend pupils' learning and experiences. For example, they thoroughly enjoyed recent trips to a theatre and the Lake District. Pupils are keen to attend the clubs on offer such as dodgeball, chess and tennis. There are also competitions that pupils relish, such as 'university challenge', 'mastermind' and 'maths challenge'.

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

Leaders are ambitious for what they want pupils to achieve. They have put in place a broad and balanced curriculum. The curriculum in the early years, including for those

children in the provision for two-year-olds, is ordered well and prepares children suitably for learning in key stage 1.

In most subjects, leaders have set out clearly what they want pupils to learn and when this content should be delivered by staff. That said, in some other subjects, leaders have not identified the key knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which learning should be taught. This means that, at times, some pupils are not able to build logically on what they already know.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They explain concepts clearly to pupils and they are supported well by leaders to design learning. Teachers check regularly whether pupils have understood and remembered earlier content. Staff are skilled in identifying pupils' misconceptions and they address these misunderstandings quickly and effectively. This ensures that pupils' earlier learning is secure.

Leaders put reading first. Most pupils in key stage 2 enjoy reading a wide variety of books and they can read with fluency and confidence. In the Nursery class, children enjoy singing rhymes and listening to stories. Staff ensure that pupils read books that match the sounds they have learned. This helps to improve pupils' confidence in reading. Leaders put effective support in place for those pupils who find reading difficult. This helps these pupils to catch up quickly. Almost all pupils become confident and fluent readers by the end of Year 2.

Leaders have recently introduced a new phonics programme. They have ensured that staff are trained appropriately to deliver this programme effectively. Mostly, staff deliver this programme as leaders intend. However, from time to time, some staff move on to new sounds before some pupils are ready. This hinders a small number of pupils in learning to read as quickly as they should.

Leaders have effective systems to support staff to identify the needs of pupils with SEND. The additional needs of pupils with SEND are identified early by staff. Teachers are equipped well to support the needs of this group of pupils. As a result, pupils with SEND learn well across all subjects. They are fully involved in school life.

Pupils know what is expected of them and how they should behave. In most lessons, pupils behave well and concentrate on their work. Children in the early years learn the school routines quickly. Pupils' learning is seldom disrupted by poor behaviour.

Leaders have carefully considered the experiences that pupils, and children in the early years, need to enhance their understanding of the world. Pupils are encouraged to be active citizens. They learn about rights and responsibilities and caring for the planet. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about different cultures and traditions. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to debate and they respect the opinions of others.

Staff are happy to work at the school. They feel well supported by leaders to manage their workload. Governors use their prior experience and expertise well to offer appropriate support and challenge to leaders when needed. Parents and carers are positive about the school. They appreciate the care that their children receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They are trained well to be able to recognise the signs of potential harm.

Leaders have ensured that there are clear processes in place for reporting any safeguarding concerns. They act swiftly when any concerns are raised by staff. Leaders work collaboratively with external agencies to secure the help that vulnerable pupils and their families may need.

Pupils learn to keep themselves safe. For example, leaders have prioritised online safety. As a result, pupils are confident in explaining how to keep themselves safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff are still getting to grips with delivering the new phonics programme. On occasion, they move on to teaching new sounds before some pupils are ready. This prevents a small number of pupils from securing the knowledge that they need and becoming fluent readers as quickly as they should. Leaders should ensure that staff are equipped well to deliver the phonics programme as leaders intend.
- In a small number of subjects, leaders are not clear enough about the essential knowledge that pupils should learn and when this content should be delivered. This prevents pupils from building logically on what they know already. Leaders should ensure that they finalise curriculum thinking in these subjects so that teachers are clear about what they should be teaching and when this knowledge should be taught.

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 March 2013.

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	119495
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10226089
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sam Osmond
Headteacher	Carl Roscoe
Website	www.stthomasthemartyr.org
Date of previous inspection	21 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school is a voluntary aided Church of England school. The last section 48 was carried out in March 2020.
- This school has provision for two-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

- 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.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher and a range of other staff.
- The inspector met with members of the governing body and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector spoke with pupils about their work and their wider school life.

- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation relating to safeguarding. She also spoke with staff and governors about their safeguarding knowledge and checked how well they understood their safeguarding responsibilities.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. She spoke to leaders about the curriculum, visited lessons and spoke with teachers. The inspector spoke with pupils about their work and viewed their work.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during play and lunchtime and spoke to parents to gather their views about the school.
- The inspector observed pupils in key stage 1 and 2 read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys. The inspector also considered the views of parents on Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Jenny Jones, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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