

Inspection of a good school: St Thomas C of E Primary Academy

Wyberton Low Road, Boston, Lincolnshire PE21 7RZ

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 June 2023

Outcome

St Thomas C of E Primary Academy continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Thomas C of E Primary is an aspirational and caring school. Pupils are happy and feel safe. Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils achieve well.

Pupils engage well in lessons and show very positive attitudes towards their learning. Teachers have high expectations. Classrooms provide a calm and purposeful environment in which pupils can learn. Pupils follow clear routines. Staff regularly refer to the school's 'STAR' behaviour expectations in conversations with pupils. Pupils understand these expectations and consistently follow them.

Pupils understand what bullying is, including cyber-bullying. Pupils said that they learn about different types of bullying in personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. Behaviour records show that incidents of bullying are very rare.

Leaders help pupils by using restorative approaches to managing behaviour. Pupils value this way of working and feel well supported. One pupil said, 'My school is special because the teachers always have faith in us. Teachers here will never give up on you.'

Pupils are well-mannered and polite to each other and staff. They have access to a wide range of clubs. Pupils take pride in the additional responsibilities they can take on, such as becoming an eco-warrior or a librarian.

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

Leaders take a consistent approach to planning all subjects across the curriculum. 'Big

questions' and basic, adventurous and technical vocabulary underpin all subjects. Pupils are confident in using vocabulary to explain their learning. For example, in an art lesson, a Year 1 pupil explained, 'I mixed red and yellow which are primary colours to make the colour orange. Then I mixed in some white. This made a different tint.'

Leaders have chosen key concepts for each subject. These are supporting pupils to learn as 'experts' in each curriculum area. Teachers regularly check what pupils remember from previous lessons and terms. As a result, pupils build their knowledge over time. Pupils can talk about their learning in detail and with confidence.

Children get off to a strong start in the Reception Year. Staff provide children with rich opportunities to explore and learn through play. The outdoor area is designed to allow children to take calculated risks. Staff encourage children to access activities independently. Teachers make sure that children practise and embed their knowledge and skills. There is a sharp focus on the development of early language and communication. Children are very well prepared for Year 1.

Leaders have prioritised early reading. Staff teach the phonics programme consistently well. Leaders provide training that is helping all staff to become experts in the teaching of reading. Teachers provide pupils with reading books that match the sounds that they know. This allows pupils to develop their reading fluency. Books used in reading lessons are carefully selected.

Mathematics lessons provide pupils with the opportunity to develop their fluency skills. Pupils use and apply their knowledge by completing regular reasoning and problem-solving activities. Teachers focus heavily on the development of mathematical oracy. Teachers model language and display 'stem sentences' on classroom displays. The work in pupils' books shows the impact of this in the quality of pupils' written mathematical explanations.

Pupils with SEND are well supported. Leaders provide staff with regular training. Teachers and support staff adapt their teaching so that all pupils can access the curriculum. Leaders engage with external agencies and create bespoke learning pathways for some pupils. This approach is allowing pupils with SEND to make good progress.

Leaders carefully consider pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. PSHE lessons and assemblies provide pupils with regular opportunities to reflect on their own lives and those of others. Pupils demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of the fundamental British values. They know hand signals for each value and can relate them to their everyday lives. One pupil said, 'Tolerance is where you might know about another person's beliefs and you respect them, even if they are different to your own.' Pupils have a well-developed understanding of diversity. One pupil commented, 'You should value everybody, even if they are different to you because you could learn something new.' Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of different types of relationships, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

Staff feel well supported and listened to by leaders. Staff said that leaders are accessible and are considerate of their workload and well-being. Subject leaders value the time allocated for them to develop and monitor their subjects. The trust provides staff with the opportunity to network with other schools and attend regular training. Staff highly value and benefit from this support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a highly vigilant safeguarding culture. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. Leaders quiz staff to check that they remember key messages.

Staff know how to report concerns. Record-keeping is robust. Leaders escalate concerns to external agencies when they feel it is necessary in safeguarding a child or family in their care. Representatives from the trust carry out safeguarding audits. Leaders value this layer of quality assurance.

Pupils say that they have adults with whom they can share any worries or concerns. One pupil commented, 'We all have an adult who we can talk to and rely on.'

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, The Saint Thomas' Church of England Primary School, Boston, to be good in March 2017.

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	146869
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10268463
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	407
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sean Westaway
Headteacher	Joanne Sharples
Website	www.stthomasacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Thomas C of E Primary Academy converted to become an academy school in April 2019. When its predecessor school, The Saint Thomas' Church of England Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school opened as part of Infinity Academies Trust in April 2019.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. The

inspector also looked at curriculum documentation for history and for design and technology.

- The inspector listened to a sample of children in the Reception Year and pupils in key stages 1 and 2 read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. She also spoke with pupils and staff about safeguarding and reviewed a range of documents, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks.
- The inspector visited the school's breakfast club.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and also considered the results of the staff and pupil questionnaires.
- The inspector met with the chief executive officer and directors of education of the multi-academy trust. The inspector also met with representatives from the local governing body and the board of trustees.

Inspection team

Luella Manssen, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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