

# Inspection of The Thomas Coram Church of England School

Swing Gate Lane, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire HP4 2RP

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Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils happily attend this friendly school. Pupils have firm friendships and are supportive and kind to each other. This creates a positive atmosphere where pupils naturally rely on their friends. Pupils are articulate, respectful and are keen to share their opinions. They talk about their learning with enthusiasm.

Pupils learn a broad, balanced and rich curriculum. They develop their interests and improve their language through the quality texts and interesting topics they study. Pupils achieve well.

Most pupils behave well. Leaders act swiftly to address bullying. Pupils feel safe and are safe. A few pupils, however, have not been given the support they need to manage their behaviour well. They sometimes misbehave. This has reduced over the year. The school's new approach to managing behaviour reflects leaders' high expectations, and sets a higher bar for how pupils should behave.

Pupils understand British values, including the importance of valuing others' differences. They show responsible attitudes towards their school jobs. They complete these without prompting and show a mature attitude towards undertaking tasks for the 'greater good'. This means pupils develop into well-rounded individuals. They are well prepared for the transition to secondary school.

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

The new leadership team has evaluated the well-established curriculum plans already in place. Where necessary, they have made changes to these. Teachers have good subject knowledge and explain tasks clearly. Therefore, pupils know what to do, and the learning tasks they complete develop their knowledge further. This means that pupils develop their knowledge in each subject over time and achieve well. Teachers check pupils' understanding during lessons and provide immediate and effective support when pupils misunderstand. In some foundation subjects, however, leaders do not check that pupils remember what they have been taught in the long term. Consequently, they do not know if pupils need to revisit aspects of the curriculum.

Leaders make sure that reading has a high priority, and pupils love reading. In guided reading sessions, pupils learn to understand the context of the text. They practise reading fluently and discuss complex words and the author's language choices. This helps all pupils understand and try to use this knowledge in their writing. Teachers check that pupils know and can use the sounds they need to read independently. They use this information to identify and provide effective support for pupils who need it. Pupils achieve well.

Leaders are determined to ensure that all pupils learn the same ambitious curriculum. They work well with external agencies to ensure that pupils with complex needs receive the support they need. They have made sure that staff

accurately identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff's targeted support usually enables these pupils to learn at the same rate as their peers. However, in a few subjects, the use of strategies to support some pupils with SEND is at an early stage. This means that, in some subjects, it is not as easy for some pupils to access the work they need to complete. They therefore do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils learn an extensive personal development programme. Leaders adapt and change this where necessary. Pupils take on extra responsibilities, for instance, by being behaviour monitors and school councillors. This helps them to understand their part in creating a positive school community. Pupils learn to develop their self-esteem and self-confidence when learning about mental health. They appreciate the support that staff provide if they need any help.

The school has a calm and orderly feel. Pupils mostly behave well in the classrooms and on the playground. A new approach is beginning to prevent the few occasions when this is not the case. There are many activities for pupils to participate in at playtime so that all interests are catered for.

Leaders have built positive relationships effectively with pupils, parents and staff, through their ability to provide a consistent vision and through clear communication. Staff feel that their workload and well-being are considered and have improved.

Leaders and governors work closely together to plan strategically by, for instance, supporting middle leaders with training that makes sure they can carry out their roles effectively.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils understand how to stay safe online and in the community. They can discuss ways they keep themselves safe and what they would do if concerns arose.

Leaders make sure that staff have up-to-date and relevant safeguarding training. This keeps staff alert to all relevant risks that pupils may be subject to. Staff quickly record any concerns that they have about any pupils. Leaders act on concerns promptly and work with staff and outside agencies to provide all necessary support for pupils at risk of harm.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The behaviour policy is new. A few pupils have not always had effective support during unstructured times. As a result, some pupils who find it harder to manage their behaviour have behaved inappropriately. While this has improved, leaders need to ensure all staff and pupils continue to understand and follow the new

behaviour policy so that the much rarer instances of inappropriate behaviour reduce even further.

- In a few foundation subjects, leaders do not have accurate systems to monitor what pupils have learned in the long term. This means that leaders do not know which gaps in pupils' knowledge need to be filled and so cannot adapt what is taught precisely to meet these needs. Leaders need to ensure that they have systems in place to check pupils' understanding over time.
- Leaders have identified the adapted and scaffolded approaches that will support all pupils to learn at the same rate as their peers. However, these are not used consistently well in all subjects. This means that not all pupils make as much progress as possible because they cannot access the task to the same level as their peers. Leaders must ensure that planned for adapted approaches are effective and utilised in all subjects.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117559
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10284885
<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	318
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Nicola Few and Wesley Ball (Co-chairs)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rob Halls
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thomascoram.herts.sch.uk">www.thomascoram.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school has a Christian religious character. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in November 2019. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.
- Leaders use one unregistered alternative provider.

## 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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, including the designated safeguarding lead. The lead inspector spoke with some members of the governing body. Inspectors met with a range of staff.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education, history and art. For each deep dive, the

inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspectors spoke to leaders and viewed a range of documents and information, including minutes of governing body meetings, school policies, and documentation and records relating to safeguarding.
- The inspectors considered the 126 responses and 81 free-text responses made by parents to the survey, Ofsted Parent View. The inspectors also considered the 32 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and the 247 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

### **Inspection team**

Jessie Linsley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Luke Wildig

Ofsted Inspector

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