

# Inspection of St Thomas' Church of England Primary School Stockport

Marriott Street, Stockport, Cheshire SK1 3PJ

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Inspection dates: 19 and 20 September 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

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

Pupils are proud to attend St Thomas' Church of England Primary School. From the start, in early years, children foster warm, friendly relationships with the adults in school. They know that adults will support them if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils feel safe in this small school community.

Pupils have a wide range of enrichment opportunities outside of lessons, which they enjoy. This includes attending a variety of clubs, including chess, gardening or taking part in debates at the local town hall.

Pupils respond well to the rules and routines set out by the school. They behave well. They are polite and courteous to fellow classmates and adults, as well as visitors. Overall, in lessons, pupils focus well on their learning. They listen carefully to the teacher. The school is a calm environment for pupils.

Expectations for pupils' achievements are increasingly high. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Current pupils are achieving better than previously in some subject areas. This is because the school has established a more well-thought-out curriculum.

At present, however, there are still some pupils who do not achieve what they should in some other areas of the curriculum. These pupils have gaps in their knowledge, which are sometimes not identified closely enough by teachers to ensure that they are successfully addressed. This affects how well pupils learn in these subjects.

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

From the early years to Year 6, there is an increasingly ambitious curriculum for pupils. The school has successfully ensured that reading is a priority within the curriculum. Staff ensure that high-quality texts link well to the different curriculum topics that pupils study. The school also ensures that staff have thought carefully about what knowledge pupils will learn in different year groups and in different subjects. Nevertheless, there is still some way to go to ensure that pupils achieve consistently well across all subjects.

Teachers are receiving regular, ongoing training to improve their curriculum knowledge and skills. In many lessons, teachers use their subject knowledge to explain new learning with increasing success. In some instances, teachers also choose activities that appropriately support pupils' learning. However, at other times, the activities that teachers choose limit pupils' ability to clearly demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of topics and concepts.

In some subjects, including in the early years, teachers use the school's assessment systems appropriately. In these subjects, teachers typically identify the knowledge

that pupils have retained from the school's curriculum. They use assessment information to think carefully about the next steps in pupils' learning.

In other subjects, however, teachers do not use assessment information precisely enough. This means that, sometimes, pupils do not have the prior knowledge that they need when they encounter new content. Pupils do not have secure enough foundations on which to build new learning. As a result, some pupils continue to have gaps in their subject knowledge.

Leaders' approach to teaching reading has changed for the better. In the main, this is having a positive impact on improving current pupils' achievement. In the Nursery class, children successfully learn different rhymes, songs and poems, which exposes them to a wide variety of words. They also begin to learn some initial sounds, which helps pupils to make a positive start to learning phonics in the Reception Year.

Despite these emerging strengths in reading, some pupils have gaps in their reading knowledge. Some teachers do not use assessment information in relation to pupils' reading knowledge consistently well. This hinders some pupils from catching up as quickly as they should. Furthermore, pupils sometimes read books that contain sounds they do not confidently know.

Staff identify and assess pupils with SEND effectively. Pupils with SEND are achieving more highly than they have done previously. They, too, are benefiting from leaders' ongoing improvements to the curriculum.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour, and staff manage pupils' behaviour consistently well. In the early years, children learn how to share equipment with each other and they work cooperatively. At social times, pupils play well together. They enjoy the different sports that they can play at lunchtime, such as football.

The school caters for pupils' personal development well. Pupils learn about different religions and faiths. They often visit the nearby church for different religious services. They learn about how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. For example, pupils learn different mindfulness techniques.

The school engages well with parents and carers. Parents said that the school supports them with relevant information about what their child is learning. They are positive about how well pupils behave.

Governors, leaders and staff form a cohesive team, which wants the best for pupils. Staff report with positivity that leaders support their workload and well-being. This is because leaders take account of the pressures on staff's time when deciding on new initiatives.

Governors and leaders recognise that pupils' achievement is not as high as it should be. Their actions are beginning to bring about change and improve outcomes for pupils. However, the full impact of these actions cannot be seen in enough subjects

across the curriculum. There are still some key areas that require further improvement to ensure that pupils achieve all that they should.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- On occasion, staff design activities that do not allow pupils to successfully learn and retain new subject content. This contributes to pupils' underachievement in some subjects. The school should ensure that teachers are well equipped to design learning activities that support pupils to learn and remember the intended curriculum.
- The school does not ensure that teachers use assessment information, including in phonics, consistently well. This means that, in some subjects, teachers do not identify with sufficient precision where pupils have gaps in their subject knowledge. As a result, pupils underachieve. The school should ensure that teachers are well equipped to use assessment information to identify and address the gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- The school does not ensure that pupils read books that are consistently well matched to the sounds that they know. This hinders how well pupils learn to read. The school should ensure that pupils read books that are well matched to the sounds that they have learned.

## **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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any

point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	106109
<b>Local authority</b>	Stockport
<b>Inspection number</b>	10268301
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	154
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Susan Breckell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Sanchez
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-thomas.stockport.sch.uk">www.st-thomas.stockport.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17 and 18 September 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

## Information about this school

- Leaders do not make any use of alternative provision.
- A new headteacher has joined the school since the previous inspection.
- Some new governors have been appointed since the previous inspection, including the chair of governors.
- This Church of England school is part of the Diocese of Chester. The last section 48 inspection took place in March 2020. The next section 48 inspection is likely to take place before 2026.

## Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, they met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils and looked at pupils' work. They also examined pupils' learning in other curriculum subjects.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They met with the leaders for attendance and behaviour.
- The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority, and he spoke with a representative of the Diocese of Chester.
- The lead inspector observed some pupils in Years 1 to 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes and as pupils moved around the school building. They scrutinised leaders' records of pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at the school. They spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors spoke with a group of parents while pupils were arriving to school.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. There were no responses to Ofsted's staff or pupil survey.

## **Inspection team**

Stuart Perkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alex Farrow

Ofsted Inspector

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