

Inspection of St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School

Sherwood Avenue, Bradley, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD2 1RQ

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy learning here. They are polite and eager to talk about the things they enjoy doing at school. Attendance is good. Pupils are proud to represent the school in competitions and in leadership roles such as well-being ambassadors and student councillors. Pupils attend a range of clubs after school including yarn club, grow club and dance club.

Staff build positive relationships with pupils. They help pupils to feel safe and secure. The school expect pupils to behave well, yet not all pupils manage this. Pupils mostly behave well in lessons. However, at playtimes and lunchtimes, the behaviour of some pupils is boisterous and upsets others. Bullying is rare, although pupils say it does happen. When it does, pupils know adults in school will help them.

Leaders are aspirational for what they want pupils to achieve. However, this vision is not being fully realised, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils develop appropriate reading and mathematics knowledge and skills. Their learning in other subjects is not as effective.

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

Reading is a high priority. Pupils learn to read following a well-sequenced programme of phonics. Teaching of phonics is effective. Children start learning to read as soon as they arrive in the Reception Year. Pupils who need extra support to keep up with their reading are quickly identified and supported. Pupils generally read books that are well matched to the sounds that they know.

The mathematics curriculum has been redeveloped. Pupils revisit prior learning often to aid their fluency. This helps pupils to remember important mathematical concepts. They can apply their knowledge to solve problems. The curriculum content for subjects such as art and history is not as clearly designed or sequenced. Some subject areas are in the early stages of development. Pupils have a limited understanding of some of the subjects they study. The needs of some pupils, including those with SEND, are not met as well as they should be. Teachers do not check often enough what knowledge pupils have understood and remembered in subjects other than English and mathematics. This means pupils develop gaps in their knowledge and cannot build on their learning successfully.

In the early years, children develop necessary knowledge and skills to prepare them well for the next stage of their education. The indoor learning environment supports children's learning well. Adults provide exciting activities to engage children in different areas of the curriculum. The outdoor environment for early years children does not offer the same high-quality learning opportunities. Outdoor activities do not support children's learning of the intended curriculum. Leaders know this area requires development and have suitable plans in place.

Curriculum leaders are enthusiastic about their subject areas. However, some curriculum leaders do not have the necessary skills to accurately check and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning in their curriculum area across the school. They do not know if the curriculum is being taught as intended. Leaders offer guidance and training to curriculum leaders. They know there is more to do to secure sustainable improvements to the leadership and oversight of all subjects in the curriculum.

Sometimes, teachers adapt learning successfully for pupils with SEND to meet their needs effectively. However, some pupils with SEND do not access the curriculum alongside their peers. Too often, they spend significant periods of time outside of the classroom with teaching assistants.

Pupils learn about different cultures and have a good understanding of different religions. They make important comparisons and links between faiths. They are taught to value difference and understand the importance of treating others equally. Despite this, pupils have weaker knowledge of the fundamental British values such as democracy, rule of law and individual liberty.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They say leaders are very mindful of their professional development and personal well-being. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.

Governors are passionate about the school and want to be effective. They do not have an accurate understanding of the school or of the improvements needed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. However, there are weaknesses in the administration and maintenance of records for safeguarding, attendance and behaviour. Sometimes, records do not accurately reflect the actions taken. Leaders cannot identify and analyse patterns of concern as effectively as they should.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all curriculum subjects set out the knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn. Teachers are not able to check if pupils have acquired important knowledge for future learning. Leaders should ensure that the content for the curriculum in all subjects is clearly sequenced and identifies the most important knowledge that all pupils need to know and remember.
- Some pupils with SEND do not access the curriculum they need or the quality teaching to which they are entitled. This limits the progress these pupils can make in their learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers receive the necessary training to support pupils with SEND to access the curriculum, learn alongside their peers and achieve well.

- Not all curriculum leaders access appropriate training. Some do not understand their subject areas well enough. This means that they do not have an accurate understanding of how the curriculum is being implemented. Leaders should ensure that curriculum leaders have sufficient training to improve their expertise to monitor, evaluate and improve their areas of the curriculum effectively.
- Pupils do not develop sufficient understanding of aspects of fundamental British values. This does not prepare them well for life in modern Britain. Leaders should make sure that pupils develop a good understanding of fundamental British values so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders do not maintain effective systems to monitor the actions they take to address attendance, behaviour and safeguarding issues. This means that leaders cannot analyse patterns of concern accurately. Leaders should ensure that they improve the school's systems and processes to improve how reported information is analysed and evaluated.
- Leaders and governors do not have an accurate view of the school. The school is not improving as well as they think it is. Leaders should ensure that governors receive the information and training they need to support and challenge the school to improve.

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

Unique reference number	136109
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10290160
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	409
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Silva Scott
Headteacher	Kate Meade
Website	www.stthomas.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is designated as having a religious character. It was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in October 2023.
- Since the last inspection, there have been several staffing changes, including a new headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers and safeguarding leaders.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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.

- Prior to the inspection, the lead inspector reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance and previous Ofsted inspections.
- Inspectors met with the acting headteacher, curriculum leaders, safeguarding leaders, members of the governing body and representatives from the diocese and local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, art and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; looked at records and information, took account of the views of leaders, staff, pupils and parents; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The views of staff and pupils were considered from conversations and through responses to Ofsted's online surveys.
- Inspectors spoke to parents during the inspection. The responses to Ofsted's Parent View, including written responses, were considered.

Inspection team

Nicola Shipman, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Turner	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Millard	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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