

Inspection of St Thomas of Canterbury RC Primary School

Hadfield Street, Higher Broughton, Salford, Greater Manchester M7 4XG

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 December 2023

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 13 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 at St Thomas of Canterbury RC Primary School achieve exceptionally well. Children in the early years also achieve well at this school.

Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. They demonstrate high levels of respect towards each other and to staff. Pupils were proud of their contribution to the welcoming, safe and happy atmosphere that permeates their school. This helps pupils to thrive.

The school is extremely ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). By the end of key stage 2, pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Pupils were keen to tell inspectors about how much they enjoy their learning. They described how important it is to always try their best. Pupils explained that they appreciate the support that they receive from staff to help them to succeed in their endeavours.

Pupils demonstrate extremely positive attitudes and resilience. They are intently focused on achieving the high aspirations that they set for themselves.

Pupils benefit from the wide range of high-quality opportunities that the school provides. For example, pupils learn how to make their school and wider community better places to be. They are eager to support local and national charities. Pupils also take part in many community events. These events include singing at local residential homes, during religious celebrations or with choirs from other schools.

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

The curriculum is highly effective. The school has carefully identified the knowledge that pupils should learn across a broad range of subjects. The meticulously designed curriculum enables pupils to build securely on what they have learned before. Pupils develop a rich and impressive body of knowledge by the time that they leave Year 6.

Across the school, staff deliver the curriculum to an exceptionally high standard. Teachers are adept at using the school's approaches to assessment to check that pupils' knowledge is embedded before they begin to learn something new. Over time, pupils develop a deep and sophisticated understanding of concepts and ideas.

Teachers swiftly identify and address any misconceptions or gaps in pupils' knowledge that may emerge, including in reading. Staff are expertly trained to identify and meet any additional needs that pupils may have. This includes for those pupils with SEND and those pupils who speak English as an additional language. This helps most of these pupils to flourish alongside their peers.

A small number of pupils with SEND benefit from specially trained staff who deliver more intensive support in the 'acorn room'. Most of these are children from the

Reception classes. Overall, these children are expertly supported to achieve well. However, on occasion, they miss out on interacting with their peers. For some children, this hinders the depth of their learning and development.

Reading is a top priority for the school. Staff deliver the school's phonics programme exceptionally well. Children in the early years quickly develop the skills and knowledge that they need to begin to read words while they are in the Reception Year. Staff skilfully support any pupils who find reading more difficult to keep up with the phonics programme. By the end of key stage 1, almost all pupils can read with fluency and accuracy.

Teachers make expert use of a wide range of high-quality texts to enhance and extend pupils' learning. These texts ignite pupils' tangible fascination with literature. Older pupils told inspectors that reading helps them to find out new things and explore issues that intrigue them.

Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is palpable. They embrace all that is on offer during lessons and at other times of the day to enhance and build on what they already know. Pupils view lessons and clubs as valuable learning time. They do not squander these opportunities. As a result, disruption to the well-ordered school environment or lesson time is very rare.

The school makes sure that all pupils are provided with suitable activities to support their wider personal development. For example, pupils have many opportunities to lead others. These include running their own themed lunchtime clubs, refereeing sports matches and supporting other pupils to understand how British democracy works. By the time that pupils move on to secondary school, they demonstrate extraordinary maturity and responsibility that stands them in good stead for later life.

The school benefits from strong and highly effective leadership. Leaders, including those responsible for governance, are committed to maintaining the highest standards of education possible for all pupils. Governors also check that staff's workload is manageable and is not unduly influenced when decisions are made to enhance or refine the school's curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In the early years, a few children with SEND sometimes miss out on learning and interacting with their peers. This hinders the depth to which some of these children learn and develop. The school should ensure that all children in the early

years, including those with SEND, have the opportunity to learn alongside their peers whenever possible.

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 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	105970
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	10256009
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	504
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	James King
Headteacher	David Deane
Website	www.stthomasofcanterburyprimaryschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	20 and 21 January 2010, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Many pupils in the school speak English as an additional language.
- A new chair of governors has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Salford. It was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in June 2023. It is awaiting confirmation from the diocese about its next section 48 inspection.
- The school operates a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.

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 educational 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.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school. An inspector also spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese.
- 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.
- An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, art and design, modern foreign languages and design and technology. They spoke with the leaders of these areas of the curriculum. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors also spoke with leaders and pupils about the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school. An inspector scrutinised leaders' records of pupils' behaviour.
- An inspector visited the school's breakfast and after-school club.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Neil Le Feuvre	Ofsted Inspector
Schelene Ferris	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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