

Inspection of St Thomas Moorside CofE (VA) Primary School

Coleridge Road, Sholver, Oldham, Lancashire OL1 4RL

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 June 2024

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

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 nine 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.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. The school received an ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Act on 28 November 2017. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are well cared for and are happy at school. They learn how to be healthy in mind and body. For example, many pupils take part in a wide range of sporting activities outside of the school day. Pupils are entrusted with a range of leadership roles. They relish these opportunities. Pupils who help to look after Tia, the school's therapy dog, carry out this role with gentle respect. They know that Tia plays a part in helping them to stay mentally well.

Pupils understand how they are expected to behave. Reception-age children act as positive role models to children in the Nursery Year. They learn cooperatively alongside one another. Across the school, pupils do their best to treat others in the same way that they would like to be treated. They value earning rewards for their positive behaviour. For example, pupils wear their 'always' badges with genuine pride to show that they uphold the school's golden promises consistently well.

The school has high expectations for pupils' academic achievement. It has made positive changes to many subject curriculums, including mathematics. Pupils typically achieve well across a broad range of subjects. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

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

The school's 2023 published data shows that a significant proportion of pupils did not meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. In response to this data, the school has acted decisively to improve its early reading curriculum. It has introduced a new phonics programme and made sure that staff are trained to deliver this programme well. Children in the Reception class now build their phonics knowledge securely. Pupils in key stage 1 also learn the sounds that letters represent in a more consistent way than they did previously. However, weaknesses in earlier phonics teaching mean that some pupils have gaps in their reading knowledge. This means that, despite effective support from staff, these pupils struggle to read with fluency and accuracy. On occasion, this hinders how well they access the wider curriculum.

In most other subjects, the school has improved and refined its curriculum over a period of time. It has designed a suitably broad and ambitious curriculum. In doing so, the school has carefully considered staff's workload and well-being, for example by trialling and evaluating the impact of new initiatives before rolling them out to all classes.

The school has set out clearly the knowledge that pupils should learn, and the order in which this should happen. This allows pupils to build their knowledge seamlessly from the early years to Year 6 in most subjects. In the main, teachers carefully introduce, check and revisit the knowledge that pupils should know and remember. Pupils typically achieve well as a result. However, in one or two subjects, improvements to curriculum design are more recent. Pupils have had less time to

develop and connect their learning in these subjects. Consequently, their knowledge is not as secure.

Teachers benefit from high-quality training to deliver most subject curriculums effectively. However, the school has not developed the expertise of some staff who teach and support children's learning in the early years sufficiently well. This means that there is an unevenness in some children's development. This is because some staff are not clear about how to build children's knowledge from the Nursery Year to the Reception Year.

Staff throughout the school identify pupils who may have SEND accurately. This starts in the early years, where children's needs are quickly identified. Staff are skilled at giving pupils with SEND the support that they need so that they can access the same curriculum as their classmates.

The school provides impressive support for pupils' wider development, including their well-being. For example, many pupils start the school day at the breakfast club. This club brings members of the school community together and ensures that pupils arrive on time and are ready to learn.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences, including valuable opportunities to work with pupils from other schools. They learn how to keep safe when they are online. Pupils are well prepared for the changes that will happen to them as they grow up.

Children in the early years listen carefully to adults and follow instructions closely. Older pupils consolidate this positive start and behave well.

The governing body's ambition for all pupils to succeed is palpable. Governors provide insightful challenge and support, to ensure that the school keeps improving. For example, governors make sure that the school takes reasonable steps to improve the attendance of the small number of pupils who do not attend school regularly. These pupils' rates of attendance are improving as a result.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Weaknesses in the delivery of the previous phonics programme mean that some pupils have gaps in their reading knowledge. This hinders how fluently and accurately these pupils read and how well some older pupils keep pace with the other subjects that they study. The school should ensure that, where there are gaps in pupils' reading knowledge, these are quickly remedied so that pupils read with fluency and accuracy.

- In one or two subjects, the curriculums have been recently refined. Pupils have had less time to secure the essential knowledge that they need to build new learning on. The school should ensure that newly revised curriculums are implemented fully so that pupils further strengthen their knowledge in these subjects.
- The school has not ensured that some staff in the early years have the expertise to build on what children already know and can do. This means that some children are not as well prepared for their next steps as they could be. The school should ensure that staff are provided with suitable guidance so that they can build children's knowledge across the early years equally well.

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	105695
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10204467
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	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kathryn Jackson
Headteacher	Adam Laskey (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.stthomasmoorside.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England voluntary-aided school. It is part of the Diocese of Manchester. Its last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in June 2017. The next section 48 inspection is due from September 2025.
- The school is part of the Dove-Shell Federation. The executive headteacher is responsible for leading both schools in the federation. Several other leaders also work across both schools.
- The school operates a breakfast club.
- 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 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 spoke with the executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other leaders in the school. An inspector spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the diocese and a representative of the local authority.
- 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 from Years 1 to 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and physical education. 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 to a sample of pupils about their learning in other areas of the curriculum. They spoke with leaders and reviewed a sample of pupils' work in these subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences of school. They observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and in lessons. An inspector scrutinised leaders' records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and carers as they brought their children to school. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Jackie Stillings, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Peter Berry

Ofsted Inspector

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