

# Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Mary & St Thomas CofE Primary School

Barton Close, St Helens, Merseyside WA10 2HS

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Inspection dates: 28 and 29 January 2025

## **Outcome**

St Mary & St Thomas CofE Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Lyndsey Lewis. This school is part of The Three Saints Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Kirsty Tennyson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Amy Bradley.

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

Pupils embody the school's motto of 'believe, achieve and shine.' They refer to the school as a safe place where everyone is welcome. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They treat each other with respect and kindness. These foundations are strongly laid as soon as children enter school in the Nursery class. Children quickly learn to share, take turns and support one another in their play and learning.

Pupils' conduct in lessons and at playtime is impeccable. They often exceed the high expectations that the school has for their behaviour, academic achievement and personal development. Relationships between staff and pupils are exceptionally strong. Pupils approach their work with great pride and resilience. They talk confidently about their learning and have a real thirst to learn more every day. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve remarkably well and make strong progress through the highly ambitious curriculum.

Pupils benefit from an exciting variety of activities that are deliberately and carefully crafted for them. For example, trips to the opera, farm visits and local museums link expertly to pupils learning. Residential trips to places of significance, such as Buckingham Palace and the Houses of Parliament, help to broaden pupils' horizons.

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

The school's aspirations for pupils are exceptionally high. Nothing but the best will do. Pupils live up to these expectations and become confident and highly articulate learners who are keen to attend school. Across the school, including in the early years, pupils achieve highly. They are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Reading takes centre stage in the school's curriculum offer. The breadth and diversity of author choices are highly impressive. It leads to a thorough understanding of equality and tolerance. The school recognises the importance of teaching pupils to read and how this opens doors for them. Right from the very start, children in the Nursery class develop a love of nursery rhymes and stories. In the Reception Year and Year 1, staff teach the phonics curriculum with fidelity. They make sure that the books that pupils read are carefully matched to the sounds that they know. This helps pupils to gain the secure phonics knowledge that they need to be successful readers. Highly trained staff give pupils prompt help to keep up when required.

The school, in conjunction with leaders from across the trust, has developed a vibrant and extremely ambitious learning journey, which expands pupils' minds and exposes them to experiences beyond their local community. It has clearly and precisely identified the key knowledge that pupils will acquire from the beginning of early years to the end of Year 6. The school makes sure that pupils learn new content in a logical way. This enables pupils to build firm foundations for future learning.

Highly trained staff teach the curriculum with expertise and enthusiasm. Their passion for learning is infectious. They skilfully design learning activities that help pupils make strong connections between what they already know and any new learning. Pupils develop detailed knowledge across all areas of the curriculum. For example, Year 6 pupils' understanding of the theory of plate tectonics was highly impressive.

The school has equally high expectations for pupils with SEND. Pupils' needs are quickly and accurately identified. Staff adapt the delivery of the curriculum so that pupils with SEND can thrive and achieve alongside their peers. Equality of opportunity is at the core of the school's work. Consequently, these pupils participate fully in school life.

The programme to promote pupils' personal development is noteworthy. It is well designed to ensure that pupils have the knowledge and skills to be well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about potential careers, financial security, healthy relationships and what it means to give consent. They know how to keep themselves safe online and in the local community. Pupils embrace their various leadership responsibilities. For example, pupils act as subject ambassadors, school councillors or playground leaders. Pupils in school have a voice and know that they are heard and listened to. They talk with confidence about being prepared for life beyond the school.

Trust leaders and members of the local governing body are absolute in their vision to ensure that every pupil thrives academically and socially. They strive for the next initiative or development opportunity which might make a difference for the pupils and staff of St

Mary and St Thomas. Staff are proud to work at the school. They are appreciative of the support that they receive from leaders within the school and across the trust. Staff feel valued, inspired and recognised for the difference that they make to the lives of pupils within the community that they serve.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **Background**

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in February 2019.

## **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>	142161
<b>Local authority</b>	St Helens
<b>Inspection number</b>	10348318
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	231
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Amy Bradley
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Kirsty Tennyson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lyndsey Lewis
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sm-st.co.uk">www.sm-st.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	26 and 27 February 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of The Three Saints Academy Trust.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Liverpool. Its last section 48 inspection took place in 2018. The next section 48 inspection will be scheduled to take place by the end of 2027.
- The school runs a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.

- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to some pupils read from Year 1 to Year 3.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff.
- The inspector met with the CEO, representatives of the board of trustees and the local governing body. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority and the diocese.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including records of governing body meetings, the school's evaluation of its strengths and areas for improvement and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector met with leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school and observed their behaviour at lunchtime. She took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- The inspector spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. She considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- The inspector met with parents at the start of the school day. She took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

### **Inspection team**

Sue Dymond, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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