

# Inspection of St Thomas CofE Junior and Infant School

Church Street, Golborne, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 3TH

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Inspection dates: 26–27 February 2020

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

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

Pupils really enjoy learning and are seldom absent from school. The headteacher and staff make sure that they feel at home. Pupils excitedly told us about Thelma, their well-being labrador, who contributes to the school's calm and happy ethos. Pupils we spoke to said that they feel safe and know whom to go to with concerns. Those who responded to school and/or Ofsted questionnaires agreed. They said that there is no bullying and that teachers make sure that everyone behaves well.

Staff make sure that pupils have opportunities outside the classroom to add to what they learn in lessons. After school, many enjoy cultural, sporting, creative and scientific activities including gardening, choir and drama. Pupils talked to us about school trips which gave them first-hand experience of things they were learning in subjects such as geography, history and art and helped them to remember what they had learned in class.

Staff's expectations of what pupils should achieve are high. By the time pupils reach Year 6, their progress in reading, writing and mathematics is better than that of most pupils across the country. However, some pupils in key stage 1 do not master the basics of reading as quickly as they could.

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

Leaders have developed a wide and interesting plan for learning which fully meets the requirements of the national curriculum in all year groups. They have carefully thought about the order in which teaching presents topics so that pupils build on knowledge, skills and understanding progressively.

The school's plans for teaching English and mathematics have transformed teaching and standards in these subjects, especially in mathematics and writing. By the end of Year 6, the progress of pupils in these subjects is in the top 20% of all schools nationally. In mathematics, pupils use reasoning and problem-solving skills in every lesson. The programme of work in English systematically develops the separate skills pupils need to read and write well.

Pupils benefit from a consistent approach to teaching from Reception to Year 6. Leaders give teachers guidance on how they expect them to approach the agreed programmes of work. Pupils talk and write about their learning in a sophisticated manner because teachers routinely develop subject-specific vocabulary.

All units of work begin with a 'wow' lesson to capture pupils' imagination. For example, the Great Fire of London history topic began with pupils setting fire to cardboard models of houses. At the start of each unit, teachers go over what pupils should already know. Then pupils decide what else they would like to learn and the key questions they would like to answer. This approach contributes to their ability to remember what they have learned. In addition, they take photographs and make

videos of work and store them online. They refer to them if they need reminders, even of work done several years ago.

Leaders have made sure that reading is important in the school. Everyone who teaches reading has undertaken training, which has contributed to improving standards across the school. Pupils enjoy reading the school's wide variety of books and wear their bronze, silver and gold reading badges with pride. Adults frequently listen to pupils read and guidance for parents and carers helps them to do the same at home.

The teaching of phonics is well organised using a commercial scheme and books which are graded. However, although teachers frequently check on pupils' reading, information from this is not used well to plan for those who are falling behind to catch up quickly during Reception and Year 1. As a result, too few pupils have mastered the basics of reading by the start of Year 2.

Staff make sure that children settle well into Reception and are safe. They teach them to concentrate, follow instructions and take turns. Plans for learning are ambitious and each year more and more children are ready for their move to Year 1.

Teachers have the same level of ambition for all pupils. Leaders take account of the reasons why some individuals may find learning difficult and put support in place. Staff make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils participate in all aspects of school life. Teaching assistants skilfully help pupils to reach their potential. Pupils with SEND learn the same things as their peers but teachers give them extra help, including by adapting learning materials and questions.

The school's Christian ethos is evident in all aspects of school life. Relationships are very positive. Pupils talk enthusiastically about respecting all people. However, their knowledge of other religions, races and cultures is not well developed. Pupils behave well in class, so no learning time is lost.

Staff are loyal to the school and appreciate the efforts that the headteacher and governors make to ensure that workloads are reasonable. Staff feel valued by leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have put in place highly effective systems to make sure that pupils and staff are safe. Everyone in the school understands their role in safeguarding. There is a safeguarding governor who works with the headteacher to make sure that the school's records of checks on staff's suitability for working with children are complete and up to date. All staff undertake training and know how to spot if a pupil is having problems. They keep careful records of actions and involve specialist support from outside the school if it is needed. Staff and visitors teach pupils how to

keep themselves safe, including on the internet. Staff contact the parents of pupils who are absent to make sure that they are safe from harm.

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

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

- Too few pupils reach the expected standard in the phonics check at the end of Year 1. As a result, these pupils spend too much time in Year 2 learning the basics of reading instead of developing fluency and comprehension. Leaders should check that phonics teaching gives all pupils the opportunity to keep up with the intended pace of the phonics programme. They should ensure that they regularly identify pupils, groups or classes that are falling behind and put in place effective strategies to help them to catch up as soon as possible.
- The school's ethos and teaching encourage pupils to respect everyone, including people who are different from themselves in relation to characteristics such as race, religion and sexuality. Pupils speak enthusiastically about diversity and equality. However, they know too little about other religions, races and cultures. This means that they are not prepared as well as possible for living in modern Britain. Leaders should ensure that pupils have opportunities to develop deeper knowledge and understanding of the history, religious practices and customs of people who are different from themselves.

## **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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## **Further information**

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	106487
<b>Local authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	10087761
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	207
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Ann Chantler
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joanne Woods
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.golbornesaintthomas.wigan.sch.uk">www.golbornesaintthomas.wigan.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England school. The most recent section 48 inspection was in October 2015.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We held discussions with staff, middle and senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- We looked at a range of documentation, including curriculum plans and information regarding safeguarding.
- We considered 13 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire), including 14 free-text comments. We also considered 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and 19 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils. In addition, we considered the school's own pupils' and parents' questionnaires.

- As part of this inspection, we did deep dives in reading, mathematics, science and history. For these deep dives, we scrutinised curriculum planning, the published results of national tests and pupils' work. We had discussions with subject leaders and class teachers. We met formally with four groups of pupils to talk about their work. We heard pupils read.

### **Inspection team**

Liz Kelly, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Stephen Rigby

Ofsted Inspector

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