

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Thomas CofE Junior and Infant School

Church Street, Golborne, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 3TH

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 March 2025

Outcome

St Thomas CofE Junior and Infant School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Strong, caring relationships between staff and pupils are palpable in this welcoming school. Staff model respect and this is reflected in the way that pupils treat each other. Pupils feel happy and safe in this nurturing environment.

The school has high aspirations for all pupils. It ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported expertly to succeed. Pupils live up to the school's high expectations of what they can achieve. They are academically, socially and emotionally well prepared for secondary school.

Pupils' behaviour is positive. They are friendly, polite and caring. From the Reception class to Year 6, there is a busy working atmosphere in classrooms. This enables pupils to focus on their learning. Transition times are calm and orderly, while lunchtimes are chatty and sociable occasions.

Pupils relish opportunities to contribute to the school and to the wider community. For example, members of the gardening club proudly show off the blooming daffodils they planted as bulbs, and the school council speaks excitedly about delivering food donations to a local food bank. Pupils discover new hobbies and develop their talents through attending a wide range of after-school clubs. These change each term and include choir, art, board games and a variety of sports.

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

An ambitious curriculum sets out what pupils need to learn from the Reception class through to Year 6. The important knowledge, skills and vocabulary are organised in a logical order for each subject. Pupils make connections in their learning. For instance, pupils in Year 6 explain confidently how their earlier efforts to grasp multiplication facts help them to manipulate fractions. Younger pupils use their previous practice of jumping and rolling techniques to create sequences in physical education.

The school's systematic approach to teaching early English and mathematics gives pupils a secure foundation in key skills and knowledge. However, when pupils write in other subjects, basic errors are sometimes not addressed effectively enough. As a result, some pupils repeat key mistakes in their spellings or punctuation skills. This hinders their writing fluency across the curriculum.

Reading is a priority. In the early years, adults share stories and rhymes with children to develop their language and communication skills. Staff deliver the phonics programme expertly. Pupils who struggle to keep up receive the extra support that they need. Most pupils quickly become confident, fluent readers. Pupils of all ages enjoy reading at home and in school. They are spurred on by the 'reading badges', which they wear with pride. The school's carefully considered 'novel curriculum' links each class with an author, introducing pupils to a wide range of high-quality texts.

The school forms strong, trusting relationships with pupils and their parents and carers. The school puts pupils' interests at the heart of its work. Parents appreciate this support. This is particularly true for families of pupils with SEND. The school ensures that any additional needs are identified quickly. Staff adapt learning activities and provide appropriate support to help pupils with SEND to progress well through the curriculum.

There are high expectations of pupils' behaviour. There is a clear policy in place, developed through consultation with staff and pupils. Pupils say that staff apply this policy fairly and that it works. For pupils who may find managing their own behaviour challenging, there are strategies in place to support them to regulate their feelings. Some older pupils articulate maturely how they have been helped to change negative behaviours. In the Reception class, children play cooperatively and happily take turns. They show great perseverance and remain engrossed in self-directed activities for sustained periods. However, sometimes, staff's interactions with children in the early years are not effective. This is because staff sometimes do not deepen children's learning and extend their vocabulary.

The school provides well for pupils' personal development. Older pupils describe how fundamental British values can be seen in action in school and everyday life. Children in the Reception class learn about healthy and unhealthy foods. They know how milk helps to keep their bones strong. Older pupils have a secure grasp of how to keep physically and mentally healthy, including the importance of exercise, diet and sleep. They have a mature understanding of personal safety, including healthy relationships and how to protect themselves when online. Pupils are well prepared for life beyond school.

Skilled governors work closely with the school. They provide effective support and challenge to ensure that it continues to improve. Staff enjoy working at the school. They value the consideration that is given to their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In subjects other than English, pupils' spelling and punctuation errors are not identified and corrected swiftly. As a result, some pupils continue to repeat the same mistakes over time. This hinders their writing fluency. The school should ensure that pupils' basic writing skills are reinforced effectively across the curriculum.
- Sometimes, staff in the early years do not make effective use of their interactions with children. This means that, at times, some children's learning, including their understanding of new vocabulary, is not as secure as it could be. The school should ensure that staff in the early years have the necessary expertise to extend children's vocabulary and learning through purposeful interactions.

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 to be good 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 good for overall effectiveness in February 2020.

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	106487
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10377929
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Angela Barton
Headteacher	Joanne Woods
Website	www.golbornesaintthomas.wigan.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 February 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has appointed a new chair of the governing body since the previous inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- This school is a Church of England voluntary-aided primary school in the Diocese of Blackburn. The school's last section 48 inspection, for schools with a religious character, took place in December 2022. The next section 48 inspection is expected during the 2026/2027 academic year.

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 held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. She also spoke with subject leaders, staff and pupils.
- The inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She also spoke with representatives from the local authority and the diocese.
- The inspector observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. She spoke to some pupils about their learning and other aspects of school life.
- 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 met with leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development. She observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and throughout the school day.
- The inspector looked at a range of policies and documents relating to pupils' welfare and education, including SEND.
- The inspector spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. She took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- The inspector spoke with some parents during the inspection. She also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Sharon Cowey, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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