

Inspection of a good school: St Thomas' Church of England Primary School Heaton Chapel

Wellington Road North, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, Cheshire SK4 4QG

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 June 2023

Outcome

St Thomas' Church of England Primary School Heaton Chapel continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. All pupils are made to feel welcome regardless of any differences. Pupils appreciate the additional help that staff provide for them whenever they need it. Parents and carers speak highly of the academic and pastoral support that the school provides for their children.

Leaders have raised their expectations of what pupils should achieve, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils work hard and are keen to do well. Pupils achieve well.

Leaders set high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and staff. They welcome visitors with a friendly smile. Bullying is not tolerated. Leaders deal with any rare bullying incidents effectively. Pupils know that they can share any concerns or worries with a trusted adult. This helps them to feel safe.

Pupils take on leadership roles, such as eco and school councillors and reading ambassadors. Pupils support the local community. They sing at the local train station to entertain passengers and they play board games with residents at a nearby care home. These opportunities help pupils to learn how to become a good citizen.

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

Leaders have worked with staff to design a curriculum from the Reception Year to Year 6 that is engaging for all pupils. They have ensured that the new subject curriculums meet the ambition of the national curriculum. Leaders have identified the important knowledge that they want pupils to learn. They have a clear rationale for the curriculum decisions that they have made based on the context and locality of the school. Leaders have

thought carefully about the order in which knowledge is taught, so that pupils build on what they know and can do. However, leaders have not sufficiently considered the knowledge that children in the Nursery Year should learn. This means that these children are not fully prepared for the Reception Year.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They have benefited from effective training and support to enable them to deliver the curriculum effectively. They design learning activities that enable pupils, including those pupils with SEND, to learn and remember the important knowledge. Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding of what they are learning. This helps teachers to identify those pupils who may need additional support and to address any misconceptions if they arise. Pupils achieve well.

Leaders are ambitious that every pupil, including those with SEND, will learn to read. They have recently introduced a new phonics programme from the beginning of the Reception Year. All staff have had the training and support to deliver the phonics programme. However, some staff are still developing their understanding of this programme. Teachers ensure that pupils read books that allow them to practise the sounds they are learning. Those pupils who require additional support get the help that they need to catch up quickly. Most pupils become fluent and accurate readers.

Older pupils read a wide range of literature and have a strong knowledge of different authors. Leaders have ensured that there are a range of books for pupils to read, which reflect the diversity of the school.

Leaders have systems in place to identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND. They ensure that teachers adapt learning activities, so that pupils with SEND can learn the curriculum alongside their peers.

Pupils work and play well together. The school is calm and orderly. Children in the early years quickly learn the school rules and routines. Pupils are able to get on with their learning without distractions. Some pupils are trained to be restorative champions. They help their peers sort out any occasional fallings-out in the playground.

Leaders have thought carefully about how best to promote pupils' personal development. Year 4 pupils learn to play a musical instrument. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 5 work towards achieving their 'Young Leaders Award'. Leaders offer a range of extra-curricular clubs, such as coding, dance and sports clubs. These enable pupils to develop their talents and interests. Pupils know about different religions and cultures. Pupils learn about what makes a healthy relationship. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They feel valued by leaders. They appreciate leaders' consideration of their workload and well-being.

Governors have an accurate understanding of the quality of education at the school. They support and challenge leaders effectively to carry out their roles and responsibilities to the highest standard.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is given the highest attention by school leaders. They ensure that all staff complete the required training. This means that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities to keep pupils safe.

Leaders know their pupils and families well. Staff report any concerns that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders follow up assiduously on these concerns. They work well with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive timely support.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through the curriculum, for example, when playing and working online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not identified the important knowledge that children in the Nursery Year should learn. This hinders how well these children achieve. Leaders should finalise their curriculum thinking for the Nursery Year, so that children are well prepared for the Reception class.
- Some staff do not deliver the phonics programme as leaders intend. As a result, some pupils do not build their phonics knowledge as securely or as quickly as they should. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the knowledge and skills to deliver the phonics programme effectively.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2014.

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](#)' 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

Unique reference number	106128
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10268775
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	640
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Susie Oldfield
Headteacher	Louise Loynes
Website	www.st-thomasheaton.stockport.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Church of England primary school. The school had its most recent section 48 inspection in November 2018.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- The governing body manage breakfast and after-school provisions.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body. She held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Diocese of Manchester.

- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They considered the responses to Ofsted’s staff and pupil surveys. The lead inspector spoke with parents before school to gather their views and opinions about the school.
- The inspectors examined a range of safeguarding documents. They made checks on staff recruitment. They spoke with staff to check how well they understood their safeguarding responsibilities. Additionally, the inspectors explored the staff’s views about their workload and well-being.
- The inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour at playtimes and in lessons. They spoke with pupils to gather their views about behaviour and safeguarding in their school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history and geography. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons and spoke with teachers. The inspectors spoke with pupils and looked at examples of their work.

Inspection team

Bev Dolman, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Katie Hague

Ofsted Inspector

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