

St Thomas CofE Primary School

Address: Molyneux Road, Westhoughton, Bolton, Lancashire, BL5 3HP

Unique reference number (URN): 105234

Inspection report: 19 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ **Safeguarding standards met**

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The school's wider offer is particularly effective. Leaders have tailored a thoughtful and varied provision that supports pupils both academically and personally. This includes a well established personal, social and health education curriculum that builds pupils' knowledge over time about important aspects such as physical health and mental wellbeing. The relationships education curriculum supports pupils to know what it means to be a good friend and learn to understand different types of families.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of clubs, music lessons and sporting activities. Many pupils represent the school in sporting competitions and take pride in their achievements. Participation is high for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Popular choices include drumba, dance, orienteering and sports' commentary. Leaders track pupils' participation in clubs. They ensure that places are offered fairly and that pupils' interests are taken into account. In addition, leaders use funding carefully to make sure that no pupil misses out on opportunities.

Pupils learn about equality, diversity and respect through lessons and wider experiences. They speak confidently about treating others fairly and understand the importance of inclusion. Resilience is nurtured and pupils learn to keep going even when faced with challenge. Confidence is actively developed. Pupils recognise how staff encourage them, celebrate achievements and help them speak up. Pastoral support is effective so that pupils feel safe, happy and well cared for. Staff know pupils well and respond quickly when support is needed.

Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. School councillors, mathematics ambassadors and playground buddies are roles carried out with pride because they help to improve the school.

Transitions into new classes and schools are planned carefully so that pupils feel prepared. Residential visits and whole school events further enrich pupils' experiences. Leaders regularly review the school's work and listen carefully to feedback from pupils and parents and carers to further enhance the provision on offer.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Leaders ensure that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve well across the curriculum. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, develop secure skills in phonics, spelling and number facts. Leaders identified the need to improve handwriting and recent work shows positive improvements in the quality of pupils' writing. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is above the national average.

In lessons, pupils typically demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding. For example, pupils speak confidently about key historical periods. They explain the impact of the Romans, Vikings and Saxons on Britain and make links to modern society. In religious education, pupils recall learning about different faiths, including Hinduism and festivals such as Holi.

Leaders recognise that pupils' knowledge is less secure in a small number of subjects. They are taking action to strengthen teaching in these areas so that pupils develop more detailed knowledge and understanding over time.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils enjoy school and want to attend. Attendance is above the national average, including for pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders and staff know pupils well and identify barriers that may affect pupils' attendance. They take timely and appropriate action to address these and work closely with families and external agencies. For individual pupils, targeted support leads to improved attendance over time. Overall, leaders' work ensures that most pupils attend regularly and are well placed to benefit from their learning.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and these are clearly communicated to staff and pupils. As a result, behaviour is typically calm and orderly across the school and pupils say they do not experience bullying. Pupils are kind and polite to each other and to staff. This contributes to a positive school environment. Pupils report that they feel safe. Leaders use suspensions and other sanctions appropriately when needed. Staff generally apply the behaviour policy consistently. However, leaders recognise that a small number of pupils need more effective support to meet the same high standards. They are taking steps to strengthen provision to help all pupils to regulate their behaviour successfully.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have acted decisively since the last inspection to strengthen the curriculum. They have introduced new subject curriculums and most are now securely embedded. As a result, teaching helps pupils build knowledge and skills effectively over time. Leaders have accurately identified a small number of subjects that require further refinement and have plans in place to strengthen these areas further.

The curriculum is ambitious and well organised. Leaders have carefully identified the important knowledge and skills that pupils should learn from Nursery to Year 6. This helps learning to build logically from one year to the next and enables pupils to remember more over time. Teaching is typically effective across the school. Staff revisit prior learning and place an emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary. Teachers use assessment to check pupils' understanding and identify any gaps in their learning. Staff address pupils' misconceptions so that pupils remain confident and secure in their learning.

Leaders ensure that early reading, writing and mathematics receive a high priority. Staff teach these subjects effectively and help pupils to develop secure foundations for future

learning. Teachers adapt learning carefully for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that all pupils access the full curriculum successfully.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have introduced a new curriculum in the early years. This has been carefully designed to ensure that children in the Nursery are settled, increasingly confident and ready to take part in activities. In the Reception class, learning and play enable children to develop their independence. The focus on important learning, such as early counting and reading, enables most children to be prepared for Year 1.

Caring staff build secure relationships with children. This helps children to feel safe and content at school. Routines are established as soon as children start school. In the Nursery class, children settle quickly each morning upon arrival and begin familiar activities. Adults provide clear guidance and encourage children to follow routines and expectations.

Children benefit from the range of provision available. For instance, in Reception, children ride trikes on the outdoor track to develop their coordination. Children enjoy mixing colours as they paint and making sculptures with different textures and materials. Staff support children's play and learning through conversation and questioning. Adults check children's understanding and provide appropriate support. As a result, children make positive progress from their starting points.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified at an early stage. Leaders work with staff to refine systems for setting targets and monitoring pupils' progress. Leaders ensure that pupils' needs are assessed and reviewed over time. Barriers to pupils' learning and wellbeing are identified. Staff take suitable steps to reduce these so that pupils can access the same learning and opportunities as their peers.

Additional funding is used thoughtfully to support disadvantaged pupils. For example, pupil premium funding helps pupils to keep up with their learning, attend breakfast club and take part in wider opportunities. Pupils with SEND receive appropriate support that is generally matched to their needs. Leaders provide suitable support for pupils who are known, or have previously been known, to social care, with a focus on their welfare and readiness to learn. Other pupils who face barriers to their learning or wellbeing are supported through pastoral care and targeted provision.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have identified appropriate priorities and taken suitable action to improve the school. There is evidence of positive impact, for example, in the curriculum and early years provision. Leaders continue to review their work regularly and maintain a focus on what will benefit pupils most in the longer term.

Governors are knowledgeable and kept well informed. They receive clear and regular updates about the school's performance. This helps them to ask relevant questions and provide appropriate challenge and support. Governors meet their statutory duties and maintain a clear view of the school's direction and priorities.

Leaders work effectively with external partners, including the local authority and the diocese. These partnerships provide valuable guidance and support for both leaders and staff. Leaders also ensure that staff have access to suitable training. This helps staff to build their expertise and improve their day-to-day practice in the classroom. Leaders, including governors, pay close attention to staff wellbeing and workload. Staff say that they feel valued and supported in their roles. As a result, morale across the school is positive and staff enjoy their work.

Parents and carers speak positively about the school. They say their children are happy and enjoy learning. Leaders communicate clearly with families and engage well with the wider community.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are proud to attend St Thomas CofE Primary School. Staff know every pupil and build warm and caring relationships with them. This helps pupils to feel safe, valued and included. Parents and carers describe the school as 'like a family'. Staff create a welcoming environment where pupils develop confidence and feel a sense of belonging. This starts in the early years, where the youngest children enjoy being with their friends and learn to respect one another.

Pupils enjoy learning and speak positively about their lessons. They typically work hard and achieve well across the curriculum. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach standards above the national averages. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress from their starting points. Disadvantaged pupils also achieve well when compared with disadvantaged pupils nationally. Pupils leave the school well prepared for the next stages of their education.

Most pupils behave well and live out the school's Christian values of 'love, respect and forgiveness'. They treat adults and each other with kindness and consideration. Bullying is rare because pupils understand the importance of caring for others. Staff encourage pupils to share any worries and pupils trust adults to listen and respond quickly. Attendance is high because staff work closely with families and support pupils who need help to attend regularly.

Pupils develop their talents through sport, music and a range of clubs and competitions. They enjoy taking part in community events and proudly represent the school. Leadership opportunities and fundraising activities help pupils to build confidence. Pupils learn to support others and take pride in their achievements. Pupils leave the school as caring and responsible young citizens who are ready to succeed in the next stage of their education.

Next steps

- In a small number of subjects, leaders should strengthen teaching so that pupils develop more secure subject-specific knowledge.
 - Leaders should further embed the school's approach to handwriting to enable pupils to write with more fluency and accuracy.
 - Leaders should further strengthen support so that the small number of pupils who struggle to regulate their behaviour meet expectations more consistently and engage successfully in learning.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Graham Andrews.

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

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the acting headteacher, other leaders and staff, a representative of the diocese, a representative of the local authority and members of the local governing board, including the chair during the inspection.

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The school is part of the Diocese of Manchester and had its last section 48 inspection, for schools with a religious character, in January 2025. The next section 48 inspection is due in 2028/29.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Since the last inspection there has been a change in the school's leadership. Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed since the last inspection.

Headteacher: Gina Linney

Lead inspector:

Frith Murphy, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Julie Stevens, Ofsted Inspector

Mark Ward, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 19 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

236

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

210

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

7.51%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.12%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

10.17%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	76%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	78%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	77%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	73%	60%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	82%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	81%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	87%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	77%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	83%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	81%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	81%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	87%	71%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	87%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	84%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	90%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	87%	73%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	78%	46%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	89%	62%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	78%	59%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	89%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	78%	68%	10 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	89%	80%	9 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	78%	78%	0 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	89%	80%	9 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been

mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	3.9%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.8%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.0%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	6.5%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.9%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	3.8%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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