

Inspection of St Thomas's CofE Primary School

Kendal Green, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 5PP

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 September 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this popular and friendly school. The school has high expectations for pupils' academic success. It fosters pupils' curiosity and concentration effectively from a young age. As a result, pupils generally achieve well in many subjects.

Children in early years settle in right from the start. Staff ensure they are ready for learning in Year 1 and beyond.

Staff provide effective support for pupils' mental health and well-being. This helps pupils to become confident and successful learners. There is a strong sense of community where pupils feel that they belong. The school has a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils know where the boundaries are. As a result, pupils are respectful and sensitive to each other's needs.

They make a positive contribution to the life of the school. For example, older pupils act as role models to younger ones. They help those who are new in school to feel happy and settled. Pupils take a full part in school life.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit from a wide variety of clubs and trips, which broaden their experience. These include school exchange visits and clubs, such as sports, arts and computing clubs.

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

The school has designed an ambitious, high-quality curriculum, which is enhanced with rich, well-planned experiences. These enrichment opportunities ignite pupils' interests and broaden their aspirations and horizons. From the nursery provision through to Year 6, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, attain high standards.

Staff are well trained to support children in their learning. For example, in early years, staff use every interaction with children as a teaching opportunity. They plan activities carefully to develop children's speech and language effectively.

In most subjects, pupils build up secure knowledge and skills as they progress through the school. Subject content is broken down into small steps of learning. However, in a few subjects, staff sometimes do not identify and address misconceptions. They are not clear about how well pupils have learned what was intended. This affects how well pupils learn in these subjects.

The school identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND accurately and quickly. Staff are well trained to meet the needs of these pupils so that they learn the same content as their peers.

The school has prioritised the teaching of reading. Staff benefit from regular, specific training to support children's ability to recognise and read sounds in the early years. This precise training ensures that the approach to the teaching of phonics is consistent and

effective. By the end of key stage 1, most pupils, including those with SEND, become fluent readers. Weaker readers are well supported so that they achieve well over time.

Older pupils demonstrate a love of reading. They use a range of vocabulary across the curriculum. Pupils spoke positively about their favourite books and enjoy using the well-resourced school library.

Pupils behave well in lessons and stay focused on their learning. Outside of lessons, pupils demonstrate good manners and show respect towards staff and each other.

The school has rightly prioritised high expectations of pupils' attendance and punctuality. It works closely with parents and carers to overcome any barriers that may prevent pupils from attending school as often as they should. As a result, pupils' attendance is improving over time.

The school ensures that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils are taught that all people are equal. They have a firm understanding of the different faiths in the world and how to avoid stereotypes. Pupils take on responsibilities, such as school council, to develop their leadership skills. They help staff to improve the school, such as deciding on the huge array of extra-curricular activities on offer. There is a very strong uptake across these opportunities.

Pupils access a vast range of opportunities to learn more about the wider world. For example, the school offers various educational trips to different areas of the country, residential visits and active links with a school in Africa. Pupils have a deep appreciation of, and respect for, the many differences that exist between people.

Governors provide effective support and challenge to the school to continually improve the quality of education that pupils receive. They, alongside the school, have an expectation of continual improvement. Governors carefully decide priorities with consideration to staff's work-life balance. Staff value this support and feel very proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, misconceptions in learning are not always identified promptly by the teachers. As a result, pupils may develop gaps in their knowledge and learning. The school should ensure that misconceptions are picked up quickly and addressed so that pupils develop secure knowledge and skills in all subjects.

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	112322
Local authority	Westmorland and Furness
Inspection number	10348106
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	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co-Chairs of governing body	Anne Hoe and Rachel Sutherland
Headteacher	Maggie Cole
Website	www.stthomasschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 April 2019 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternate provision for its pupils.
- The school offers provision for three-year old children in the early years.
- As a school with a distinctive Christian ethos, the school was last subject to a Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) in December 2019. At that time, the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a Church of England school were judged to be excellent.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading and phonics, mathematics, physical education and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also held discussions and looked at samples of work with other subject leaders.
- Inspectors met with leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documentation relating to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day. They took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. There was no response to the Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Keith Wright, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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