

Inspection of St Thomas Primary School

Union Street, Exeter, Devon EX2 9BB

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 February 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this caring school. Leaders expect every pupil to do their best. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and live up to leaders' high expectations. Pupils develop a deep understanding of how the 'Learning 4 Life' skills help them to learn well. When talking about perseverance, one pupil said, 'Making a mistake is beautiful because it helps you to learn.'

If pupils have any worries, they say there are many trusted adults they can talk to. They use the worry boxes in each classroom to share their thoughts with staff. Pupils have confidence that staff will take their concerns seriously. This helps them to feel safe. Pupils found it hard to remember the last occasion of bullying. They say it happens rarely. Pupils are polite to each other. Older pupils act as peer mediators to help younger pupils make the right decisions during social times. This supports all pupils to conduct themselves well.

Parents and carers are supportive of the school. They find leaders to be approachable. Parents say that leaders respond well to any concerns they raise. They appreciate the clear information they receive about their children's progress through the curriculum.

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

There have been many recent changes to leadership roles at the school. Trust leaders have overseen a period of turbulence well to minimise the impact on the quality of education that pupils receive. Trust leaders provide ongoing support to ensure new staff receive the help they need to fulfil their roles effectively.

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Starting in the early years, leaders set out the most important knowledge that pupils need to know and remember in each subject. Pupils regularly recap their prior learning. This helps them to link their new learning to what they already know. Most curriculum leaders have expert subject knowledge. They skilfully check that the sequencing of the curriculum helps pupils to build their knowledge well. However, curriculum leaders in some foundation subjects do not monitor the implementation of their subjects with enough precision. Teachers in these subjects, do not always use assessment well enough to check pupils' prior knowledge. As a result, pupils do not know and remember as much as they could.

Pupils with SEND have targets to support their learning. Teachers think about how to best help pupils to become confident and independent. However, the support pupils receive to help them to meet their learning targets is not consistently effective. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they could.

Leaders are determined for all pupils to become confident readers. Reading starts straight away in the early years where children quickly learn the sound each letter

makes. Children use their phonic knowledge to read with increasing accuracy as they move to Year 1. Staff benefit from phonics training. This gives them the up-to-date knowledge they need to teach phonics with accuracy. Staff carefully monitor the progress pupils make through the phonics programme. Very few pupils fall behind. If they do, they receive the support they need to catch up quickly. Teachers precisely match pupils' reading books to the sounds they know. Pupils develop into confident and fluent readers. Parents speak highly of the information they receive from leaders about how to support their children to learn to read.

Pupils enjoy the range of roles of responsibilities that leaders provide. They take their responsibilities seriously. Pupils learn about democracy through voting for representatives on the school council. They see the impact of their decision-making, such as the development of the new behaviour policy. Pupils enjoy the impressive variety of extra-curricular activities that leaders provide. They are particularly fond of the card-making club where they create celebration cards to share with family and friends.

Most pupils behave well. There is a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour across the school. Staff and pupils treat each other with respect. Leaders focus on building strong relationships as the key to helping some pupils to improve their behaviour. Pupils know that all positive relationships rely on trust.

Staff feel that leaders take the time to consider their workload and well-being. They feel part of a strong team working towards a shared goal. Staff say that leaders are responsive to their training needs. Governors fulfil their roles well. They ask the right questions to check on the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders promote a strong culture of safeguarding. They deliver safeguarding training that helps staff understand the procedures for keeping pupils safe. Staff identify pupils who cause concern and record their concerns with accuracy. Leaders take prompt action to secure the help that vulnerable families need.

Governors have an in-depth knowledge of safeguarding. They make sure that leaders' day-to-day systems and procedures for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils learn how to keep safe online. They share a range of examples, such as not sharing personal information and reporting anything suspicious.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The support pupils with SEND receive to help them to meet their learning targets is not consistently effective. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not learn as

well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that the support all pupils with SEND receive helps them to learn the curriculum well.

- Some foundation subject leaders do not monitor the implementation of their subject with enough precision. In these subjects, teachers do not always use assessment well enough to check pupils' prior knowledge. Pupils do not know and remember as much as they could. Leaders need to develop the role of the subject leader and the use of assessment in foundation subjects to ensure that pupils' learning builds on what they already know.

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	143191
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10241067
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Suzannah Curtis
Headteacher	Dan Jenkins
Website	www.stthomasprimaryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 and 27 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The acting headteacher has been in position since March 2022.
- St Thomas Primary School is part of Exeter Learning Academy Trust.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.

- Inspectors spoke with school leaders, subject leaders, parents, pupils and representatives from the trust.
- An inspector listened to pupils read.
- To evaluate safeguarding, inspectors spoke to the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors also spoke with staff, governors and pupils, and evaluated record-keeping and staff training.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted’s online survey for parents, and comments made by parents online during the inspection. They also evaluated responses to Ofsted’s staff survey and pupil survey.
- The lead inspector received and considered letters from parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Jane Dennis, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Craig Hayes

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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