School report

St Thomas Moorside CofE (VA) Primary School

Coleridge Road, Sholver, Oldham, Lancashire, OL1 4RL

Inspection dates	23–24 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	**Outstanding**	**1**
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- This is an exceptionally happy and caring school where, as one parent commented, 'They always go the extra mile to help.' All pupils are valued and respected, expectations of what they can achieve are high and pupils are helped to believe in themselves. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.
- Children get off to a flying start in the early years. Adults get to know the children quickly, are sensitive to their needs and interests, and plan exciting activities so that children are eager to learn.
- Pupils continue to build on this excellent foundation throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. All groups of pupils make rapid progress, which is continuing to accelerate.
- Teachers plan work that is challenging and extremely well matched to pupils' different needs. Highly skilled and experienced teaching assistants play a very valuable role in supporting pupils' learning. Pupils say that teachers make lessons 'fun and interesting'.
- The school's new marking policy encourages pupils to reflect on their learning, as well as receiving and responding to specific written guidance from teachers. On occasion, however, the new policy is not fully implemented.
- Pupils feel extremely safe, secure and well looked after. They behave very well at all times and are unfailingly polite and considerate towards each other and adults. They take considerable pride in their work and are keen to do well.
- The curriculum is exceptionally well organised. It provides a range of rich experiences which develop pupils' understanding of the world around them and prepares them very well for life in modern Britain. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- The executive headteacher and head of school provide inspirational leadership. They lead by example and ensure that leaders at all levels have the skills and confidence they need in order to fulfil their roles. Staff morale is high and teamwork between staff at all levels is key to this school's success.
- Governors know the school extremely well and are regularly involved in school life. They provide strong support for leaders within the school but also ask challenging questions. This has contributed significantly to improvements, particularly in pupils' achievement and in the quality of teaching, since the last inspection.
- There is no hint of complacency in this school. Leaders, staff and governors are committed to and successful in doing the very best for all the pupils in their care. The school is well placed to continue improving.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes, including three observations carried out jointly with the executive headteacher. They observed the teaching of reading skills and listened to pupils read. The inspectors also observed teaching in small support groups. Together with senior leaders, they looked at examples of pupils' work to gain a view of teaching and learning over time.
- The inspectors held meetings with pupils, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. They observed and talked with pupils at lunchtimes and during their break times.
- The inspectors spoke with parents informally before and after school, and as they came into school with their children in the early years classes. They took account of the school's own surveys of parents' views, one letter from a parent and of the 20 questionnaires returned by staff. There were no published responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's most recent data on pupils' attainment and progress across the school, the school's own view of its effectiveness and its plans for improvement. They also considered information relating to checks on the quality of teaching.
- In addition, the inspectors looked at arrangements for safeguarding pupils and at records relating to attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Christine Potter, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Stephen Helm	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school, although the number of pupils on roll is increasing rapidly.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those eligible for support through the pupil premium, is well above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The early years provision comprises a Nursery class and a Reception class. Children attend both of these on a full-time basis.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school provides a breakfast club for pupils.
- The school is federated with East Crompton St James' CE Primary School. There is a joint governing body and a shared executive headteacher. St Thomas Moorside is run a on a day-to-day basis by a head of school. The current soft federation will change to a hard federation on 1 July 2015.
- A children's centre is located on the same site. This provision is subject to a separate inspection and a separate report can be found on the Ofsted website.
- The school has Gold Accreditation in Investors in People.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Fully implement the new marking policy, in order to improve teaching even further, by ensuring that:
  - pupils always respond in a timely manner to specific written guidance from teachers about how to improve their work
  - pupils' own written comments indicate more precisely how they feel about the work that they have done.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The executive headteacher, ably supported by the head of school, provides very strong leadership. They share an ambitious vision for the school, which is demonstrated by the whole-school belief that every teacher will perform to the highest standards and that all pupils will do as well as they possibly can. All staff are committed to continuous school improvement. They work together enthusiastically and highly effectively to secure pupils' outstanding achievement.
- Leadership is successfully shared across different levels. The executive headteacher and head of school have been keen to develop the leadership potential of other staff and there is now a strong team of middle leaders. Their actions have had a significant impact on improvements since the last inspection, such as in raising standards in writing across the school. Leaders value the incisive contributions of all staff to school improvement planning.
- Senior leaders have taken very effective action to eliminate weaker teaching and to ensure that, overall, its quality is outstanding. Rigorous systems are in place to check the quality of teaching on a regular basis. Detailed feedback when lessons are observed, a wealth of training opportunities for teachers and support staff, and the chance to work together, both within school and with the federated school, ensure that teaching continues to improve.
- The school's systems for checking pupils' progress are highly effective and leaders know precisely how well individual pupils are doing. Teachers and support staff all contribute to regular pupil progress meetings and make decisions about how best to support pupils who are not doing as well as they should.
- Parents who completed the school's survey, together with those who spoke to inspectors, were almost unanimous in their praise and appreciation of the school. 'I would not want them to go anywhere else,' was typical of their comments. Parents love the fact that staff know their children so well and support them all, whatever their needs. Weekly class newsletters keep them well informed about what their children are doing in school and what they should be doing at home. Holiday projects, such as building model castles, engage them successfully in their children's learning.
- The well-planned curriculum, while retaining a strong focus on ensuring that pupils acquire the necessary basic skills, brings subjects together into topics that engage pupils' interests very successfully. Pupils have frequent opportunities to practise and develop their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills in other subjects and in meaningful contexts.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development exceptionally well. Pupils have many opportunities to work together and reflect on their beliefs and those of others. During the inspection, pupils in the school choir listened thoughtfully to one another and performed sensitively together. Pupils are keen to support local and national charities. As one pupil said during a Key Stage 1 assembly, 'If you can help someone else, then you should help them.'
- Good relations are fostered extremely well by the school. Pupils clearly respect each other and say that, whatever someone's culture or beliefs, 'You should always treat someone as you like to be treated.' Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated in the school. Pupils develop an excellent understanding of British values. They democratically elect school prefects and learn about the importance of laws within wider society. They are therefore very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school makes very good use of the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Additional support for eligible pupils means that they can take part in all aspects of school life and make the same rapid progress as other pupils. Leaders ensure that special provision is available for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This, and the fact that all groups of pupils make outstanding progress, demonstrates leaders' excellent promotion of equality of opportunity.
- The primary school sport funding is used well. A specialist coach provides regular sport and physical education lessons for pupils of all ages. Additional after-school activities have increased the numbers of pupils participating in a variety of sports, from street dance to athletics. Pupils have been able to take part in adventurous outdoor sports, including rock climbing and ghyll scrambling, all of which have improved their confidence and social skills, as well as contributing to their health and well-being.
- The school currently receives 'light touch' support from the local authority. Leaders have facilitated support from independent consultants, who work very successfully to secure ongoing school improvement. The strong partnership with the federated school enables both schools to share resources, ideas and best practice.
- Arrangements for safeguarding fully meet requirements. There are very clear policies and procedures in place and case studies demonstrate how highly successful these are when there are any safeguarding concerns. Leaders monitor training records closely to make sure that staff and governors are trained to

the appropriate levels.

- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors provide very effective support and challenge for the school to ensure its continuing success. They are linked to classes and, therefore, gain first-hand information on teaching and learning. They receive detailed and clearly presented information about pupils' achievement, and demonstrate a very good understanding of the school's performance data. Governors are keen to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they should and that the quality of the school's work is of a consistently high standard. They are extremely proud of the school and its role in the community.
  - Governors ensure that teachers are held accountable for the progress pupils make, and that arrangements for deciding on any increases in salaries are based firmly on the effectiveness of their teaching and their contribution to wider school life. Governors have a sound grasp on school finances. They are particularly keen to ensure that the pupil premium funding is used wisely and has an impact on the progress of eligible pupils. They check rigorously that pupils are kept safe and secure in school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The school is a very happy place. Pupils are friendly, polite and considerate; they behave extremely well around school, both when working and playing. Their excellent attitudes to learning and the pride that they take in their work strongly contribute to their outstanding achievement.
- Pupils know that they are respected and valued as individuals and, in return, respect and value others. They eagerly take on responsibilities, such as emptying the recycling bins or preparing equipment for morning fitness sessions. Breakfast monitors at the school's breakfast club take their role very seriously and are particularly helpful towards the younger pupils. Pupils are proud of their contribution to school life.
- There are clear systems in place so that pupils understand the consequences of their actions. They quickly learn how important it is to take responsibility for their own behaviour and value the rewards that they receive for behaving well. They admit that just occasionally, if they are 'in a really bad mood', they might fall out with one another and might call each other names. However, they say that they are usually able to sort these minor problems out themselves and good relations are soon restored.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils say that they feel absolutely safe in school and that, as pupils commented, 'All the adults look after us and are really kind.' Parents unanimously agree that the school keeps their children very safe. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet or mobile phones. The school goes to great lengths to develop pupils' confidence, resilience and independence so that they are well prepared for transfer to high school.
- Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of different types of bullying and know that it is not tolerated in school. They know that persistently excluding someone from their group is a form of bullying. They understand exactly what steps to take, should they feel that they are being bullied, and are totally confident that it would be dealt with promptly and effectively.
- The school works tirelessly to promote good attendance. The school effectively supports specific pupils and their families in order to help pupils attend regularly and on time. Attendance has therefore improved significantly and is now broadly average.
- The school's breakfast club is popular and well attended, both by pupils and their parents. It provides a calm, positive start to the school day and ensures that pupils are able to have a healthy breakfast. Staff, including the head of school, are on hand to chat to parents. The club has contributed to the improvements in attendance.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Work in pupils' books, the school's assessment information and records of checks carried out on teaching, all indicate that the quality of teaching over time is outstanding.
- There are excellent relationships between adults and pupils. Adults have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The praise and encouragement that pupils receive mean that they develop the confidence to

have a go at increasingly challenging work and to learn from their mistakes. From an early stage, pupils learn the importance of setting their work out neatly and taking pride in what they do.

- Well-established classroom routines, careful planning and the efficient organisation of resources mean that lessons flow smoothly and no learning time is wasted. Pupils' work builds highly successfully on their prior learning and is well matched to their different needs and abilities.
- The recently introduced 'must, should and could' learning targets, used consistently across the school, raise pupils' aspirations and provide them with challenging goals at different levels. Clear explanations and teachers' demonstrations help pupils to understand precisely what is expected of them. Ongoing checks in lessons and questioning that enables pupils to explain their thinking mean that misunderstandings are corrected quickly and progress is accelerated.
- Reading skills are taught extremely well across the school. Pupils become confident readers at an early stage because of the very systematic way that phonics (the sounds that letters make) is taught. They quickly learn that it is important to understand what they are reading. Older pupils study texts more closely and learn to draw conclusions based on their reading. Pupils in a mixed Years 3 and 4 class, for example, were exploring how evidence from direct speech and tone of voice could be used to back up the inferences that they were making.
- The teaching of writing has improved significantly since the last inspection. Good links are made between the texts that pupils read and their writing in a range of styles and for different purposes across the curriculum. Pupils are challenged to include varied sentence structure and extend their vocabulary. For example, Year 2 pupils developed their use of different adjectives to improve their persuasive writing. They were further challenged to explain how their writing could be made even better by using different punctuation.
- The school's detailed calculation policy means that there is a consistent approach to teaching basic skills in mathematics. Pupils' mathematical understanding is deepened successfully as they apply these skills to solving problems in a broad range of different contexts. Pupils in Year 5 and 6, for example, were constructing pie charts based on their project on endangered species and were using the information to consider deeper questions concerning man's role in conservation.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled and experienced. They provide extremely valuable support for pupils' learning, particularly when teaching individuals and small groups. They know the pupils and their needs well and plan activities carefully so that they are all helped to make rapid progress.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and praise their efforts and achievements. However, the school's new marking policy is not yet fully implemented by all teachers. For example, sometimes pupils do not have the opportunity to respond in a timely manner to teachers' specific guidance on how to make their work better. Pupils' own comments do not always identify precisely enough how they feel about the work they have done.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The school's data and work in pupils' books demonstrate that they make rapid and sustained progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups across the school.
- The small numbers of pupils in Year 6 over recent years means that their attainment varies. Published data for 2014 and the school's data for 2015 show that almost all pupils make the progress that is expected of them across Key Stage 2. The proportion of pupils who make more than expected progress is consistently high. Most pupils reach the standards expected for their age by the end of Key Stage 2 and an increasing proportion are doing better than this. Progress in writing has accelerated particularly quickly since pupils have had more opportunities to write in different subjects across the curriculum.
- The most able pupils make outstanding progress overall and achieve high standards at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2. This is because the work they are given challenges them well, helps them to deepen their understanding and accelerates their progress. For example, in mathematics, the most able pupils are regularly given problems and investigations that involve several steps and processes.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 screening check on phonics in 2014 was above average and is expected to be even higher this year. Almost all of those pupils currently in Year 2 who did not reach the standard last year are expected to do so this year.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make excellent progress from their individual starting points, taking account of their often complex needs. This is because of the extremely well-structured and highly personalised teaching and support that they receive.
- There were too few disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2014 to make comparisons with other pupils without identifying individual pupils. The school's own data show that disadvantaged pupils in all year groups

make progress which is similar to, or better than, that of other pupils. Gaps are closing extremely rapidly.

The early years provision is outstanding

- The overwhelming majority of children enter the early years with skills and understanding below those typical for their age. A small proportion has significant special educational needs. Children are looked after extremely well, their skills are carefully assessed and routines are quickly established. Children who need extra help are identified early so that they get the support that they need to do well.
- Most children make rapid progress from starting points below those typical for their age, particularly in communication, language and social skills. This is because of the outstanding teaching and the highly individual support that children receive. Adults model language and engage children in conversation at every opportunity. They constantly ask children questions which help them to express their ideas and feelings. There is a strong emphasis on developing the personal skills and attitudes which will provide a firm basis for children's future learning.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Reception class in 2014 was below average. This was partly due to the high number of children with special educational needs in this group who, nevertheless, made outstanding progress from their starting points. However, standards are rising and this year the proportion is expected to be closer to average. Children are, therefore, increasingly well prepared for Year 1.
- The early years areas buzz with activity as children move confidently and independently between different tasks. Everywhere there are smiling faces and children's enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning are clear. They are eager to chat about what they are doing.
- Activities, both indoors and outdoors, are very carefully planned. All the adults are involved in this planning, which is based extremely effectively on their ongoing assessment of children's interests and developing skills. Children in the Nursery class were excitedly searching for the pirate's jewels, which they counted and then matched to numerals. The most able children were challenged to write the numerals and identify 'one more than' the number they had found. Children in the Reception class were expected to use their reading skills to follow clues in their hunt for the pirate's belongings.
- There are particularly good opportunities for children to develop their skills in information and communication technology. Children had designed their own treasure map and were programming toys to travel in different directions. Others were using hand-held computers to read codes and find out more about pirates.
- Leadership in the early years is outstanding. Staff work exceptionally well together as a team, sharing information about children's progress on a daily basis and adapting what they do to meet children's needs. Beautifully presented learning journals provide a clear record of children's progress. There is a clear, shared vision for developing and improving the provision further.
- Parents are encouraged from the start to be involved in their children's learning. They thoroughly appreciate being able to come into school with their children at the beginning of the school day. They enjoy the chance to talk to the staff and to see how well their children are doing.
- Children behave extremely well. They love the opportunity to carry out responsibilities such as collecting whiteboards. They clearly feel very safe and secure. There are excellent procedures in place to ensure children are kept safe, including rigorous checks on equipment and thorough risk assessments of all activities.

What inspection judgements mean

School Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors. A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.

School details

Unique reference number	105695
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	461717

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eric Crompton
Headteacher	Adam Laskey
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2012
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