

# St Thomas' Church of England Primary School Stockport

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106109
<b>Local authority</b>	Stockport
<b>Inspection number</b>	377354
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Judith Tolley

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	135
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mike Eveson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jill Gray
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	Marriott Street Stockport SK1 3PJ
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Judith Tolley

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed 14 lessons and eight teachers; three were joint observations with the headteacher. These included short visits to phonics and guided-reading sessions across the school led by teachers and trained assistants. Meetings were held with a group of pupils from Key Stage 2, members of the governing body and school staff, including senior and middle managers. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, the safeguarding policies, and the school's analysis of pupils' progress. She also analysed 43 parental and carers' questionnaires and others completed by pupils and staff. No responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were available when planning the inspection.

## Information about the school

St Thomas's is much smaller than the average sized primary school. Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities is much higher than average as is the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Since the last inspection, the proportions of pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities have increased, as has the proportion of pupils who join the school at other than the usual times and is much higher than average. The proportions of pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils from minority ethnic heritages, although still below average, have also increased. The school has met government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school holds the Inclusion Quality Mark, Activemark and Healthy Eating Award.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate**  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a good school. Attainment has risen steadily over the last three years. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in reading is above average and in writing and mathematics it is broadly average. Pupils make very rapid progress in reading, as a result of the strategies employed consistently across all year groups. Although they achieve well, their progress is weaker in writing than in other subjects.
- Teaching is consistently good across the school. The school provides good-quality individual support for pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities, through additional programmes tailored closely to their needs. Marking gives good guidance to pupils about how to improve in English but this is not always the case when they practise their writing skills in other subjects across the curriculum. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are excited by adult-led activities linked to the stories they have read. However, their interest wanes and learning and progress slows in play activities initiated by the children where adults miss opportunities to link these activities to stories in the same way.
- Pupils typically behave well and say they enjoy school. They have very positive attitudes towards learning. The care, guidance and support given to pupils and their families is at the heart of the school's work and is a major factor in enabling all pupils to learn effectively and achieve their potential. The strong emphasis on pupils' personal development results in a calm, orderly environment where very good relationships are evident amongst pupils and between pupils and adults, and where learning is valued.
- The headteacher, senior staff and the governing body monitor the school's work closely and provide very clear educational direction. They have used the good practice that exists within the school well to improve the quality of teaching and to implement strategies to accelerate pupils' progress, especially in reading.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress in writing further, by ensuring that marking gives pupils clear guidance about how to improve their work when they write in all subjects across the curriculum.
- For adults to ensure that play activities from which children in the Early Years Foundation Stage can choose are more closely linked to stories and themes that excite and interest them in order to sustain good learning and progress.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school, greatly value the support they are given, and are pleased with the progress their children make. Many pupils join the school with attainment which is low in relation to that expected for their age. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, particularly in their personal development and in their language, communication and reading skills. Although many are still working towards the early learning goals when they enter Year 1, they are eager to learn and continue to make good progress as they move through the school. Pupils make very swift progress in reading and consistently good progress in mathematics in relation to their starting points. Their progress in writing is good overall but weaker than in reading and mathematics. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment in reading is above average; most pupils read a variety of texts, including play scripts, narrative and non-fiction fairly fluently. Most recount accurately what they have read in their own words and, through the use of drama, are beginning to empathise with characters in the books they read. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in reading is well above average. Most pupils can read a variety of texts fluently and with understanding. They skim and scan for information and identify how authors use literary devices for different effects. Almost all pupils are on track to meet, and the majority to exceed, their targets.

As a result of very well-tailored intervention programmes and individual support for pupils with special educational needs, those with disabilities and those who are at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language, these pupils make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress; they are able to participate fully in activities alongside their classmates. There is no significant difference between the rates of progress of different groups within the school. In lessons, pupils make particularly strong progress in reading and problem-solving in mathematics. Their skills in writing in subjects other than English are less well-developed. They participate enthusiastically in activities, especially when working with a partner to explore ideas and solve problems. In a Year 5 class, pupils used the information in the census and photographs, to explore life in Victorian England and as a result of discussion with a partner, were keen to explain their ideas to the rest of the class. Similarly in a Years 3 and 4 mathematics lesson, pupils were confident in explaining how they had tackled subtractions.

## Quality of teaching

Parents and carers say that the teaching their children receive is good. Inspection findings indicate that teaching is consistently good across the school. Teachers have high expectations. Games, information and communication technology (ICT) and drama are used effectively to engage pupils' interest. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilful in their use of questioning to support and extend pupils' thinking both in whole- class activities and in small group work. Pupils, including the youngest children, are frequently asked to share and explain their thinking to others and this is effective in developing their speaking and listening skills and in increasing their confidence and independence as learners. For instance, Year 1 pupils retold the story of *The Princess and the Pea* and acted it out in small groups. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children display great enthusiasm and excitement in adult-led activities linked to the stories they have been reading. Children in the Nursery class made great strides in their speaking and listening and in extending their vocabulary by acting out and retelling the story of *The Bear Hunt* outside. However, their interest dropped and the pace of their learning slowed when follow-up activities that children could choose for themselves were not directly related to the story. Pupils make good progress when they work with a partner or in small groups to solve problems and explore ideas but opportunities are sometimes missed for them to do this.

Teachers use assessment information effectively to plan next steps for different groups in detail. On occasions, resources provided in writing tasks lack the guidance some lower-attaining pupils need so that their progress slows and they do not always manage to complete the tasks in the time allowed. Marking is regular and usually gives good guidance about how to improve. However, the very thorough marking to improve writing in English is not always mirrored in other subjects. Although pupils have frequent opportunities to practise their writing in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes, opportunities are missed to improve the quality of their writing in this way. Pupils know how they are getting on and what their next steps are to enable them to improve.

## Behaviour and safety of children

The pupils say overwhelmingly that they feel safe in school and value the support they have from adults to help them deal with problems. Parents, carers and pupils are confident that any poor behaviour is dealt with effectively and promptly. They have a good understanding of the risks to which they may be exposed, both within and outside of school and know how to stay safe and healthy. Attendance is below the national average but has improved significantly over the last three years and persistent absenteeism has also decreased significantly. The school works very rigorously to improve attendance further.

Pupils typically behave well in lessons and around the school. They say learning is fun and they are enthusiastic about their reading. They have very good relationships with each other and are courteous and polite. They respond promptly to instructions from adults. Incidences of bullying and exclusions are rare and parents, carers and pupils express confidence in the school's systems for dealing with such occurrences.

Pupils display high levels of concentration and, when working in groups, organise themselves well and without fuss. They take responsibilities seriously and are proud of their achievements, for instance, the school council's planning and management of the budget for the new playground, their work as helpers in the playground and with the youngest children in the nursery.

The school uses the expertise of a range of outside agencies to provide good support for pupils experiencing difficulties that affect their behaviour. Those pupils in receipt of this support attend school regularly and most make good progress in their personal development and academic work.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher, strongly supported by the deputy headteacher, provides very clear educational direction, based firmly on a rigorous analysis of pupils' progress, close monitoring and accurate evaluation of the school's work. Any slowing of progress is identified rapidly and intervention strategies reviewed and adapted accordingly. Members of the governing body play an active part in the school's self-evaluation, monitoring and improvement planning processes, as do all teaching staff. Strategies to improve the quality of teaching, such as lesson observations by subject specialists, and mentoring, have proved successful. A clear focus on elements of best practice, such as the use of questioning, ensure that there is a high level of consistency across the school. This consistency is particularly evident in the teaching of phonics and reading. Safeguarding has a high priority within the school, procedures and policies are regularly reviewed by the governing body, and staff kept up to date with training. The school has a strong commitment to equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination reflected in the gaps in attainment and progress that have closed between different groups of pupils. Attainment has improved and progress has accelerated year on year since the last inspection. Issues from the last report have been tackled successfully. These are clear indications that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils well, including those with special educational needs and those with disabilities. The focus on phonics and reading across the school has had a major impact upon raising attainment and accelerating the progress of all pupils. A very wide range of activities and visits beyond the classroom broaden pupils' experience significantly. Visits, even by the youngest children, for example, to the science museum, the theatre, the seaside, and a residential visit to France, as well as opportunities to work with artists and writers, are all greatly valued by pupils. This, together with the development of drama and the focus on speaking skills, is highly successful in raising pupils' aspirations, their confidence as learners, and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add up exactly to 100.



## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



11 January 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Thomas' Church of England Primary School Stockport, Stockport SK1 3PJ**

I would like to thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school recently. I really enjoyed talking to you all. You told me how much you enjoy your learning and how proud you are of your school. I agree with you. You go to a good school. It's an exciting place to learn with lots of things to do. You told me how much you appreciated the help you get from teachers and I was very impressed by the way the school provides exactly the right help for each pupil in the school so that you can all do your best.

Your behaviour is good. You do a lot to help improve the school, for instance, through the school council and helping younger children. The teaching you have is good. Younger children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. They get very excited by activities when these are linked to the stories they are reading, so I have asked the school to make sure they get the chance to do exciting activities linked to these stories in their play sessions as well. You make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. You are getting on really well with your reading. I can understand why you enjoy it so much. I think you could do even better in your writing. So I have asked your teachers to make sure you get the same good advice about how to improve it when you write in other subjects as you do in English. You can all help by deciding how to improve it yourselves.

You told me that the staff look after you very well indeed and I agree. The headteacher and staff are working to make your school even better. You can help all by continuing to work hard and come to school every day. I wish you every success for the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your learning.

Yours sincerely,

Judith Tolley  
Lead inspector

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