

St Thomas CofE Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 105234 |
| Local authority | Bolton |
| Inspection number | 377207 |
| Inspection dates | 9–10 February 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Lyn Pender |

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

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| 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 | 255 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Graham Andrews |
| Headteacher | Robert Dean |
| Date of previous school inspection | 26 November 2008 |
| School address | Molyneux Road Westhoughton Bolton BL5 3HP |
| Telephone number | 01942 634666 |
| Fax number | 01942 634667 |
| Email address | office@st-thomas.bolton.sch.uk |



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Introduction

Inspection team

Lyn Pender
Diane Auton
Steve Rigby

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 10 teachers teaching 17 lessons. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, parents and carers and school staff. Inspectors listened to children read and discussed the work they have been doing in class this academic year. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school self-evaluation summary, school improvement plan, safeguarding documents and minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors analysed 110 questionnaires from parents and carers as well as questionnaires completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

The school is of a similar size to most primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Most pupils are from a White British background. Fewer than average disabled pupils or those with special educational needs or with a statement of special education needs attend the school. The school holds Healthy Schools status and has achieved the Activemark, Eco-Schools Bronze award, Gold Sing Up award and the International School award. A breakfast club managed by the school is available to pupils each day. Some children move to other settings at the end of Nursery and around a third of children join the Early Years Foundation Stage in Reception. The school meets the current floor standard.

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

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Overall Effectiveness | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 2 |

Key Findings

- This is a good school. It is led and managed well and, with very few exceptions, parents and carers hold very positive views of the education it provides for their children. Pupils make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and they achieve well through the school so that by the end of Year 6 their attainment is well above the national average. Pupils’ attainment has improved since the last inspection, particularly in mathematics and reading; however writing, although still above the national average, is not as strong.
- Typically, teaching is mainly good and sometimes outstanding. As a result, pupils learn effectively and build their knowledge, understanding and skills systematically as they move through school. Occasionally in lessons, teachers do not provide pupils with tasks that engage their interests sufficiently or ensure a fast enough pace to enable them to move on to more challenging work as soon as possible.
- Pupils feel safe because they are cared for well. Behaviour is good and in the best lessons, when their curiosity and imagination is captured, pupils become enthusiastic and active learners and strive to do their very best. Attendance is high; pupils attend school regularly and are punctual. The overwhelming majority of pupils, parents and carers agree that incidents of bullying are rare.
- There is a strong team ethos; staff and governors have a sharp focus on improvement and a keen resolve to continue to take the school forward. School leaders have a clear understanding of strengths and areas for improvement and have taken effective action since the last inspection to secure good improvement. The strategies implemented to raise attainment in writing are showing positive impact but are not yet fully embedded to have full effect.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing by:
 - embedding the recent strategies, particularly those to provide more opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces of work and to write in other subjects
 - improving pupils' understanding of the structure of sentences.
- Improve teaching so that it is at least good and more is outstanding by:
 - providing tasks that are always sufficiently engaging for pupils
 - ensuring that the pace of learning is fast enough to enable pupils to move on to more challenging work as soon as possible
 - taking more steps to build on and extend the best practice that exists in the school.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is good. In lessons, pupils usually listen intently, answer readily and frequently offer views and pose their own questions to extend their understanding. They enjoy working with a partner or in a group and they share and offer their ideas with confidence. Almost all pupils take a pride in their work and their books show that they work with care and try hard to present their work neatly. On the few occasions when teaching does not capture pupils' interests fully, their attention wanes and the pace of learning slows. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress as a result of effective identification of their needs and the well-targeted support provided for them.

Children start school with skills and knowledge typical for their age. They settle quickly and make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of the good teaching they receive. There has been a positive trend of improvement in pupils' attainment and progress since the previous inspection. Pupils make good progress across the school and attainment is well above average in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2. Progress is more rapid and attainment higher in reading and mathematics than in writing. The school leaders recognised the need to accelerate progress in writing and have introduced a range of strategies to achieve this. The school's tracking information shows that these actions are beginning to work.

Reading is a strength because of the sharp focus on developing early reading skills right from the Nursery. Regular and well-targeted teaching of letters and the sounds they make is giving pupils the tools they need to move their learning forward. As a result, pupils become competent readers so that by the end of Year 2 their attainment in reading is well above the national average. Pupils continue to make good progress leading to well above average attainment in reading by the end of Year 6. Pupils read with interest and enjoyment and apply their skills confidently to

tackle new or difficult words. The 'early bird' volunteer helpers contribute very well to promoting pupils' enjoyment and progress in reading in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

In their responses to the inspection questionnaire almost all pupils say that they enjoy their lessons and learn a lot. The vast majority of parents and carers justifiably feel that their children make good progress and achieve well at the school.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is mainly good with examples of outstanding teaching, but the quality is not consistent across the school. Typically where it is good or better it contributes well to pupils' learning and progress. Most lessons are planned well to take the range of pupils' needs into account. On occasions where teaching is less effective, the pace of learning is not fast enough to capture and keep pupils' interest and consequently progress slows. In most lessons, however, learning moves along briskly, the level of challenge is good and this is all helping pupils to progress more speedily. Regular assessment means that class teachers have a clear overview of pupils' progress and they use this information well in order to identify which pupils need extra support. Teachers' expectations of pupils are generally high and most pupils know how to improve their work because they receive clear written and oral feedback from well-focused marking and on-going assessment by teachers. Pupils say they particularly like the way they are able to write a response to teachers' comments in their work. Targets are changed regularly and pupils report that 'they help you know what to work on'.

Strong, positive relationships are evident in the classroom. In lessons adults work effectively as a team and teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning. One-to-one tuition and small groups led by skilled staff ensure that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive provision that is carefully matched to their needs; as a result, they too make good progress. Tailored provision for more-able pupils is having a positive impact on enabling these pupils to progress well and achieve their potential, especially in reading and mathematics.

The teaching of writing is improving with, for example, a greater focus on sentence structure and more regular opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing. Although the strategies are not yet fully embedded they are starting to have a positive effect on pupils' progress. In one lesson seen during the inspection, for example, pupils were given the opportunity to reflect and improve the quality of some work they had produced earlier in the week. They rose eagerly to the challenge, applying their good understanding of how to make their writing even more interesting through the use of exciting vocabulary. Through assessing each other's work they considered maturely how well they had done.

The curriculum is planned well and is providing increased opportunities for pupils to practice and develop their literacy and numeracy skills in work across other subjects. This promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. An Early Years Foundation Stage literacy activity, for example, stimulated the children's imagination as they tried to discover what had happened to the toy baby owl which had 'gone missing' from the nest in the classroom. Children's interest was captured

completely as they became engrossed in the search, providing excellent opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills as well as sparking their curiosity and developing empathy.

Parents and carers are correct in their view that teaching in the school is good. They are very supportive of the school homework policy and, with few exceptions, they indicate that they are happy with the teaching their children receive in school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is typically good and makes a positive contribution to their learning in lessons. Around school and during playtimes they are orderly and sensible. They say they feel very safe in school and that the grown-ups look after them well, remarking that 'there is always someone to turn to if you have a problem'. Pupils understand different types of bullying, such as name-calling and making others unhappy. They say that bullying incidents are few and if they occur they are dealt with promptly and effectively. A very small number of parents and carers raised issues about behaviour in school, but most indicated that they are confident that the school's systems are sufficiently robust to deal with any incidents that may occur. Pupils enjoy taking on responsible roles, for example as members of the school council or when acting as a 'helping hand' or 'playground pal' to support other pupils. They are committed and enthusiastic fundraisers for charities at home and abroad. All of this, together with their good basic skills, contributes to preparing them well for the next stages in their education. Pupils show a good understanding of the good moral values the school promotes and this is reflected in the behaviour they display. Pupils develop a strong sense of fairness and show a good level of respect for adults and each other.

Leadership and management

Staff and governors share the headteacher's firm commitment to school improvement and all seek to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils. The role of middle leaders has been developed well to provide a strong focus on raising standards and this is making a positive difference to pupils' progress and achievement.

Since the last inspection there have been good improvements in pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics. The school has correctly identified areas for further improvement, for example, actions are in place and beginning to raise pupils' attainment in writing. Teaching is monitored regularly and appropriate steps taken to improve its quality and consistency with good professional development for staff. However, not enough use is made of the best practice within the school to help improve teaching further. All staff contribute to termly assessments and progress reviews which is ensuring a greater consistency in learning across the school. The information gained from these is used well to ensure appropriate levels of challenge for pupils and identify quickly those who may require additional support. Members of the governing body have a wide range of relevant expertise and hold the school to account effectively. The school is well-placed to improve further.

The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. It contributes positively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, promoting their awareness of different faiths and cultures within the local community. The varied curriculum is well-planned and enriched by opportunities for pupils to develop skills in sports and the arts and to learn a modern foreign language. A well-developed programme of visits and visitors adds to the breadth and balance of the curriculum.

This is an inclusive school; its ethos supports the promotion of equal opportunities and access to educational entitlement well. Parents and carers appreciate all that is done to support their children's welfare. The school complies with current government requirements for safeguarding.

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).

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 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. |
| 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.



13 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas C of E Primary School, Bolton, BL5 3HP

Thank you for the warm and friendly welcome you gave my colleagues and me when we inspected your school recently. Please thank your parents and carers for their letters and for taking the time to talk to us. You were extremely helpful and we enjoyed finding out from you how you are getting on. You spoke enthusiastically about your school and how much you enjoy learning. Yours is a good school.

These are some of the things your school does well.

- You make good progress in your learning and achieve well, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- You behave well and told us you feel safe.
- Your teachers support your learning well through very clear marking of your work. You respond well to their comments which help you to improve even further. The results of your questionnaires also confirm that you think teaching is good and you learn a lot in school.
- You attend school regularly and are punctual.

We have asked the school to work on two things to make your school even better.

- To make sure that your lessons are all as good as the best ones, and in particular, to ensure that the activities always interest you and you move on to harder work more quickly.
- To improve your writing skills by giving you more opportunities to write longer pieces of work, practise writing in other subjects and improve your understanding of the structure of sentences.

You can help by always trying your best in lessons. It was a pleasure to visit your school. Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Lyn Pender
Lead Inspector

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