

# Thomas A Becket Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125955
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	359971
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 January 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Pye

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>	Middle deemed primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8–12
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	764
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lance Craddock
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Gadd
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	Glebeside Avenue Worthing Worthing BN14 7PR
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 21 lessons and saw a total of 21 teachers. They spoke to parents and carers and held meetings with governors, pupils and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at data relating to pupils' attainment and progress. The school's development plan, lesson and curriculum plans, governing body minutes and school policies and procedures, particularly those relating to the health and safety and safeguarding of pupils, were scrutinised. Inspectors also looked at completed questionnaires returned by pupils, staff and those from 255 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which the quality of teaching is improving the progress of all pupils, and pupil groups, particularly in mathematics.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels and their impact on improving pupils' progress.
- The extent to which the mathematics curriculum promotes, and other subjects reinforce, pupils' investigative and problem-solving skills.

## Information about the school

Pupils at this large middle school, come predominantly from a White British background. Pupils enter the school at the start of Year 4 and leave at the end of Year 7. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible to free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average, and the proportion of those who have a statement of special educational needs is below average. The two largest groups have specific learning difficulties or speech, language and communication difficulties. The school has been recognised nationally through the Green Flag Eco School and Basic Skills awards. An independent provider runs an after-school childcare club from the school premises.

**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: how good is the school?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

The school provides an outstanding education for its pupils. The pupils really enjoy school and adopt excellent attitudes towards learning. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe, for example when using the internet. Pupils say the adults care for them extremely well and that their views are listened to. The very large majority of parents and carers agree. One parent reflected other's views when writing, 'I feel the staff all show a genuine interest and care for the children.' Outstanding behaviour and mature attitudes were observed during the inspection.

By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 7 their attainment is above the expected levels in mathematics and English. Given their starting points, this represents good progress for the majority of pupils. Effective planning and rigorous monitoring by school leaders have resulted in the school successfully accelerating progress in mathematics. This has resulted from a focus on introducing 'learning to learn' skills which emphasise the benefits to pupils of such traits as perseverance and concentration. A further positive factor has been the introduction of more practical and investigative approaches in mathematics lessons.

The quality of teaching is good. There is evidence of some outstanding teaching, including in mathematics. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge, and this is most evident in the high quality of the pupils' artwork in the vibrant displays around the school. In lessons there are inconsistencies in the extent to which teachers pose more challenging questions and remind pupils of their learning targets when marking their work. Nevertheless very good, focused questioning was observed in the majority of lessons and marking is regular, and often contains good guidance about how pupils can improve their work. Lesson observations during the inspection confirmed the school's judgements which result from its very thorough monitoring of teaching. The effective use of assessment information to plan work for all pupils, regardless of their ability, results in some very appropriate challenge in most lessons. However, this is occasionally inconsistent, with a small minority of teachers planning tasks rather than emphasising the different learning expected of pupils; progress dips when this occurs.

The very focused headteacher has successfully distributed leadership and management responsibilities to other leaders. He has ensured that a very good link is made between this objective and the professional development and performance management needs of staff. Consequently, school leaders have the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their monitoring responsibilities, and self-evaluation is very accurate. This leads to robust and very appropriate analysis and development planning. The excellent curriculum has resulted from detailed and careful planning about how and when to create more opportunities for pupils to develop their creative skills. Comprehensive assessment procedures exist and provide the data by which pupils' progress is regularly tracked. This allows for the quick identification of any necessary support for pupils requiring additional

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support and guidance. All of this has helped the school sustain above average attainment and good progress, while fostering many outstanding aspects of pupils' personal development, including their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Consequently, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is excellent.

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

- Remove the few existing inconsistencies in teaching through ensuring that all teachers:
  - use assessment information effectively to set work that challenges pupils of all abilities
  - link the marking of pupils' work with their targets for improvement.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Pupils are very enthusiastic about their lessons. This was seen in a science lesson about forces, when talk partners excitedly discussed whether to choose the 'fast' or 'funky' image for their rocket car design. The pupils demonstrated their keenness to learn and a very good understanding of empathy during a history lesson based on conditions in a Victorian workhouse. In groups they then adopted 'freeze-frame' positions, with the rest of the class eagerly suggesting what this showed. Such positive attitudes contribute very well to the pupils' good achievement from entry levels below that normally expected of pupils entering Year 4. Together with the impact of the basic skills award, this helps explain why attainment levels in the national assessment tests are consistently well above average by the end of Year 6. Mathematics remains the relatively weaker subject at this stage, especially for girls, but the gap is reducing as a consequence of effective school actions. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and other, smaller pupil groups, progress in line with their peers.

The impact of the work being done to gain Healthy School status is reflected in the excellent knowledge of pupils regarding how to stay healthy. They join the varied sports clubs in large numbers. Older pupils help run the healthy foods 'Snack Shack' and speak of 'no more crisps!' The pupils' outstanding contribution to the community does not stop at membership of the very active eco and school councils. While these pupils are making meaningful decisions and helping to monitor energy usage within the school, others are running activities for charity, or visiting younger children as part of the transition arrangements, or acting as sports coaches. The team work experienced through such activities makes a significant contribution to the good preparation the pupils receive for the next stage in their education. Pupils tell of enjoying trips, such as to France, and their cultural awareness is very well developed through contact with another multicultural school.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Pupils readily answer questions in lessons because of the positive relationships that exist. Teachers ensure a good balance in lessons between direct teaching, investigative and problem-solving approaches. For example, a Year 7 mathematics lesson saw pupils eagerly tackling a challenging problem. They were asked to calculate the perimeter of a complicated shape, a racing car, and progressed well as they began to explore Pythagoras' theorem. Good use is made of the interactive whiteboards to add pace and interest to lessons. The use of slides in a science lesson about evaporation encouraged pupils to consider the problem of why the water in puddles 'disappears'. The use of hand signals to represent gas, liquids and boiling also catered very well for the pupils' different learning styles. Pupils progress well when appropriately challenging work is set and through skilled questioning, but this is not always the case in the few satisfactory lessons. Pupils refer to their targets for improvement which are highly focused and regularly reviewed, for example in their English books. However, learning targets are not always referred to in other lessons.

The excellent curriculum is exceptionally well planned to maximise the opportunities for cross-subject links and the reinforcement of literacy skills. A recent detailed review has led to further links being developed. This has resulted in some excellent writing at length across a range of subjects. Curriculum planning ensures pupils are consistently involved in contributing ideas about what they would like to find out during topic work, and in

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evaluating at the end of the project. The curriculum is also very well adapted to the pupils' interests. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities encompassing sport, music, art, and foreign languages. The take-up is very impressive, with over a quarter of the school directly involved in the end-of-year concert.

The school is rigorous in ensuring that pupils learn in a happy, welcoming environment. The commitment to, and level of, pupils' personal care are excellent and extend to the families of children facing difficulties in their learning or lives. One example of the high level of care and inclusiveness is the club that is run for reluctant physical education participants. External agencies are very well utilised for the benefit of pupils, and numerous examples exist where barriers to pupils' learning have been lowered. The trained learning mentors contribute significantly to this. Transition arrangements into Year 4 are excellent, with every feeder school visited, opportunities for pupil visits and participation in activity days. Very useful personal plans are in place prior to each pupil starting school. Effective use of learning support assistants in class contributes to the good progress of pupils with special educational needs.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Adults share fully the school's aim of developing independent and successful learners, who are caring and confident; the TAB (Thomas A Becket) pupil. The headteacher and senior staff effectively reinforce such messages in assemblies, during in-service training and staff meetings. This shared ambition permeates the school at all levels and reflects the impact of leadership. The high expectations and skills of leaders and managers are seen in accurate and in-depth monitoring of all aspects of school life. Targeted actions, supported by constant monitoring, have resulted in improved attendance. Subject leaders carry out high quality annual reviews of their subjects, develop effective action plans, brief staff on strategic developments and carry out regular reviews to evaluate pupil progress and the quality of teaching. In their lesson observations excellent and very detailed feedback is given to teachers which often involves research guidance as well as the identification of support mechanisms. The school is consequently moving quickly to achieving its aim of all lessons being of high quality, although a few inconsistencies remain. The governing body has established a good and full programme of monitoring involving visits and reporting. Governors meet their statutory obligations very well. Safeguarding arrangements are good, and every full governors' meeting has a safeguarding and equal opportunity time slot to allow for any issues to be discussed. However, their monitoring has yet to involve a formal approach to ascertaining pupil views about these areas. A commitment to equal opportunity is at the very heart of the school. For example, four teams are entered into

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local sports events to allow wider access for pupils. The very effective tracking of pupils' progress enables the school to monitor rigorously the attainment of different groups. In addition, the school offers a wide range of activities whereby pupils of all backgrounds can showcase their extra-curricular skills and knowledge. Partnerships are a real strength and make an outstanding contribution to pupils' learning, particularly in music, dance, and sport. The school has carried out a thorough review of the impact of its community cohesion work. Local community links are very strong. Pupils increase their understanding of democracy and politics through participating in a local redevelopment project. Pupils communicate with a school in India to challenge stereotyping about, for example, the effects of the monsoon. The school recognises the need to develop further links with contrasting schools in Britain.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who completed the questionnaire believe their children enjoy school. The inspection confirmed the views of the vast majority of parents and carers that the quality of teaching is good. A few are of the opinion that their views are not listened to. Inspectors however, identified a number of very good strategies used by the school to ascertain the views of parents and carers. A very small minority had concerns about behaviour. Inspectors judged behaviour to be outstanding during the time of the inspection. Most respondents are happy with the education that their children receive and the vast majority believe the school is well led.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thomas A Becket Middle School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 255 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 764 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	130	51	100	39	8	3	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	135	53	99	39	5	2	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	88	35	132	52	19	7	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	101	40	127	50	9	4	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	125	49	108	42	4	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	104	41	116	45	16	6	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	90	35	131	51	14	5	1	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	98	38	117	46	12	5	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	101	40	120	47	15	6	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	98	38	115	45	19	7	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	84	33	117	46	22	9	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	116	45	110	43	6	2	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	134	53	98	38	7	3	1	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and 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 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**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.**



19 January 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Thomas A Becket Middle School, Worthing BN14 7PR**

You may remember our recent visit to your school, and thank you for the warm welcome you gave us. You were eager to tell us about your school and we listened carefully. We judge your school to be outstanding and extremely well led by your headteacher and other adults.

There were many things that really impressed us. You told us how you felt safe and well cared for. We believe the care and support you receive is excellent. We also liked the way you are active and know how to stay healthy. Well done! Your behaviour during the inspection was excellent and we were especially impressed by the way you get along with each other and act responsibly in lessons. This, together with the good teaching you receive, helps explain why you progress well in your studies. We also believe that you get an excellent range of things to study in lessons and we are very pleased that you attend in large numbers the wide range of clubs on offer. We are impressed by the way you make such an excellent contribution to your community. The work of your eco and school councillors is very good.

We have asked that the school looks into this. You can help your teachers by telling them when you find the work too easy or too hard. Many of you know how to improve your work – good! We have asked that your teachers mention your targets to you more regularly in lessons and refer to them when marking your books.

Once again thank you for your help, and we wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pye

Lead Inspector

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