

St Thomas CofE Primary School, Halliwell

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105218
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	355728
Inspection dates	21–22 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael McIlroy HMI

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	315
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Pott
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Pilling
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Twenty-three lessons and 12 teachers were observed as well as two assemblies. Meetings were held with nominated staff, two groups of pupils and with representatives of the governing body. Inspectors also talked informally with a number of parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at improvement planning, pupils' books and the school's assessment and tracking systems. Forty-three questionnaires from parents and carers were studied as were questionnaires from pupils and from staff.

- It considered the rate of progress made by pupils in each key stage and in particular the progress of pupils in Key -Stage 2 and that made by those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- It investigated the quality of teaching provided by the school.
- It judged whether the quality of the care, guidance and support is outstanding.
- It considered how effective leaders and managers have been in raising attainment in English.
- It looked at how well the school provides equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination.

Information about the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups is more than twice the national average. Most minority ethnic pupils are of Indian heritage and there are a few pupils from Eastern Europe. Over half of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average and that of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs is below average.

The school holds a number of awards including the Healthy Schools Award and the Sportsmark.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

At the heart of this good school are the excellent care, guidance and support it provides for its pupils. These contribute strongly to the school's welcoming and inclusive ethos and to the good progress pupils make in their learning in each of its three key stages. They are also reflected in pupils' good behaviour, their positive attitude to learning and the courtesy they show to each other and to visitors.

Pupils achieve well. Entering the school with levels of skills and abilities below that expected for children of their age, they make good progress in their learning, so that by the time pupils leave school, their attainment is average. Pupils do better in mathematics than in English, due to weaknesses in writing. Most groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those of Indian heritage, make similarly good progress. Contributing to this good achievement is a good curriculum which provides exciting learning opportunities and which is firmly focused on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Teaching is good, although no outstanding teaching was observed during the inspection.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. They know how to keep themselves safe and appreciate well how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Attendance is average, having improved after concerted action by the school. Pupils contribute well to the school's development and that of the local and wider community. Their social, moral and spiritual development is good. Pupils' cultural development is also good, partly because of the school's good work to promote community cohesion, which enhances their understanding of the diversity of cultures in Britain. Further factors that influence pupils' good progress are the positive partnerships that exist with parents, carers, other schools and external agencies.

The school is well led by the headteacher and her supportive team of managers and staff. Issues that will improve pupils' learning, such as the need to reduce pupils' absences, have been rigorously and successfully tackled and a range of initiatives have been introduced to raise attainment. Governance is good and governors provide both support and challenge to the school. Rising levels of attainment in Key Stages 1 and 2, improvements in attendance, its good leadership and an accurate self-evaluation of its effectiveness show that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing by:
 - ensuring that skills developed in literacy lessons are routinely applied in other subjects and cross-curricular activities

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- giving pupils more experience of different genres and of writing for different purposes and audiences
- making greater use of annotated displays of exemplary writing to show and remind pupils what constitutes good writing.
- Raise the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - providing extended training by March 2011 on the features of outstanding teaching and monitoring the impact of this in the classroom
 - providing teachers with opportunities to observe outstanding teaching in other settings.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils enter the school with skills and abilities that are below and in some cases well below average. They make good progress in their learning in Key Stage 1. While overall results for this key stage are below average, since the last inspection there has been steady improvement. Pupils perform most strongly in reading and least well in writing. There is a similar pattern of improvement in overall results at Key Stage 2. Provisional results from the most recent statutory assessments for pupils in Year 6 show that attainment has continued to improve and is average. However, results over time in English are not as high as those in mathematics due to weaknesses in pupils' writing. This is partly because writing skills are not consistently applied in writing activities, including those used in cross-curricular activities. Evidence from lesson observations, pupils' books and assessment data show that pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 2. Progress is stronger in mathematics, due to well-structured lessons that draw strongly on prior learning. In an effective mathematics lesson in Year 5, pupils listened carefully to clear instructions about a new method of subtraction and more-able pupils were able to check their answers by using other methods previously learned. Most groups of pupils, including those of Indian heritage, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make similar progress in their learning to their peers on account of the very good care and support they receive.

Pupils play well together and move sensibly around the school. They feel safe in school, know who to turn to if they have any concerns and know that these will be dealt with promptly. Pupils understand well how to keep themselves safe. For example, younger pupils could explain who they would tell if they came across any hazards in the playground. They understand well how to lead a healthy lifestyle and there is a good take-up of extra-curricular sporting activities. Pupils have a good sense of right and wrong and a good understanding of other cultures and religions. Their spiritual development is good. Pupils make a good contribution to their school. Older pupils have positions of responsibility such as 'office pals,' church helpers and as reading buddies to younger pupils. Elected school councillors related how their suggestions for improving provision in school were enacted by the school. Pupils make a good contribution to the wider community. For example, they tailor their harvest gifts to the needs of a local homeless charity. Pupils' average attainment and attendance means that they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ 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?

Teaching is good. Teachers possess good subject knowledge and good relationships exist between staff and pupils. A wide range of teaching strategies are used. A good example is the frequent use of short action songs in mathematics lessons which help pupils remember mathematical operations. Explanations are clear and additional adults are mostly well used in classes to support less-able pupils. In a mathematics lesson in Key Stage 1, one group of less-able pupils made good progress in understanding the place value of numbers because of the good teaching they received from an additional adult. Most planning is detailed and is informed by assessment information. There is also good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to illustrate learning objectives and stimulate learning. Although teaching is good, no outstanding teaching was observed. Pupils listen well to teachers and work well both cooperatively and independently when asked to do so. Their ICT skills are developing well and in several lessons pupils were observed using these confidently and independently.

Pupils have opportunities to write at length in literacy lessons and in other subjects but the quality of their writing is variable. This is because the different writing skills pupils have learned are not consistently well applied to their writing in literacy lessons and in other subjects. Although pupils have studied some writing genres, such as fairy tales, they are not given enough opportunity to write in a range of different genres. Some pupils have opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences, for example pupils who are

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entering a new year group, but these opportunities are not widespread. The school does not make enough use of annotated displays of exemplary writing to remind pupils what constitutes good writing.

The good curriculum focuses on the core subjects and this contributes to the good progress pupils make in these areas of learning. It also provides many creative opportunities which make learning more interesting and there is some good use of cross-curricular themes. An example of this was in a good ICT lesson, where pupils adroitly used their literacy, word-processing and graphic skills to create a computer presentation about ancient Greek gods. A wide range of extra-curricular activities such as ICT, netball and Bollywood dance clubs provide pupils with good opportunities to develop learning skills and to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The curriculum is enhanced by an extensive range of visitors, visits and themed activities such as French and Victorian days.

Exceptional care, guidance and support for pupils are underpinned by good links with external agencies. Pupils receive excellent guidance on how to behave and how to stay safe, for example through an anti-cyber-bullying week. Good induction procedures for new pupils help them settle quickly into learning routines. The needs of new pupils who speak English as an additional language are assessed quickly. Support in lessons for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language receive good tuition in small, discrete groups. Additional classes and individual tuition are targeted at those pupils who have fallen behind in their learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, supported by an effective senior management team and governing body, has successfully developed the school's inclusive ethos and improved attainment. Sustained action has been taken to improve outcomes for pupils in reading and to raise their attendance. Teaching is regularly monitored. Some training has been held on the features of outstanding teaching and some have had the opportunity to observe outstanding practice in other settings. However, this has not yet improved existing good teaching so that more of it is outstanding. There are good systems to check the progress of pupils and to hold staff to account. Procedures for the safeguarding of pupils are robust. The school works well with parents and carers, keeps them well informed and hosts educational workshops for them so that they can help their children learn. There are good partnerships with the church and local mosques. There are also good links with other schools, the facilities of which are used to extend learning and to provide extra-curricular

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opportunities which the school itself cannot provide. A good contribution is made to community cohesion. The school itself is a cohesive community and there is an effective partnership with another school in a different area which has pupils from a contrasting background. Any form of discrimination is quickly tackled by the school. Its success in ensuring that most groups of pupils make similar progress in their learning means that the school promotes equality of opportunity well. The school provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with abilities and skills that are below, and in some cases well below, those expected for their age. There are particular weaknesses in language, communication and number skills. Good induction procedures and good links with parents and carers mean that children, including those who speak English as an additional language, settle quickly into the Nursery and Reception classes. Good teaching and experience of a wide range of activities ensure that children make good progress in all areas of learning. There is a strong emphasis on developing children's personal, language and communication skills. Children share and play well together. There is a good balance between child-initiated activities and those directed by adults, although on occasion adults intervene too soon and do too much for children. Good planning and assessment systems are in place. The latter system is used well to ensure that the next steps in learning are matched to the needs of individuals. Resources are well used and the school has appropriate plans to develop the outside play area. The key stage is well led and staff work well as a team. Links with parents and carers are developed well through regular coffee mornings and information workshops and packs which enable parents and carers to support their children's learning at home.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents are very supportive of the school's work. A few would like the school to provide more support for children to improve their confidence. Inspectors found that the school supports pupils very well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Thomas CofE Primary School, Halliwell 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 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 315 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	58	17	40	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	56	19	44	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	19	44	23	53	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	58	17	40	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	58	17	40	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	49	20	47	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	47	22	51	1	2	0	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)	21	49	20	47	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	51	20	47	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	49	20	47	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	40	22	51	2	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	51	21	49	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	67	14	33	0	0	0	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



Dear Pupils

Thank you for being so polite and helpful when we inspected your school recently. These are some of the best things we found.

- The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for you.
- Your behaviour is good.
- You know how to keep safe and how to lead a healthy lifestyle.
- You make good progress in your learning.
- You are well taught by your teachers.
- Your school is well led.

I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to make a few improvements. I have asked that they help you improve your writing and also asked that they make the good teaching we saw even better. You can help your school by making sure that you come to school every single day.

Once again, many thanks for being so courteous and helpful when we visited your school.

Yours sincerely

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