

# St Thomas A Becket Church of England Aided Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	126416
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wiltshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	360077
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Rob Crompton

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 aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	57
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rob Ridley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Diana Bowley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Tilshead Salisbury Wiltshire SP3 4RZ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Observations included 11 lessons taught by three teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors looked at minutes of meetings held by members of the governing body, curriculum plans, assessment documents and a wide range of other information. The questionnaires returned by 33 parents and carers, seven staff and 31 pupils were scrutinised.

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

- How well teachers pitch work at appropriate levels for all pupils in the mixed-age classes.
- The effectiveness of the shared headship in monitoring the school's performance and driving improvements.

## Information about the school

The school is much smaller than average. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes in the morning, comprising Reception and Year 1, Years 2, 3 and 4 and Years 5 and 6. During the afternoon, there are usually two classes, one with Reception and Years 1 and 2, and one with Years 3 to 6. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and no pupils are at an early stage of learning English. No pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has Healthy Schools status and the Active Mark. A pre-school unit managed privately shares the same site in close proximity to the school. The headteacher works part time for three days per week. The senior teacher is acting head on the other two days and has been appointed as the full-time permanent headteacher from September 2011.

**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

This is a good school which has made significant headway in several aspects of its work since the last inspection. This is due to good leadership and management which successfully drive improvements, particularly in pupils' personal development. Leaders work closely with the highly effective governing body to monitor teaching and learning and analyse assessment data. The outcomes for pupils are outstanding, particularly in aspects of their personal development. Teachers are highly skilled in ensuring all pupils in the mixed-age classes are suitably challenged. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress, including the most able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Overall levels of attainment are above average. Outstanding care, guidance and support contribute to pupils' excellent awareness of how to keep safe. Their extremely secure understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle is apparent in their eager participation in physical activities and excellent knowledge of the effect of exercise on the heart and circulatory system. Pupils' exemplary behaviour has a positive impact on their learning. They apply their good literacy, numeracy and computer skills well in different contexts. This, together with pupils' high levels of independence and confidence in working cooperatively, means they are extremely well prepared for their subsequent education and beyond.

The school provides a warm, welcoming and purposeful environment. This is much appreciated by parents and carers. They are overwhelmingly supportive. Their comments included: 'The school puts the needs of every child first', 'I could not wish for a better school environment' and 'I have nothing but praise for the school'.

Self-evaluation procedures are very effective and result in first-rate strategic planning. The views of pupils', parents and carers and staff are taken into account and development plans are sharply focused. This process has revealed that there are some inconsistencies in the degree to which pupils are involved in reviewing and reflecting upon their own progress. It also showed that there are some remaining weaknesses in curriculum planning to enable it to provide more flexibility, while at the same time ensuring that pupils build up their skills through the school. The close match between these issues and the findings of the inspection, together with the school's track record in identifying and remedying weaknesses, indicate a good capacity for sustained improvement.

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

- Improve pupils' learning by:
  - providing further opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own learning
  - making explicit the success criteria for each piece of work or unit of study

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- ensuring more consistency in the guidance teachers provide on how pupils could improve their work
- making more effective use of pupils' learning journals and home diaries.
- Refine curriculum planning so that pupils acquire skills progressively through the school while engaging in interesting and stimulating activities.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

As children start school their skills, knowledge and understanding are broadly typical of the age group. Although the small numbers in each year lead to slight fluctuations in achievement from year to year, the overall picture is that pupils achieve well and their attainment is above average. This was fully supported by observations of work in lessons and pupils' books during the inspection. Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning, sustain their engagement and rise to the challenges offered. Year 1 pupils were making very good progress from their starting points. They were proud to show their joined script, and how they were writing in sentences. The more-able pupils were keen to demonstrate their counting skills. 'I can count over 600!' exclaimed one. During a lesson in the mixed Years 2, 3 and 4 class, all pupils made rapid progress in learning how to multiply using a grid to guide their calculations. Some moved on quickly, and were eager to demonstrate their very secure grasp of division and their skills in solving problems involving fractions and percentages. Pupils in the mixed Years 5 and 6 class were equally enthusiastic as they learned how to calculate perimeters and areas of irregular shapes. The most-able pupils showed great tenacity as they tried different methods to find the area of regular polygons, such as pentagons and hexagons, and searched for a formula.

Pupils' confidence in literacy has increased significantly. After reading a particularly thought-provoking poem, Years 5 and 6 pupils made insightful comments about the characters, plot and underlying theme. Working extremely well in pairs, they went on to create their own opening paragraphs. Girls and boys are developing their skills equally effectively. This was evident as pupils shared their work. One pair wrote:

'Splash!

"Woof"

"Help me!" yelled Phillip, who was hanging awkwardly off the edge of the crumbling canal.'

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well. They benefit from working alongside other pupils and from targeted support in lessons and extra one-to-one tuition. In recent years, almost all have reached the expected levels by the end of Year 6.

Pupils' personal development is a real strength and is a significant reason why they are extremely well prepared for their next schools. Healthy Schools status and the Active Mark award are reflected in pupils' extremely good knowledge of the importance of keeping safe and healthy. They described the potential hazards in the kitchen and provided a well-informed account of how exercise has an impact on the heart's ability to ensure good circulation. Strong moral values are evident, not only in pupils' daily interactions with other pupils and staff, but also in their strong commitment to supporting those less fortunate than themselves. Involvement with charities, together with the study of other countries, develops pupils' understanding of global issues. Although the school's rural location constrains opportunities for pupils to gain insights through first-hand experiences into

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cultural diversity within the United Kingdom, pupils exchange information through the internet with pupils living in contrasting locations.

*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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</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 make good progress because the quality of teaching is generally good and often outstanding. Relationships are excellent; pupils are mutually supportive and keen to do their best. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace with a good variety of approaches that keep pupils engaged. Teachers take full advantage of the mixed-age classes and deploy the skilled teaching assistants to good effect. Pupils are frequently grouped by ability, for example the more-able Year 2 pupils often work alongside those in Year 4. Pupils who are less confident benefit from the role models provided by the more-able pupils. Teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively and employ a variety of questioning techniques which help to ensure all pupils are attentive. They skilfully draw on pupils' existing understanding and extend their thinking. Teachers provide good feedback during lessons and use assessment information well to pitch work with a good level of challenge for different groups. Pupils helped to devise a marking system, including symbols for teachers to point out how well they have tackled each piece of work. Pupils also use 'traffic lights' to indicate their own views. There are inconsistencies in the use of this system and in the opportunities pupils have to reflect on their own progress using specific success criteria for each topic they study. Pupils' use of their individual learning journals is patchy and pupils

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are sometimes unsure of the purpose of the diaries they are expected to complete at home.

Staff go to great lengths to provide curriculum activities that engage pupils, provide memorable experiences and promote their learning and personal development. Drawing on a range of sources, teachers are in the process of devising a curriculum structure that teaches skills progressively and includes an appropriate emphasis on knowledge and understanding, while allowing the greatest flexibility in responding to pupils' interests and local circumstances. Pupils talked enthusiastically, for example, about a recent project where the whole classroom had a Dinosaur theme. This approach is not yet embedded sufficiently. Staff are, rightly, drawing on their experiences so far to refine their strategies to take full advantage of pupils' high levels on independence and resilience, and to devise more thorough ways of assessing pupils' progress during integrated work.

The way staff are keen to further adapt the curriculum in the light of pupils' individual learning needs and interests is indicative of the outstanding care, support and guidance they provide. Support is provided straight away for any pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable. Very well-organised induction procedures for new Reception children and close links with the on-site pre-school mean that children move seamlessly into school. Excellent links with secondary schools help older pupils make a smooth transfer after they leave. The 'early birds' provision before school is attended by three or four pupils each day for a very modest fee, and is much appreciated by parents and carers.

*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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and the senior teacher who takes on this role in her absence work in close partnership. They transmit their high expectations clearly but sensitively to all members of the school community. Staff form a very strong team and work hard to ensure that good standards are maintained and that the school continues to improve. All teachers take on management responsibilities and this good will is a significant factor in sustaining the impetus for innovation and development.

Procedures to ensure pupils are safe in school are firmly embedded. The governing body plays a very important role in this by visiting the school regularly to check on the effectiveness of the safeguarding policy, and carrying out health and safety audits to the premises. Staff promote equality of opportunity extremely well and there are no differences in the attainment or progress of different groups. No racist incidents have

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occurred in past memory but procedures are in place to ensure that if any arise they are tackled promptly.

Parents and carers much appreciate the guidance they receive in supporting their children at home and are active partners in their children's learning. All attend the twice yearly consultation evenings. Monthly newsletters provide useful information. The recently introduced parents' and carers' forum is well attended and provides a sounding board and conduit for two-way information. Parents and carers raise considerable funds which are used to support visits and other aspects of the curriculum. Close links with other local schools lead to mutual benefits.

The governing body has an excellent grasp of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement which has helped the school to improve since the last inspection. Members analyse assessment information sharply and gain first-hand insights through regular focused visits during the school day. The school plays a central role in the life of the church and local community. Charity events and links with schools in the United Kingdom and overseas promote community cohesion and citizenship well, and encourage pupils to believe that they can make a difference in the lives of others.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>1</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>2</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>

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children make good progress and generally reach levels that are above those expected by the end of the Reception year. They play extremely well together and are happy to take on responsibilities such as organising resources. They show great enthusiasm as they choose from the good range of activities on offer, often showing initiative as they pursue their own interests. They talk readily to staff and visitors, reflecting their confidence and growing vocabulary. Children make very good headway in early reading and writing skills due to systematic teaching of letters and sounds. They readily support one another. 'I'll



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write the for you', offered one and 'You start postcard with a p then an o', said another, as children were busy addressing envelopes.

Children arrive each day to a stimulating, varied and well-organised learning environment. Activities are planned well to achieve a good balance of indoor and outdoor learning. A good range of resources supported learning around the theme of 'people who help us', for example. Children enthusiastically donned police, fire-fighter and postman uniforms and acted out these roles enthusiastically. Girls tend to more readily take up writing activities than boys, who are apt to graduate to the outdoor area. There are some resources outdoors to encourage writing but they are rather limited in scope. As well as encouraging children to follow their own interests, adults lead stimulating activities. On 'potato planting day' children delighted in planting potatoes and subsequently used potatoes and an excellent variety of craft resources to create people, animals and prints.

The teacher and teaching assistant manage the joint Reception and Year 1 class very well. They take advantage of the cosy mezzanine floor to introduce activities to each group or the whole class. Reception children benefit from working alongside the older children who provide good role models.

Adults record children's progress across all areas of learning though regular observations, collecting samples of their work and, when possible, photographing significant moments. Individual learning journeys provide a cumulative record of children's progress and parents and carers take up opportunities to add their own comments.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

The number of questionnaires received was well above average, with over three quarters of families responding. All parents and carers felt their children enjoyed school and were happy overall with their children's experience. Except for two parents or carers, who indicated individual concerns, they were unanimous in their positive opinion of all aspects of the school. The inspection findings endorsed these views.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Thomas A Becket Church of England Aided Primary 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 33 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 57 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	61	13	39	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	70	10	30	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	20	61	13	39	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	67	10	30	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	70	9	27	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	61	13	39	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	61	13	39	0	0	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)	18	55	14	42	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	64	11	33	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	61	12	36	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	52	16	48	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	52	16	48	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	73	9	27	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	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.**



18 March 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Thomas A Becket Church of England Aided Primary School,  
Tilshead, SP3 4RZ**

Thank you for making us so welcome during our recent visit. You were very helpful and keen to tell us how much you enjoy being at St Thomas A Becket. You go to a good school where each one of you is cared for extremely well. You rise to the challenges given, make good progress and reach above average standards.

Your behaviour is outstanding and we were impressed by the way adults and children get on together. You are polite and helpful and show a great deal of respect for one another and the adults who work with you. Your school is a happy place in which to learn and you are growing up to be confident and responsible; a great preparation for your future. We saw how teachers make lessons interesting and you told us that one of the best things about the school is how to have fun while learning. Your teachers are always thinking about how to make your learning even more interesting and enjoyable, at the same time making sure you improve as you go along. We agree that they should keep trying out ways to do this. It was good to learn that you had helped to devise the marking system and we have asked the school to keep working at improving this for you. We have suggested that you could review your own work more easily if the success criteria were clearer.

One of the main reasons why your school has improved since it was last inspected is that all the adults work extremely well together. We are confident that with the positive attitudes you have to your work, you will all try your hardest to help the school go from strength to strength.

Yours sincerely

Rob Crompton

Lead inspector

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