

# St Thomas' Leesfield CofE Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105714
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oldham
<b>Inspection number</b>	355823
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Colin Smith

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>	196
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Judith Knott
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Caroline Ireland
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 June 2008
<b>School address</b>	Thomas Street Lees, Oldham Lancashire OL4 5AT
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 7705710
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 10 lessons and three small group sessions, involving eight teachers and three teaching assistants. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books; assessment information, planning, and policies, including those relating to safeguarding (care and protection of pupils); and examined 59 questionnaires from parents and carers together with 86 completed by pupils and 18 by staff.

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

- Whether achievement in writing and mathematics is sufficient, particularly that of more-able pupils in Key Stage 2.
- The extent to which teaching provides challenge and fully engages pupils.
- The extent to which measures introduced by recently appointed leaders and managers to improve teaching and learning are helping to raise achievement.
- The quality of provision and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly the balance between adult-led activities and learning through play.

## Information about the school

St Thomas Primary is smaller than average in size for a school of this type. The proportions of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and with special educational needs and/or disabilities are above average. The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Only a very small number speak English as an additional language. The headteacher and a senior member of staff were appointed in September 2010. The other senior member of staff was appointed nine months ago. The school has gained the Activemark, Silver Eco and Platinum Teeth awards and has Healthy School status.

**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?**

**3**

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

**3**

## Main findings

Immediately following the previous inspection staffing difficulties arose and attainment started to decline. A recently appointed leadership team is providing secure foundations to move forward. The school is currently providing a satisfactory standard of education. Signs of improvement in provision and achievement are already evident. Good safeguarding, care, guidance and support ensure that pupils feel safe and happy in school. These factors have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour, sense of responsibility, contribution to the community and appreciation of healthy lifestyles, all of which are good.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and they enjoy learning. Children's knowledge and skills are below those expected for their age when they enter school. They make a satisfactory start in Reception, though their creative and physical development, and knowledge and understanding of the world do not keep pace with their increasing literacy and numeracy skills. By the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average in English and mathematics. Progress in reading is good and that in writing is improving strongly and edging closer to good. Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory and leaders recognise the need to raise the challenge for more-able pupils to accelerate progress further. Effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities enables them to make good progress.

Teaching is satisfactory. There are examples of outstanding teaching but also inconsistencies in the way assessment is used to ensure that the activities provided are sufficiently challenging for all pupils. Pupils learn best when they are actively engaged in the lesson but there are occasions when learning is passive and pupils' enthusiasm wanes. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum with good opportunities for pupils to engage in additional activities.

The key elements of leadership and management are satisfactory. Recently appointed leaders have left no stone unturned in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Many priorities have emerged and appropriate plans drawn up to address them. However, the school improvement plan lacks identified actions and criteria for success, making it hard for leaders, including governors, to judge the effectiveness of their actions. Nevertheless, progress is increasing, attainment is now rising and leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. These factors ensure that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

About 40% of the school's whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

- Improve provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:

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- strengthening children's learning through structured play
- planning learning objectives, identifying the next steps, and making more effective use of adult intervention to increase children's creative and physical development and their knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Improve teaching from satisfactory to good by:
  - using assessment more effectively to ensure that activities provided are consistently well matched to pupils' different learning needs
  - making greater use of methods and approaches that engage all pupils.
- Accelerate progress in mathematics by:
  - improving pupils' investigation and problem-solving skills
  - ensuring that more-able pupils are consistently challenged
  - setting clear targets and success criteria to support pupils' learning.
- Ensure that the school improvement plan has precise actions and success criteria and not too many priorities to enable leaders to measure the impact of their strategies.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Pupils enjoy learning, particularly when they are actively engaged, for example, in investigating mathematical patterns or composing stories with a partner. However, when pupils are required to listen for too long or complete paper exercises, their enthusiasm subsides. The vast majority of pupils are eager learners, who work independently and present their work neatly. Although pupils' progress has been satisfactory over previous years, there are signs of improvement, especially in writing. By providing clear targets and making writing more meaningful and enjoyable, for example, through drama, pupils are becoming enthusiastic writers, eager to use powerful language that engages the reader's attention. Progress in mathematics is improving gradually but is still held back because of pupils' difficulties in problem solving, limited use of individual targets and insufficient challenge in some lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from learning in small steps, which enables them to experience success. The progress of more-able pupils is sometimes restricted by having to complete easier exercises unnecessarily, before moving on to more demanding work.

The school is a harmonious community. Pupils are respectful and considerate. They relish opportunities to take responsibility. For example, as school counsellors and playground leaders they define their own rules. This raises their awareness of dangers and how to avoid them. High quality collective worship instils a strong sense of spiritual and moral awareness and encourages pupils to reflect on the consequences of their actions. Pupils disapprove strongly of any form of bullying or racism, although their awareness of cultural diversity is limited. Pupils develop a good understanding of healthy diet and exercise and are trying not to eat foods that contain high levels of fat or sugar. Pupils' attendance and their literacy and numeracy skills are average. They are learning how to assess their own achievements and benefit from involvement in business enterprise events. These factors provide a secure preparation for the future.

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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>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
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>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</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>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<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?

Teaching is mainly satisfactory and sometimes good and outstanding. School leaders are gradually eliminating inconsistencies. For example, in all lessons, teachers now ensure that pupils understand what they are expected to learn and mark their work constructively to help them to improve. The use of questioning has been improved since the previous inspection. Pupils are encouraged to think and explain, although there are still occasions when only a small number contribute while others listen passively. In the better lessons, pupils discuss ideas with a partner, which involves everyone. The extent to which teachers use assessments of pupils' prior learning to provide activities that are closely matched to different learning needs is more evident in some lessons than others. The work in pupils' books shows that challenge does not always extend the learning of the more-able pupils sufficiently, particularly in mathematics. Good quality advice, involving targets with success criteria, make an important contribution to pupils' achievement in English, although such explicit guidance is not firmly established in mathematics. Good quality small group teaching enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to reach their targets. Outstanding teaching, at the end of both key stages, is reflected in teachers' excellent subject knowledge, which inspires pupils to write with flare and imagination or investigate and discover mathematical rules.

The curriculum is undergoing improvement to promote creativity, enjoyment and study skills. Pupils have good opportunities to apply and improve their literacy and information

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and communication technology skills in other subjects. However, opportunities for pupils to investigate and solve mathematical problems are insufficient. The curriculum is enhanced by foreign language teaching and a wide range of visits, visitors, well-attended extra-curricular activities, and health education. This ensures that pupils understand citizenship and the importance of safe and healthy lifestyles. Although the curriculum is adapted effectively to cater for the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, it is not sufficiently well modified to cater fully for the needs pupils who have been identified as gifted and/or talented.

Despite the old buildings having flights of steps and being separated by a road, pupils are kept safe because of good supervision. The school is bright and welcoming. Good induction arrangements enable Reception children to settle quickly. Pupils move smoothly from one class to the next. Pupils are suitably prepared for transfer to secondary school. The needs of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are understood well, and strong links with health and education professionals ensure that barriers to learning are significantly reduced. Effective intervention programmes are specifically provided to support pupils at risk of falling behind.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

In a short time, the headteacher's skills, vision and openness have united all members of staff in making improvements, although it is too early to judge how effective these comprehensive measures have been. The governing body is centrally involved in decision making, has made first-class appointments of new leaders and is increasingly effective in holding the school to account. The headteacher is strongly supported by key stage managers, who lead by example, and are increasingly influencing school practice. Challenging targets have been set for each year group and pupils' progress towards them is rigorously tracked. Swift intervention to close gaps and increase progress is beginning to take effect. A wide range of monitoring and evaluation strategies has been implemented. Lessons are observed, pupils' work is checked, assessments are analysed and stakeholders' views are gathered. A clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses has emerged. Leaders are optimistic in their self-evaluation that achievement will be good when the current Year 6 pupils are assessed in a few months time. The school development plan, as a working document, has too many priorities and is insufficiently precise in identifying the necessary actions and success criteria to measure improvements in crucial areas.

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The school's good engagement with parents and carers, local schools, commerce and social services, brings many additional benefits to pupils' welfare and learning. For example, parents' and carers' views influence school planning and pupils develop teamwork skills through enterprise events. Good safeguarding is reflected in the measures to ensure safe staff recruitment, child protection and minimise risks associated with school buildings and visits. The school steadfastly challenges stereotyping, prevents discrimination and has begun to analyse outcomes for different groups of pupils. This has raised awareness of the need to improve provision for more-able pupils. Community cohesion is adequately promoted by taking steps to reach out to the local and wider community. However, the school is at an early stage of measuring the impact of its provision, for example on pupils' understanding of cultural diversity.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<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>2</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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress, although attainment by the end of Reception has been below average over recent years. The present Reception children are making good progress in their personal development and are working at the levels expected in literacy and numeracy. Children are safe, happy and are gaining independence. They behave well and understand the importance of health and hygiene. Provision, including teaching, is satisfactory. The teaching of reading and number skills is effective because activities are planned to match children's different learning needs. However, the planning, provision and assessment of activities to improve children's creative and physical development, and knowledge and understanding of the world lack clear objectives and specific purpose. When children are playing outdoors, there is not enough support from the planned activities or timely intervention from adults to promote learning, particularly in knowledge and understanding of the world or in developing children physically or creatively.



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Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders have raised expectations and challenge in literacy and numeracy. However, monitoring and evaluating provision and outcomes related to children's independent learning are not sufficiently precise to redress the imbalance between learning led by adults and children's learning through play.

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaires returned was above average. Parents and carers are highly appreciative of all that the school provides. A very small number of parents and carers expressed concern about the management of unacceptable behaviour but the inspection found that behaviour is good and is managed well. A similarly very small number of parents and carers raised concerns about pupils' preparation for changing school but this was related to pupils being offered the secondary school of their choice, which is beyond the school's control.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Thomas' Leesfield CofE 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 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 196 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	68	19	32	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	61	23	39	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	34	58	23	39	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	56	24	41	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	61	21	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	63	20	34	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	53	27	46	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)	29	49	24	41	3	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	49	26	44	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	46	29	49	3	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	46	30	51	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	54	22	37	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	61	19	32	1	2	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.**



30 March 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Thomas' Leesfield CofE Primary School, Oldham, OL4 5AT**

Thank you for making us so welcome and answering our questions politely. I would like to explain the inspection findings.

I know that the levels you reach slipped two to three years ago, at a time when your headteacher and some class teachers were absent. Since then, with the help of Mrs Ireland and staff, your school is improving again. Your school is satisfactory at the moment. Teaching is at least satisfactory. You are making at least satisfactory progress and the level you reach is average overall. Your attainment in reading is good, improving well in writing, although more gradually in mathematics.

There are many good things about your school, such as the way pupils with learning difficulties are supported. Your behaviour is good and you are eager to learn. I noticed how much you enjoy school, especially all of those extra activities. You know how to keep healthy and stay safe. Your school is very caring. Teachers and support staff go out of their way to make sure that you are content and happy. It is good to see that you follow their example by helping each other.

To help the school to improve further we have asked your headteacher and teachers to do the following things.

- Improve children's learning through play in Reception.
- Improve teaching to make it good in every class.
- Strengthen your problem-solving skills to increase progress in mathematics.
- Make sure that the main changes taking place in school are clearly explained in the school's improvement plan so that everyone can see just how much the school is improving.

Yours sincerely

Colin Smith

Lead inspector

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