

St Thomas CofE (VC) Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 136109 |
| Local authority | Kirklees |
| Inspection number | 382027 |
| Inspection dates | 10–11 October 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Tony Painter |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 398 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Silva Scott |
| Headteacher | David Rushby |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not applicable |
| School address | Sherwood Avenue Bradley Huddersfield HD2 1RQ |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons, taught by 16 teachers, and held discussions with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of school documents including policies for safeguarding and other matters, planning and assessment records. They examined staff and pupil questionnaire responses as well as 86 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- How consistently pupils make progress through the school.
- Whether teaching is ensuring good progress in most lessons.
- Whether provision and outcomes for pupils' personal development are as good as the school believes.
- How far the leadership of the school is becoming established.

Information about the school

This is an above-average-sized primary school where around a half of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The rest are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest groups from Caribbean and mixed White/Caribbean backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is broadly average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, at 39%, is well above average. Although above-average numbers of pupils have identified special educational needs and/or disabilities, the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is below average.

The school was formed in September 2010 from the amalgamation of an infant and a junior school on the same site and has not, therefore, been subject to previous inspection. The school gained the Investors in People award during its first year.

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

This is a satisfactory school. It has outstanding strengths in promoting pupils' personal development and ensuring they feel extremely safe. The excellent atmosphere of care is immediately apparent and pupils confidently show good behaviour and very good manners. There is a very strong sense of community in the school; pupils of different backgrounds mix readily and attendance is above average. All staff have worked together successfully to quickly establish a harmonious and inclusive atmosphere in this new school, acknowledged in the many positive comments made by pupils, parents and carers.

Children join the school with levels of development that are below those expected for their age and make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Progress through the rest of the school is more variable and is satisfactory overall. Although the school's 2011 Year 6 test results were low, this cohort of pupils had a high proportion of pupils, some very new to the school, with significant learning difficulties. Assessments, pupils' work and evidence from the inspection show that current Year 6 pupils and those from other year groups are on track to reach broadly average levels of attainment, although only a few are likely to reach the highest levels. The school has established consistent assessment systems, giving detailed and accurate information about how well pupils are doing. Senior staff analyse these data well to identify pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable and to successfully target action, for example, where pupils are in danger of falling behind. Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress, achieve soundly overall and keep up with the other pupils.

The many positive aspects of teaching ensure that pupils enjoy their learning. Good relationships and organisation, well-planned resources and effective questioning promote pace to learning in many lessons. Strong teamwork with teaching assistants supports the progress of targeted pupils. However, some inconsistencies reduce the overall impact of teaching. In most lessons, teachers group pupils by ability to target work to their needs but occasionally they do not plan different activities and match tasks sharply enough to the needs of these groups. While most teachers generally respond quickly to reshape their lessons to the rate of pupils' learning, others do not

do enough to amend their teaching to ensure consistently good progress. In some lessons, there is room for further challenge, particularly for higher-attaining pupils.

The headteacher's effective monitoring and successful establishment of a new leadership framework are having a positive effect. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and there is a shared sense of purpose among all staff. Senior leaders' roles are established and middle managers are now playing a part in steering improvements. The headteacher's monitoring has built an accurate picture of teaching but other managers play a less pivotal role in monitoring to support and ensure the implementation of new developments. The effective actions taken to establish the school and build the necessary foundation of relationships and teamwork indicate a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Up to 40% of the schools 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?

- Ensure teachers promote pupils' consistently good progress in lessons by:
 - using information about how well pupils are doing to plan work that is more sharply matched to different ability levels
 - ensuring lessons always challenge higher-attaining pupils enough
 - responding more flexibly to pupils' needs as they become apparent.
- Widen management systems further by developing leaders' skills of observation and evaluation of teaching and other aspects of the school's work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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| 3 |
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Pupils greatly enjoy their lessons and show this through good behaviour, positive responses to teaching and their comments to inspectors. Frequently, there is a tangible sense of excitement to learning and pupils are keen to get on with tasks. They take pride in their work and mostly concentrate well. They enjoy applying their developing skills within a good range of activities. For example, pupils express their thoughts and opinions with greater confidence in response to teachers' questioning, often making correct use of appropriate specialist vocabulary. Good attention to developing reading skills is having a positive impact and older pupils read and discuss books with interest and enjoyment. Pupils say they particularly enjoy their many opportunities to link learning of information and communication technology and literacy skills to real-life experiences.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive well-targeted additional support which ensures they do not fall behind. The school monitors the progress of every pupil carefully and ensures there are no significant differences in the progress made by different groups.

Pupils say that they have total confidence in their safety at school. Instances of bullying or racial intolerance are extremely rare and pupils are confident that staff deal effectively with any such instances. Pupils understand well how to eat healthily and above-average numbers take part in sports activities. Pupils speak with pride about the good opportunities for them to take responsibilities and the various roles they fulfil. They show a very strong sense of social responsibility and value opportunities to reflect, think deeply about themselves, their values and those of others. The impact of pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development shows in the ways pupils from different backgrounds interact harmoniously and cooperate well. These personal strengths, above average attendance and sound basic skills ensure satisfactory preparation for the next stages of their learning.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 3 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attainment ¹ | 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 | 3 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 1 |
| 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 | 2 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have successfully put a number of new teaching and learning strategies into place. Although some inconsistencies remain that reduce the overall impact of teaching, there is evidence that pupils' progress and learning have improved. Throughout the school, teachers develop strong relationships with pupils through appropriate encouragement, praise and effective control where necessary. As a result, pupils behave well, contributing positively to the pace of their learning. Well-established routines ensure little time is lost in classroom management and teachers increasingly ensure that time is available for independent work. Support staff are used productively and are confident of their roles to ensure learning, particularly of targeted pupils.

Good assessment systems now give teachers accurate information about how well pupils are doing. Pupils know their targets and can explain how to improve their work. Teachers frequently use assessment information constructively when planning work for different ability groups but, in some lessons, there is not enough distinction between what pupils of different abilities will learn. As a result, not all groups have

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

the right level of challenge to promote good learning. Some tasks, particularly for higher-attaining pupils, do not offer sufficient challenge to extend their learning. Teachers recognise and check how well pupils are learning during and at the ends of lessons; they often intervene appropriately with further questioning or support. However, they sometimes miss opportunities to amend the lesson in progress to ensure good learning, for example, when pupils have quickly understood and can move on to new learning. Although there were some good examples of teachers' adjustments to planning based on pupils' learning in earlier lessons, these were not consistent.

The good curriculum includes a wide range of meaningful activities that pupils find enjoyable and engaging. An increasing use of thematic work with an emphasis on visits, visitors and first-hand experiences adds meaning, relevance and interest; pupils respond enthusiastically to these improvements. Strong partnerships contribute to the very wide range of well-attended clubs and enrichment activities. Appropriate amendments to the curriculum meet the needs of identified groups of pupils. For example, targeted pupils take part in additional activities designed to boost their performance, and gifted and talented pupils have opportunities to extend their experiences. New strategies to provide regular homework effectively involve parents and carers in their children's learning and further extend the strong home/school links.

Staff's deep personal knowledge of each individual pupil and the detailed and interlocking range of support services have firmly established outstanding care, guidance and support. The overall impact is a strong community atmosphere and ethos of care that makes a dramatic contribution to pupils' confidence, personal development and sense of well-being. Very strong positive relationships at all levels ensure any potentially vulnerable pupils and their families have full confidence in the school's ability to give them support. The school makes very good use of a good range of well-established partnerships to meet needs. Actions are closely tracked and frequently show very effective outcomes. Robust monitoring arrangements have improved attendance markedly to above average levels and substantially reduced persistent absenteeism.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 3 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 3 |
| 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's initial monitoring has given an accurate overview of the school and identified the right areas for development. He has successfully conveyed a clear vision for the amalgamated school and staff at all levels are wholeheartedly adopting new ways of working that are improving provision. Well-directed training is giving staff the additional skills they need to put new strategies into place. This is improving the quality of teaching and reducing inconsistencies. The establishment of a rigorous,

regular and accurate assessment system through the school has been an important step; the data are giving a secure picture of progress through the school and helping to establish challenging targets. Regular reviews of pupils' progress, holding teachers to account and targeting further support, are reinforcing ambition and the drive for improvement. Secure actions to establish the school have built the necessary foundation of good relationships and teamwork to improve further.

After unavoidable delays in establishing leadership responsibilities, action has now begun to widen responsibilities. Senior leaders, for example, have established their roles across the whole school to support more effectively coherent provision. Middle leaders are beginning to play a greater part in forming an overview of their subjects, identifying and leading new developments. All show commitment to this process but are at the early stages of developing observation and evaluation skills that will enable them to contribute fully to establishing new developments and taking improvements to the next level.

The supportive governing body has good knowledge of the school and its current priorities. It ensures safeguarding arrangements fully meet statutory requirements and has particularly rigorous procedures to monitor and improve all safeguarding matters. Governors' links with the school are effective with good strategies to gather and share first-hand observations of the school's work. This ensures governors ask increasingly searching questions to hold the school to account and monitor developments.

Many strong partnerships enhance and extend the school's provision. In particular, outside agencies contribute very well to aspects of pupils' personal development and complement the good links with parents and carers. The school effectively promotes community cohesion from a good understanding of its own context. There are strong links in the local area and internationally that help pupils from different cultures and backgrounds to get along very well together. Active measures to analyse all aspects of pupil achievement and act on the findings promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination, although higher-attaining pupils continue to underachieve.

These are the grades for the 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good provision ensures children make good progress, particularly in social and language development. Children settle quickly into the school routines and are clearly happy and motivated in their activities. The staff team establishes very secure relationships with children and their families that ensure a supportive and positive atmosphere and encourage good behaviour. Effective partnerships with Year 1 staff have identified good ways to adopt practice from the Early Years Foundation Stage to ease children’s transition.

In Nursery and Reception classes, there is a well-planned balance between adult- and child-led activities. This provides constructive and enjoyable learning experiences for all children that promote purposeful play, investigation and exploration. There is appropriate attention to teaching and developing children’s early reading skills. Activities in the outside areas generally mirror those inside but staff do not always take full advantage of the outside to extend children’s experiences.

The coordinator has established effective teamwork that ensures a common sense of purpose and promotes good learning. Self-evaluation is based on secure monitoring, and comprehensive assessment systems give a clear idea of how well individual children are learning and developing. However, this information is not always drawn together well to identify strengths and where further developments are needed.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |

Views of parents and carers

The inspection questionnaire response rate, at around 22%, is below the average found in primary schools. However, most parents and carers responded with wholly positive views of their children’s experiences with particularly high support for the effective way that the school keeps pupils safe. A number of comments were supportive of the effective way that staff have established the school as a coherent whole. The inspection findings support these views. A very small number of comments expressed negative views and inspectors thoroughly investigated all the general matters raised. Their findings are included within the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Thomas CofE (VC) 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 86 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 398 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 55 | 64 | 29 | 34 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 56 | 65 | 29 | 34 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 39 | 45 | 43 | 50 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 41 | 48 | 38 | 44 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 46 | 53 | 36 | 42 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 44 | 51 | 36 | 42 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 35 | 41 | 49 | 57 | 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) | 39 | 45 | 39 | 45 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 41 | 48 | 40 | 47 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 41 | 48 | 36 | 42 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 30 | 35 | 46 | 53 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 48 | 56 | 35 | 41 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 54 | 63 | 30 | 35 | 1 | 1 | 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 | 43 | 47 | 10 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 6 | 46 | 42 | 6 |
| Secondary schools | 14 | 36 | 41 | 9 |
| Sixth forms | 15 | 42 | 41 | 3 |
| Special schools | 30 | 48 | 19 | 3 |
| Pupil referral units | 14 | 50 | 31 | 5 |
| All schools | 10 | 44 | 39 | 6 |

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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">■ 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.



12 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas CofE (VC) Primary School, Huddersfield, HD2 1RQ

I would like to say a big 'thank you' to you all for making the inspectors feel so welcome when we came to your school. Special thanks must go to those of you who gave up time to talk to us about your work and how you enjoy school and your lessons. You told us that you think the new school is exciting and that you feel very safe. We agree that you all work hard in school, behave well and get on extremely well with each other. You are right to be proud of what you achieve.

Yours is a satisfactory school that is particularly good at caring for you, helping you to grow up and making sure that you are safe. We saw that all the staff have worked hard together to establish the new school and to make things better for you. We saw how you enjoy your lessons and how so many of you are keen to learn. As a result, you make satisfactory progress.

One reason for our visit was to see if we can help your school to improve further. We have asked your teachers to do a bit more to make sure that all work is challenging enough for all of you to learn well, especially for those of you who find some things easy. We have also asked staff to check a bit more carefully how things are going to help the school to continue to improve.

I hope that you will help by continuing to do your very best in all you do.

Yours sincerely

Tony Painter
Lead inspector

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