

St Thomas Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105322
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	377224
Inspection dates	17–18 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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

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	277
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judith Jones
Headteacher	Sheryl Farnworth
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who observed teaching and learning in 21 lessons or part lessons, taught by nine different teachers. The inspection team examined the school's policies, assessment information, pupils' work, teachers' plans and school improvement planning. They held discussions with the headteacher, the staff, members of the governing body, parents and carers and pupils. The inspectors analysed 76 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 98 from Key Stage 2 pupils and 25 from staff.

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

- How effective are strategies to promote children's language and communication skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage?
- What action is being taken and how effective is it, to improve pupils' attainment in mathematics in Key Stage 1?
- How successful has the school been in improving pupils' writing since the previous inspection?
- What is the impact of the creative curriculum on enjoyment and outcomes for pupils?

Information about the school

St Thomas Church of England is a larger than average primary school. Most pupils are from a Pakistani heritage and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high. About three quarters of children are at a very early stage of learning English when they enter the Nursery. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The school has gained a number of awards, including International Schools and Basic Skills. The school is popular and pupil numbers have increased since the previous inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

St Thomas Church of England Primary is an outstanding school. An extremely dedicated headteacher and staff have maintained and built upon the strengths identified in the previous inspection. All pupils are highly valued in this harmonious school community and have full access to the high quality opportunities provided. Outstanding care, guidance and support and the very positive school atmosphere make a considerable contribution to pupils' excellent personal development. Pupils are highly motivated learners who thoroughly enjoy school. Community cohesion is promoted extremely well and pupils make exceptional progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Behaviour is often exemplary in lessons and around the school. Pupils feel extremely safe and show an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They willingly take on additional responsibilities and make very valuable contributions to the school and to the wider community.

Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and a very exciting curriculum. Teaching and the curriculum are imaginative and well tailored to pupils' needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding and children make exceptional progress in most areas of learning, especially in developing their language skills. Pupils make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is average. Teaching is stimulating. Across the school there are examples of outstanding practice and these are shared with staff. There are plans to extend this strategy further. Teachers establish clear expectations and high quality relationships with pupils. Pupils benefit from skilful explanations, demonstrations and questioning. Assessment is used effectively to plan teaching and to provide challenging tasks which are well matched to pupils' needs. Just occasionally, learning does not proceed at a quick enough pace and learning can be hindered by insufficient resources. An innovative curriculum is enriched by a wide range of additional activities that results in overall outstanding outcomes for pupils.

The headteacher, senior leaders and staff are firmly focused on providing high quality provision so that all pupils can do as well as they can. There are outstanding partnerships with other agencies to promote pupils' learning and development. Parents and carers are delighted with the care and education provided for their children. Their comments included, 'Children are making very good progress in this school', 'Fantastic school', and, 'Teachers are wonderful, especially the headteacher'. Through accurate, systematic self-evaluation, the school knows its strengths and

takes positive action to bring about improvements where needed. Since the previous inspection, the school's effectiveness has progressed from good to outstanding. The school demonstrates an outstanding capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and learning by extending the sharing of the best practice and ensuring that in all lessons:
 - learning and the lesson move on at a brisk pace
 - resources are sufficient for the purpose of the lesson.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge, understanding and skills that are generally well below the levels expected for their age, particularly in communication and language.

Throughout the school pupils show considerable enthusiasm for learning and thoroughly enjoy the wide range of activities provided. Pupils informed the inspectors, 'It's fun to learn', and, 'We learn a lot in lessons'. Most pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2, including the more able make good progress. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because of the well-targeted support they receive. Pupils at an early stage of learning English benefit from specialist support and guidance and make good progress. They are especially helped by well-planned opportunities for pupils to discuss their learning in pairs and small groups. A focused approach to teaching reading leads to good pupil progress in this area. Attainment in writing has been increased by the introduction of exciting topics and extending links between subjects. As a result, writing is now lively and imaginative. After being inspired by the teacher's enthusiasm and stimulating visual images, pupils in Year 4 made exceptional progress in exploring and recording their ideas about a mystery dinosaur egg. They wrote what it might be like to be in the egg and what creature might emerge.

Pupils make good progress in mathematics. Strong teaching, interesting practical problem-solving activities and collaborative learning approaches are helping to bring attainment in mathematics by the end of Year 2 in line with that of reading and writing. By Year 6, school assessments, the lessons seen and pupils' work show that attainment is average in reading, writing and mathematics. Taking attainment, progress and enjoyment into account, pupils' achievement is good.

Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development and demonstrate very positive qualities such as cooperation, kindness, respect for others and responsibility. In assembly, pupils reflect on the importance of sharing with others. They have a very good understanding of different cultures and faiths. Pupils feel extremely safe at school and know that there are always trusted adults they can turn to for help. Pupils choose healthy food wisely and enjoy participating in rigorous exercise. They thrive on the wide range of responsibilities provided. Head boy, head girl, prefects, eco warriors, librarians, community farmers, receptionists and those on the school council all take their roles and responsibilities extremely seriously. Pupils

raise funds for a wide range of appeals and charities to help those who are less fortunate than themselves. Outstanding personal skills and good progress in literacy and numeracy mean that pupils are well prepared for the future.

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is lively and enthusiastic. Pupils told inspectors, 'Teachers make lessons interesting', and, 'Our teachers make learning fun'. Examples of outstanding lessons were seen throughout the school. In these lessons, the teacher's strong subject knowledge, high expectations and imaginative activities led to exceptional gains in learning. Throughout the school teachers create attractive and stimulating classrooms. Useful learning prompts guide learning and high quality displays of pupils' work reflect the current topics. Lessons have a clear purpose and pupils know what they are expected to learn. Skilful questioning challenges pupils' thinking and checks their understanding. Assessment information is used successfully to plan teaching and to guide pupils' learning. Pupils' interest is sustained because stimulating tasks are closely tailored to their abilities and needs. However, the rate of learning slows occasionally when time is not used effectively and resources are insufficient to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and make good contributions to pupils' learning, particularly for those who need additional help with language.

The curriculum contributes extremely well to pupils' personal development and promotes good academic progress. It provides memorable and exciting learning experiences for all pupils. Strong links between subjects add meaning and relevance to pupils' learning. Themed events are very well received by learners. Art Week provided an exciting start to the new school year for all classes. All classes produced impressive examples inspired by the work of famous artists. For example, Year 1 pupils created impressive portrait masks after looking at the work of Marc Quinn, and Year 3 pupils produced colourful animal images in the style of Rene Magritte. All year groups exhibited their fine work for pupils, parents, carers and visitors to enjoy. Health education and the wide range of physical activities provided contribute

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

extremely well to pupils’ excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the wide range of clubs, including athletics, choir, cooking, football and Urdu. Visitors and visits further enhance the curriculum and pupils’ learning.

High quality care, guidance and support are at the heart of the school’s extremely positive ethos. Pupils, parents and carers fully appreciate the well-organised, safe and secure environment provided. Relationships between adults and pupils are outstanding. A parent commented, ‘Friendly staff and children’s interest always comes first’. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with outstanding support. In partnership with other agencies, the school is highly successful in supporting pupils and their families who require additional help. The rigorous monitoring and promotion of attendance has led to sustained improvements in this area.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and staff have successfully created a very positive school atmosphere where a strong drive to improve is shared by pupils and staff. Staff work extremely well as a team. The headteacher and all staff are dedicated to providing high quality provision and their success can be seen in the outstanding outcomes for all pupils. Senior staff and subject leaders effectively monitor performance and effective action is taken to bring about improvement. There are good systems for monitoring and developing teaching and the school has good procedures for professional development to increase the proportion of outstanding lessons.

Members of the governing body show a good understanding of the school’s strengths and improvement priorities. They are supportive and provide constructive challenge to hold the school to account. Safeguarding is good and there are effective policies and procedures to protect and safeguard pupils. The monitoring and evaluation of these procedures are thorough. All staff are well trained in the area of safeguarding. Safe practices for pupils are successfully promoted through the school’s teaching and ethos.

Outstanding attention is paid to ensuring equality of opportunity and discrimination is very effectively tackled. All pupils have full access to the high quality provision and there is no unevenness in progress. This is an extremely harmonious community and community cohesion is a great strength. Careful planning and assessment of provision has led to a very good understanding of the community the school serves and has established high quality relationships with parents and carers. An appreciation of different cultures and faiths is promoted extremely well through the school’s curriculum. The international dimension to the curriculum further enhances its work on community cohesion across the globe.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

High quality leadership and planning are promoting outstanding provision. Children settle quickly because of good induction arrangements. They make exceptionally good progress especially in their personal, social and emotional development because of the strong relationships between adults and children and the excellent attention to care, guidance and welfare. Children grow in confidence and feel extremely safe and secure.

Children thoroughly enjoy the indoor and outdoor activities provided. They are extremely well taught and make outstanding gains in their learning. Assessment information is used accurately to plan teaching and learning. There is a successful balance of adult-led activities and those chosen by the children. Children have considerable opportunities to explore, be creative and work independently. Each child has a 'learning journal' which is a detailed annotated and photographic record of their progress and learning experiences. This is effectively shared with parents and carers.

Children make rapid progress in communication and language because these skills are very well promoted through all activities. For example, in Nursery, children talked about their favourite fruit after tasting apple, avocado, pineapple, mango and orange. Effective bilingual support is a great asset to the many children who are learning English as an additional language. Children love listening to stories such as 'Handa's surprise'. There are good opportunities for them to acquire and practise mark making and early writing skills. In Reception, children counted carrots, onions, leeks and parsnips and bought them from the 'farm shop'. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to develop children's numeracy skills. The outdoor areas successfully encourage children to be active and purposeful learners. The leader has clear plans to sustain the many strengths and also to further extend outdoor learning facilities and resources.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

All of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaire are happy with their children’s experience at the school. They are especially pleased with the safety in the school, the sense of enjoyment, their children’s progress, the quality of teaching and how well the school is led and managed. The inspection findings reflect these very positive views. The results of this survey indicate that parents’ and carers’ concerns about the school are very few. However, the school is not complacent and the headteacher and staff continually strive to meet and exceed the needs of parents and carers. The school engages extremely well with parents and carers and is successfully helping them to support their children’s learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Thomas Church of England 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 76 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 277 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	55	72	21	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	59	78	17	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	53	70	22	29	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	61	27	36	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	52	68	23	30	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	50	66	24	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	63	26	34	1	1	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)	51	67	23	30	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	61	28	37	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	48	63	27	36	0	0	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	63	27	36	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	51	67	25	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	68	23	30	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	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.



19 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas Church of England Primary School, Bury, BL9 7EY

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school, giving us your views and showing us your work. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit. St Thomas' Church of England is an outstanding primary school. These are the main strengths.

- You thoroughly enjoy school and the activities provided.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make outstanding progress.
- In Years 1 to 6 you make good progress because of the good teaching you receive.
- Pupils who need additional support with their learning make outstanding progress.
- An exciting and wide range of learning activities is provided including clubs, visits and visitors.
- You get on extremely well with each other and your behaviour is outstanding.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and fit.
- You feel extremely safe at school because teachers and other adults take excellent care of you and provide outstanding guidance and support.
- You make very valuable contributions to school life and to the wider community.
- The school is extremely well led and managed by the headteacher. She receives very good support from other key leaders.

We have given your school just a few points for improvement.

- We have asked teachers to ensure that full use is made of learning time in all lessons. We have also asked teachers to ensure that learning resources are suitable and sufficient for your learning needs.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts
Lead inspector

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