

St Thomas A Becket Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	100177
Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	395303
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2012
Lead inspector	Joanna Toulson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	289
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tolu Laleye
Headteacher	Monica Manley
Date of previous school inspection	18 July 2007
School address	Mottisfont Road Abbey Wood London SE2 9LY
Telephone number	020 8310 5394
Fax number	020 8310 4449
Email address	admin@sttab.greenwich.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	15–16 May 2012
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M1 2WD

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Introduction

Inspection team

Joanna Toulson

Additional inspector

Samuel Ofori-Kyereh

Additional inspector

Kanwaljit Singh

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 19 lessons and observed 11 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, documentation relating to safeguarding, teachers' lesson plans and pupils' work. In addition, inspectors listened to pupils read. The questionnaires returned by pupils, staff and 131 parents and carers were also scrutinised.

Information about the school

St Thomas A Becket Roman Catholic School is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is very high. The largest group of pupils in the school is of Black African heritage, with White British pupils being the next largest group. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than the national average. Most of these pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage attend a morning or an afternoon session in the Nursery and, this year, full time in two Reception classes. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Pupils respond well to the school’s excellent focus on promoting an inclusive learning community. The school is not yet outstanding because teaching is not consistently strong enough to secure rapid and sustained progress in all year groups.
- Pupils achieve well. From low starting points, pupils’ attainment at the end of Year 6 is usually at least in line with the national average. In almost all classes, pupils make good progress. However, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to write at length and this hinders the progress of a few pupils.
- Good teaching is supported by excellent relationships. A focus on improving the quality of marking of pupils’ work has resulted in it contributing strongly to pupils’ learning, with pupils usually responding to teachers’ comments. However, not all teaching is good, in a few lessons the pace of learning is occasionally too slow and does not provide sufficient challenge for the more-able pupils. At times, opportunities are lost to engage all pupils by encouraging paired or group talk.
- Pupils’ good behaviour stems from consistently high expectations from all staff. As a result, pupils are polite and respectful to others and develop positive attitudes to learning. Pupils feel safe, knowing that adults care for their welfare.
- The headteacher communicates high expectations and is well supported by other senior leaders and the governing body. Together, they manage the performance of teachers effectively and are well equipped to improve teachers’ practice still further. The school provides rich experiences for its pupils and ensures that the curriculum contributes well to the promotion of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all teaching progresses towards outstanding by:
 - ensuring that more-able pupils are always challenged in all lessons
 - engaging all pupils in lessons by encouraging paired and group talk
 - making sure that the pace of learning in all lessons moves on swiftly.

- Accelerate pupils' progress by increasing the opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills in other subjects, as well as in English.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaire, nearly all agreed that their children make good progress and develop confident skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. The inspection evidence supports this view.

Children enter school with skill levels that are well below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage in all areas of learning and enter Year 1 with skills still slightly below those levels typically found. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils attain broadly average standards in reading and mathematics. Writing skills at the end of Key Stage 1, although improving well, are below age-related expectations. Pupils in the current Year 6 have made rapid progress in their learning. From low starting points, they are on track to attain standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics.

In English work seen, pupils show a growing confidence in writing in a range of genres. By Year 6, pupils consistently use paragraphs and a range of connectives appropriately. However, these skills are not consolidated sufficiently through applying them to their writing in other subjects. Pupils demonstrate good mathematical skills across the curriculum; for example, using photographs of children to make graphs about their favourite foods in the Nursery or plotting and interpreting graphs in their science work in Year 6. Work is well set out in mathematics, showing a logical approach to solving problems.

The school makes good use of external professionals to support pupils with language and communication difficulties. Together with good support from teaching assistants and targeted, effective interventions, this expertise ensures that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. There is no evident variation in the achievement of different groups of pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, Black African and White British pupils.

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Quality of teaching

Almost all parents and carers who returned the questionnaire feel that their children are taught well and the inspection findings endorse this view. Data on pupils' progress, pupils' work and inspectors' observations support the judgement that teaching is typically good, with a small amount that is satisfactory.

Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good because of the effective focus on addressing weaknesses in language and communication skills when children join the school. Good phonics teaching (the linking of letters and sounds) is supporting this, together with good opportunities for children to talk about their exciting activities for example discussing the vegetables in the greenhouse or sequencing the story of the Gigantic Turnip. Expectations are high in both the Nursery and Reception classes and activities challenge children at all levels.

Teachers use a wide range of interesting activities, for example writing a newspaper report about the visit to the Olympic Park, to engage the interest of the pupils. Regular assessments assist teachers in setting activities to meet the needs of individual pupils. Occasionally however, the progress of more-able pupils is slowed when they have to complete easier activities before moving on to the more challenging ones. The marking of pupils' work gives clear guidance about how they can improve and this is a key factor in explaining pupils' good progress. Teachers have created bright learning environments with pupils' work displayed as well as learning prompts, to which pupils refer. Pupils are motivated and enthused, for example, by writing information texts about crocodiles or by exploring what makes people angry, happy or sad. Reading is developed well across subjects. Teachers also take good opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects. However, opportunities to extend their writing skills in other subjects are not sufficiently developed to guarantee faster progress in writing to raise their achievement further.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and question pupils well during lessons to support their learning. Occasionally, however, too much teacher talk slows the pace of learning. An over-reliance on the 'hands up' convention at times means that some pupils listen passively while others volunteer answers.

Teachers link activities in the curriculum with initiatives to promote pupils' personal development. For example, anti-bullying week, sports week and the annual visit to the theatre all make a positive contribution, as reflected in the displays around the school. These include displays celebrating pupils' achievements in writing, dance and physical education as well as a selection of Victorian kitchen equipment to support their cultural understanding.

The needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well understood by teachers and work is planned carefully to ensure they make good progress. Pupils who receive additional support feel it helps them to learn and say they enjoy working in small groups.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Inspectors' observations and discussions show that behaviour at the school is typically good. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire are positive about the behaviour in the school and all feel that the school keeps their children safe. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage quickly grow in confidence because of safe and secure surroundings and good attention to their welfare needs. Pupils say that behaviour is good and that lessons are not disrupted by poor behaviour. Inspectors found that behaviour in lessons is good but pupils are sometimes too passive in their learning. Pupils say they feel safe. They have a good understanding about different sorts of bullying and are adamant that racist incidents do not occur. A recent focus on cyber-bullying and keeping safe on the internet has been well received by pupils. As a pupil said, 'I would never put my photograph or personal details onto the internet – it is very dangerous.' Adults are good role models. Pupils appreciate the care that they receive and say that the headteacher is always at the gate to say goodbye at the end of the day. As a result, there is a real sense of community within the school, which contributes significantly to a safe, secure and welcoming environment. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in the rate of attendance which is above average for all groups of pupils.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear focus on ensuring that the school does all it can to help each pupil achieve their best. She is strongly supported in this aim by her senior team and a highly skilled and supportive governing body. Together, they share a clear strategic vision for the school. All areas of the school are led well, including the Early Years Foundation Stage and the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. 'Learning teams', focusing on different aspects of school life, include staff and governors and help to ensure that leadership is distributed across the school. Senior leaders monitor teaching closely and training is carefully planned to meet the individual needs of the teacher and the strategic needs of the school. This good management of the performance of teachers is helping all staff, especially newly qualified teachers, to provide a good and improving quality of teaching. The school clearly has the capacity for further improvement, sustaining the good teaching noted at the last inspection, while focusing well on raising attainment further. The governing body challenges the school well and, along with school leaders, ensures that the safeguarding arrangements meet all legal requirements.

Pupils enjoy a rich and varied curriculum, with a good range of visits and visitors to the school that positively promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Awe and wonder of the world are promoted well through, for example, pupils watching chicks hatch and observing African snails. Assemblies contribute well to pupils' personal development, encouraging them to reflect on the symbolism of the Olympic torch and what is meant by unity and friendship.

The school's careful analysis of the performance of individuals and groups ensures that all enjoy equal opportunity to do well and discrimination in any form is not

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tolerated. The support of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable is a significant strength and there is very evident care in the school's work with individuals and their families. In this way, the school promotes equality in an exemplary way and as a result, it is a very harmonious place in which pupils thrive.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



17 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas A Becket Roman Catholic Primary School, London, SE2 9LY

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school recently. The other inspectors and I really enjoyed meeting you. You told us that you enjoyed school and felt safe. We thought you were well behaved and it was lovely to see how kind and respectful you are to each other. We were pleased to see that you attend school regularly. The teaching in your school is good and you make good progress in your learning. We think that the leaders and managers in your school are doing a good job and that, as a result, St Thomas A Becket Roman Catholic Primary is a good school.

In order to make it even better, we have asked the adults that run your school to do the following things.

- Make sure you are always challenged to work hard, especially those of you who sometimes find learning easy, ensure time is used well in your lessons so that you learn quickly, and provide you with more opportunities to talk about your learning in pairs and in groups.
- Provide more opportunities for you to practise your writing skills in all your subjects.

You can help by continuing to work hard and enjoying all that the school offers you.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Toulson
Lead inspector

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