

# St Thomas Church of England VA Primary School

Great Colmore Street, Birmingham, B15 2AT

**Inspection dates** 14–15 March 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils make rapid progress in all key stages because of the outstanding teaching they receive and the rich variety of other experiences the school provides.
- Teachers pay great attention to ensuring all pupils quickly become secure in the basics of reading, writing and mathematics.
- All pupils, from Year 1 onwards, are taught by specialists in English and mathematics.
- Pupils very much enjoy their lessons because teachers let them choose the topics that they study.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They feel completely safe and know that staff will deal quickly with any concerns they may have.
- Attendance is improving rapidly, but too many pupils still arrive late to school in the mornings.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders are exceptionally well focused on identifying and tackling any weaknesses in provision. As a result, the school is improving rapidly in all areas.
- Governors have a very good understanding of what the headteacher and his deputy headteacher are doing to improve teaching. They have high expectations of how quickly the school can improve, and these are being fulfilled.
- Leaders act very quickly to improve any areas of weakness in teaching, including in even the very best lessons, in order to raise achievement.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 18 lessons. In addition, they listened to pupils reading and analysed the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and staff.
- The inspectors took account of the 24 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also met parents informally.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current progress, records relating to behaviour and documents in relation to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

David Driscoll, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Philip Winch

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most other primary schools.
- A high proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported through school action. The proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The great majority of pupils are from Black British or Black Caribbean backgrounds, with other pupils coming from a very wide range of other minority ethnic groups. A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language, but only a very few are at an early stage in learning to speak English.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for certain groups of pupils, in this case those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and who are in the care of the local authority) is high.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school had a full-time Nursery until September 2011, when it reduced to part time. There was a dramatic fall in the number of parents applying for a place for their children in the Nursery in September 2012.

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

- Reduce the number of pupils who arrive late to school by raising parents' understanding of the importance of punctuality and providing extra support for those families who have the most difficulty in getting their children to school on time.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The rapid improvements noted at the time of the last inspection have continued. Standards are rising across the school at a rate that is much faster than the national average.
- The pupils who left Year 6 in 2012 did so with average standards, despite having moved up to Year 3 with very low standards indeed. Every pupil who left Year 6 in 2012 made at least the expected amount of progress, and the proportion that exceeded this was much higher than the national average.
- The same pattern, of pupils starting with low standards and making outstanding progress to improve to average, is also true of Key Stage 1 and the Nursery and Reception classes. The standards in Year 2 were below average in 2012, but the improving trend has been maintained and standards there are now average.
- Teachers are building successfully on the improved standards; standards of writing in the Reception class and Year 1 for example are now above average and the proportions of pupils reaching the highest levels are increasing rapidly in Years 2 and 6.
- The weaknesses in basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics found at the previous inspection are no longer evident. Pupils read widely by Year 2. They enjoy fiction and non-fiction books, as well on-line newspapers, for example, where pupils kept up to date with events for Red Nose day. One group also checked predictions for football results and worked out what this would mean for their team's position in the league, so using their mathematical skills as part of a reading lesson.
- All groups of pupils make outstanding progress, regardless of their ethnic background. The intensive teaching of literacy enables those who are at early stages in learning English very quickly to become confident speakers, readers and writers in the language.
- There was very little difference in English between the progress and attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and others in 2012. In fact, such pupils did slightly better than others in mathematics. Leaders have used the extra pupil premium funding to improve attendance and provide extra staffing so that eligible pupils can be taught in smaller groups and this is having a good effect on their achievement.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make equally as impressive progress as other pupils. Their needs are assessed frequently and accurately and used to determine what type of support they need. They make up much of the ground lost previously because teachers and teaching assistants make them think hard and work things out for themselves. As a result, the number of pupils leaving the school with low standards is falling quickly.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Leaders have organised the teaching so that pupils are taught English and mathematics by specialist teachers, who successfully focus on raising standards of literacy and numeracy as quickly as possible.
- Every lesson starts with a short activity that reinforces pupils' basic skills, such as doing times

tables or thinking of synonyms. This, together with the emphasis on using such skills as part of their topic work, ensures that pupils are constantly improving their mathematics, reading and writing skills.

- Teachers' planning is highly detailed. It not only identifies what groups of pupils will do, but also what some individuals will be working on, especially disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. All pupils have individual targets, written in plain English, so they know what they need to do to reach the next level in their work.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons because teachers make them fun and because pupils decide what the topics will be. Topics such as 'chocolate' are carefully planned to incorporate a wide range of subjects. Teachers bring lessons on 'evacuation' alive by allowing pupils to work with first-hand evidence, such as the incomplete diary of an evacuee.
- Teachers expect pupils to work hard and behave well. Pupils respond by doing their best because they want to please their teachers and because they know the importance of getting a good education.
- Teachers question pupils very well to test their understanding. At the same time, teaching assistants often take copious notes on individuals' performance that are then used to plan the next lesson, so pupils are continuously moving forward in their learning with no time wasted.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Leaders have invested a great deal of time and resources in improving behaviour. Around 10% of pupils were excluded in 2011; a very high proportion. Only two pupils have been excluded for short periods this year.
  - Pupils now feel totally safe in school. Pupils, and their parents, say that bullying is unknown because teachers quickly deal with any one-off incidents to ensure that they do not escalate. This is helped by the session called 'playground chat' that happens after lunch each day. It is a time when pupils can discuss anything that has occurred and learn from it. Incidents do not have to be negative; sometimes, for example, pupils discuss what has motivated them such as scoring a goal or helping a younger pupil.
  - The school is very effective in promoting positive relationships and preventing any discrimination. Pupils from all backgrounds get on very well with one another. There are no racist incidents and pupils simply do not see differences in ethnic background as something negative. As one pupil put it, 'We may be different, but we are all special'.
  - Pupils behave well in lessons. They usually concentrate on their work and do as the teacher tells them. Any whose attention wanders are quickly brought back on task by a quiet word from the teacher.
  - In formal situations, such as assemblies, and at playtimes, behaviour is often exemplary. Pupils know the importance of being on their best behaviour when representing the school and the outstanding range of playground equipment means that everyone has something to do at playtime.
  - Pupils are friendly, polite and respectful towards visitors and staff.
-

- Although below average, attendance rose by 1.9% between 2011 and 2012; three times faster than the national average. It continues to rise in the current year.
- Although leaders have been successful in getting pupils to come to school, around one in 20 are still late each morning because leaders have not stressed the importance of punctuality with parents or targeted their efforts at those families who are most in need of support to get their children to school on time.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The headteacher provides quiet, determined and outstanding leadership. He has implemented a policy of school improvement which is simple but highly effective in ensuring all pupils have equal opportunities to fulfil their potential. Senior leaders work exceptionally well as a team and have strengths that complement one another.
  - Leaders identify the key areas for improvement, and then each area is allocated to a senior member of staff, who is provided with the time and resources to bring about improvement. Each is also held to account for their area of responsibility. The results are clear in rapidly rising standards and attendance, much better behaviour, and teaching that is now outstanding.
  - Teaching has improved because leaders have an accurate picture of individual's strengths and weaknesses. There is no delay in providing training when an area for improvement is identified, so teachers quickly improve their performance.
  - All staff have targets that are linked to the school's key areas for improvement, so all have a stake in raising standards. The successful ones are moved up the pay scale while others are held back and encouraged to improve their performance.
  - Leaders do not only improve pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics lessons; all lessons include an element of literacy and numeracy. Pupils in Year 1 write detailed designs for pop-up books, for example, and pupils in Years 5 and 6 calculate the costs of feeding evacuees.
  - The topics are supported by a very wide range of residential trips, visits and links with other schools that all play a strong part in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils meet or communicate with children in Malawi, Jamaica and areas of Great Britain that are different from inner city Birmingham to learn about their cultures and how they live.
  - The local authority is aware of the significant improvements in the school's performance and has had no need to provide any significant support. The school makes effective use of an external consultant to provide advice and guidance.
-

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have a detailed and accurate knowledge of the school's performance and how teaching is being improved. They receive comprehensive information from the headteacher and are quick to challenge any perceived slowing in the rate of improvement. Governors have had specific training on how to understand performance data, so they can check that what leaders say about achievement is accurate. They keep a close eye on finances and carefully check that the pupil premium is being used effectively. Governors meet all their statutory requirements, including those for keeping pupils safe.
-

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103419
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	404876

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	200
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Hayward Osborne
<b>Headteacher</b>	Daniel Lassetter
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 June 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 6222151
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 6224121
<b>Email address</b>	d.lassetter@stthomasprimary.bham.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)  
[Store St](#)  
[Manchester](#)  
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2013

