

INSPECTION REPORT

SAINT THOMAS' C of E JUNIOR SCHOOL

Featherstone

LEA area: Wakefield

Unique reference number: 108249

Headteacher: Mr. J. C. Parkin

Reporting inspector: Mrs. K. Charlton 1718

Dates of inspection: 17 and 18 January 2000

Inspection number: 190239

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	George Street Featherstone West Yorkshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev. Canon A. S. Ramsden
Date of previous inspection:	4 to 8 November 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Number of full-time pupils:	407 (bigger than other primary schools)
Pupils with English as an additional language:	0 (low)
Pupils entitled to free school meals:	31% (above the national average)
Pupils on register of special educational needs:	69 (broadly in line with the national average)
Pupils with statements of special educational needs:	5 (broadly in line with the national average)
Average class size:	28.5

Saint Thomas' Church of England Junior School is a Voluntary Controlled Junior School catering for girls and boys aged seven to eleven. Pupils come mainly from the immediate area where there is a higher than average level of unemployment. Virtually all pupils are of white European origin and none speaks English as an additional language. There is a wide range of attainment on entry, but overall, pupils' attainment is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a successful school which achieves high standards. It has a number of very good features. The teaching is good and the pupils are keen to learn. About a third of the teaching is very good or outstanding. The headteacher provides strong leadership. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection and there is a clear commitment to future improvement. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve consistently high standards in mathematics and science.
- Pupils develop very good skills in speaking and listening.
- Teaching across the school is good and it is particularly strong in the older classes. Teamwork amongst the staff is very good and contributes significantly to the quality of pupils' learning.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership and the school's development plan is well matched to its needs.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good and their self-awareness is also very good.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is a strength of the school.

What could be improved

- The effectiveness of monitoring to check the quality of teaching, especially in English, and to check that initiatives provide good value for money.
- The role of subject co-ordinators in ensuring further improvement in standards.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection in November 1996. The good quality of teaching has been maintained and has ensured that the school's standards have improved in line with the national trend in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. There is now a much clearer focus in the curriculum on pupils' personal and social development. There have been significant improvements in the procedures for monitoring attendance which have begun to have a positive impact on the attendance rate. The school's homework policy is now much clearer and the homework, which is given regularly, is making a helpful contribution to pupils' progress.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	C	C	C	A	well above average A
mathematics	A	A	B	A	above average B
science	A	A	A	A*	average C
					below average D
					well below average E

The results in mathematics and science in the national tests for eleven-year-olds have been consistently above and often well above the national average since 1997. In English, the results for the past three years have been close to the national average. In English and mathematics, the school has achieved standards which are well above average for similar schools. In science, the results are in the top five per cent compared with similar schools. The standards in these subjects were confirmed by the work the pupils were doing during the inspection. The inspection findings show that pupils' skills in speaking and listening are very good. However, their skills in reading and writing are not as well developed but are satisfactory overall.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are eager to learn and they try hard and show very good attitudes in all they do. They enjoy being challenged in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. There is a quiet working atmosphere and pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. Pupils show a mature respect for each other and for adults.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. A central aim of the school is 'to lead pupils towards a clearer understanding of themselves' and pupils demonstrate very good self-awareness. Relationships are very good and older pupils in particular take on many extra responsibilities.
Attendance	Below average but with improvements taking place as a result of the new procedures.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching is good overall; in a third of lessons it is very good or excellent. The majority of the very good teaching is in the older classes, particularly in Year 6. Throughout the school, teachers are enthusiastic and they work together very well as a team ensuring their lessons are carefully planned. They make the aims of lessons clear to the pupils. In most lessons staff use discussion very well, with effective questioning and good oral feedback about pupils' learning. There is very good use of key vocabulary to deepen pupils' understanding.

Lessons are very interesting and staff make very good use of resources. A range of different ways of organising teaching, for example setting, team teaching and carousel arrangements are used effectively. These features, along with the pupils' very positive attitudes, contribute significantly to pupils' learning so that they increase their knowledge effectively and acquire new skills. The quality of teaching in English ranges from satisfactory to excellent but it is not as consistently good as that in science or mathematics. This affects the quality of pupils' learning in English and the standards they achieve are not as high as those in mathematics or science.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is a broad and balanced curriculum which provides a good range of interesting learning opportunities. Curriculum provision is enhanced by the good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The school supports pupils of all abilities well. There is a clear commitment to ensuring that all pupils achieve their best.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good in all aspects. The strong Christian ethos influences all aspects of school life. Moral development is very effectively built on positive principles within an atmosphere of mutual respect. The school very successfully promotes pupils' social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Provision is good. Staff are caring and supportive of the pupils. They know the pupils well and treat them all as individuals.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides strong leadership. Along with staff he has a clear commitment to future improvement. However, the procedures to check the quality of teaching are not systematic and subject co-ordinators are not sufficiently involved in ensuring further improvement in standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are effective in ensuring that suitable policies are in place but strategies for evaluating developments to find out if they have been worthwhile are not sufficiently well established.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school's analysis of its overall strengths and weaknesses is very good and the school development plan is well matched to its needs. The analysis which is made of the quality of teaching and pupils' learning is not as strong.
The strategic use of resources	Good and the school seeks best value for money. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are used well. The school makes effective use of the strengths of the staff.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The expectation that pupils will work hard and do their best at all times.• The good progress pupils make.• The very good behaviour of pupils.• The good teaching.• They would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The amount of homework that is given to the pupils.• Information about the progress their child is making.

The inspection team agrees with the strengths of the school identified by the parents. The school provides a suitable amount of homework for pupils. It is similar to that in other primary schools and is consistent with national guidelines. The reporting arrangements are good. Each year, two written reports are sent out and there are three formal occasions at which the parents can discuss their child's work. Parents are welcome to meet informally with staff at the start and end of the school day.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils achieve consistently high standards in mathematics and science.

1. Since 1997, the pupils have achieved consistently high standards in the national tests for eleven-year-olds in mathematics and science. The results have been consistently above average and often well above the national average. In comparison with similar schools, the results are well above average in mathematics. In science the results are in the top five per cent compared with similar schools.
2. Mathematics is taught consistently well throughout the school so that pupils develop good understanding across all areas of the subject. They establish particularly good understanding of number and are able to use mathematical skills well to solve problems. Pupils carry out paper and pencil calculations accurately and use measures, such as length and time, appropriately in their work. Pupils in Year 5 show particularly clear understanding of negative numbers and make useful reference to 'ground level' to explain their ideas. In Year 6, the pupils demonstrate a very good knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages and many are confident to operate to two decimal places. Teachers give a good focus to ensuring pupils understand mathematical terminology; for example when handling data, the pupils learn effectively what is meant by mode and median. They successfully apply these concepts in different situations; for example, when analysing a frequency table about the number of drink cans sold at a tuck shop during a week. Homework is given regularly in mathematics and this is helpful in ensuring pupils make good progress.
3. In science, pupils make particularly good gains in the development of their scientific knowledge and this is supported well by consistently good teaching, with staff placing a high emphasis on the development of key vocabulary. Very interesting activities are arranged so that pupils are motivated by the work. In the Year 3 topic about materials, the pupils observed items such as paper, wood, plastic and metal and classified them by relating their properties to the use which is made of them. In Year 4, they learned to generalise and linked ideas about cause and effect very effectively, for example, when studying forces. In Years 5 and 6, teachers continue to expect high standards and pupils develop good knowledge and understanding. They describe the feeding relationships between animals and plants in specific habitats such as ponds, woodland areas and the sea. Many pupils recognise that external factors affect the development of living organisms. All pupils enjoy their work in science and are keen to pursue their learning after lessons are completed.

Pupils develop very good skills in speaking and listening.

4. By the age of eleven, pupils' skills in speaking and listening are very good. In all age groups pupils listen well to their teachers and to other children, showing good levels of respect for each other. They listen particularly well during school assemblies. Staff place a high priority on reviewing what has been learned in lessons and pupils share their own ideas very well with each other to help consolidate learning. Pupils gain confidence during their time in the school and they learn to express opinions with conviction. Staff emphasise the importance of valuing the opinions of others and pupils are prepared to take notice of, and build on, other pupils' critical evaluations of their own work. In Year 6, pupils have a very mature attitude and discuss very effectively complex human emotions such as love, hatred and jealousy. When discussing Shakespeare's play 'Romeo and Juliet' pupils not only show an excellent appreciation of the motives of the characters but also learn to use the appropriate vocabulary to match the audience. They recognise that this is a technique used by authors and playwrights. For example, they readily use phrases such as 'A plague on both your houses! They have made worms' meat of me' when referring to the families involved in the play, but they also use such terms as 'it's cool' when expressing their own views about the play.

Teaching across the school is good, it is particularly strong in the older classes. Teamwork amongst the staff is very good and contributes significantly to the quality of pupils' learning.

5. Overall, teaching is good and in nearly a third of lessons it is very good or excellent. The majority of the very good teaching, and all of the outstanding teaching, is in the older classes, particularly in Year 6. Throughout the school, teachers are enthusiastic, teamwork is strong and staff work together very well ensuring that their lessons are carefully planned. They make pupils aware of the aims of the session and lessons have a good structure with a clear beginning, middle and end. In most lessons, the staff use discussion very well, with particularly effective questioning and good oral review and feedback about

pupils' learning. There is very good use of key vocabulary to help deepen pupils understanding. Lessons are very interesting and staff make very good use of resources, such as videos and artefacts. A range of different ways of organising teaching, for example setting, team teaching and carousel arrangements are used effectively. These arrangements not only ensure that staff teach to their strengths but also that they learn from each other. These features, along with pupils' very positive attitudes to learning, ensure that they increase their knowledge effectively and acquire new skills.

6. In Year 3, the language workshop is used effectively to raise pupils' basic skills in literacy. This workshop includes a high level of staffing from the school and parent volunteers. Careful planning, based on the teacher's good knowledge of the subject, ensures that all groups of pupils undertake work which is very well matched to their individual needs. The pupils and staff are clear what is expected of them so that they all work purposefully. Adults consciously build pupils' confidence, particularly in reading. Very good use is made of resources, such as a 'story-sack' containing objects to illustrate the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk', to engage the pupils' interest.
7. In a Year 4 science lesson, very good use was made of a bicycle as a stimulus for learning about friction. After a lively introduction the teacher continued to maintain the very good pace of learning by searching questions that made the pupils think. A clear focus on the key scientific vocabulary of 'friction', 'cause' and 'effect' helped considerably in reinforcing pupils' learning.
8. The effective way in which the school uses team teaching was demonstrated well in a Year 5 religious education lesson and in Year 6 English lessons. In both cases, the very good teaching input makes excellent use of the staff's individual strengths. A good example was when staff took on the role of different characters in a play and demonstrated to pupils the sorts of things they might say to each other. Teachers set high expectations of the pupils in these situations to which they respond particularly well.

The headteacher provides strong leadership and the school's development plan is well matched to the school's needs.

9. The recently appointed headteacher provides strong leadership. Along with staff and governors he has a clear commitment to future improvement. He works well with the governors, staff and pupils to ensure the school's aims are reflected in practice. The principles of equality of opportunity are embedded in the school's beliefs so that pupils with special educational needs are well supported and every pupil has the opportunity to excel. The headteacher contributes well to the quality of teaching in the school.
10. The school development plan is well matched to the school's needs, and is a working document to which all staff have contributed. It gives a clear view about future development, is suitably costed and appropriate priorities and targets have been set. It takes good account of national initiatives and shows commitment to staff development. The school's analysis of its overall strengths and weaknesses is very good and careful checks are made to ensure that the school development plan is working effectively. The analysis which is made about the quality of teaching and pupils' learning is not as strong. However, the headteacher has initiated a very useful system to target improvement for each pupil to inform future whole-school planning.

Pupils' behaviour is very good and they demonstrate very good self-awareness.

11. There is a quiet, working atmosphere and pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They have a mature respect for each other and for adults. Parents are appreciative of the school's high expectations of behaviour and visitors to the school, including parent helpers and governors, are complimentary about the pupils' behaviour. The pupils are aware of the school's expectations and are keen to receive 'blue slips' which lead to bronze, silver and gold awards for good behaviour. The very good relationships in the school and the open manner with which staff talk to pupils, encourages them to develop self-discipline. Older pupils, in particular, are able to explain that each person makes their own decisions about the way they behave and that often you have to think carefully to make the appropriate decision.
12. A central aim of the school is 'to lead pupils towards a clearer understanding of themselves' and this is very successful in practice. In many situations pupils gain understanding about feelings and emotions and the effects these have on their own and other people's actions. Role play forms a significant part of learning so that pupils think about how to 'get inside other people's heads'. In history, for example, pupils in Year 4 empathised well with members of the two armies at the battle of Marathon and could relate these to their own feelings of fear and anger. In Year 6, pupils writing about the feelings of soldiers during World War II

show excellent empathy with the characters, for instance, one pupil wrote ‘ My bones ached and my blue lip shivered, sitting silently on the soft, sandy beaches of Dunkirk’. When describing their art work, undertaken in the style of Klimpt, the older pupils show very mature understanding of the concept of love.

The provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and a strength of the school.

13. There is a strong Christian ethos which influences all aspects of school life. There is an important link with Saint Thomas’ Church and the whole school visits the church for events such as the Harvest Thanksgiving service. Prayer forms an important part of daily activity in the school and takes place in assemblies as well as at other times during the day. The pupils know a range of prayers well and say them with reverence. There are very good opportunities for pupils to reflect and many opportunities for them to wonder at their world, for example, as they learn about gravity and as they observe different sorts of rock through a lens or a pocket microscope in their science lessons. They listen very attentively to stories which promote an understanding and appreciation of the need to take care of those who are less fortunate than themselves. A particularly good example of this was in a Year 4 assembly.
14. Pupils’ moral development is very effectively built on positive principles within an atmosphere of mutual respect. There are many situations where they have to consider moral dilemmas and they take part in sensitive discussions about sharing with, and caring for, others. Pupils are successfully taught right from wrong and are very courteous to each other, staff and visitors.
15. The school very successfully promotes pupils’ social development. There is a clear sense of belonging and pride, and there are very good relationships between pupils and staff. The good range of extra-curricular activities and visits, such as the one to the Robinwood Centre, help to deepen the relationships pupils make with each other and with the staff. Pupils work very well together and the staff effectively build pupils’ confidence and their self-esteem.
16. The pupils make very good gains in learning about different cultural festivals and traditions, such as Diwali, the Chinese New Year and Christmas. Through religious education lessons, in particular, the pupils gain a very good insight into their own cultural and religious heritage and that of others; for example, when comparing the ways in which Christians celebrate the birth of Christ with the ways in which Sikhs celebrate the birthday of Guru Nanak and when finding out about Judaism in Year 6. Cultural development is further extended by a good focus on art, music and dance in the curriculum.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The effectiveness of monitoring to check the quality of teaching, especially in English, and to check that initiatives provide good value for money.

17. The results of the national tests for eleven-year-olds show that standards in English are close to the national average but are not as high as those in mathematics and science. Although pupils’ skills in speaking and listening are very good, reading and writing are not as well developed. The school’s analysis of its results shows that there is a need to ensure that more pupils, especially boys, achieve higher standards. Consequently the school has placed improvement in English as top of its priorities.
18. The quality of teaching in English is more variable than in mathematics and science. It ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. This inconsistency affects pupils’ learning and the standards they achieve are not as high as those in the other core subjects of mathematics and science. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have started a programme of monitoring to check teaching quality but this process is not systematic and there are no clear procedures for setting individual targets for staff which will ensure further improvement in the standards pupils achieve. Occasionally in English lessons, the introduction goes on for too long, as happened in a Year 4 lesson, or the activities which are set are not sufficiently well matched to pupils’ levels of understanding in reading and writing, to ensure the systematic development of basic skills.
19. The school development plan has highlighted suitable whole-school targets for improvement and outlined appropriate action for these to be achieved. However, strategies for evaluating developments to find out if they have been worthwhile and have provided good value for money are not clear. The headteacher and

governors have recognised this need and are developing more effective procedures to take this work forward.

The role of subject co-ordinators in ensuring further improvement in standards.

20. Subject co-ordinators have worked well with colleagues to develop policy and schemes of work. They attend courses and organise staff development in school. However, they are not sufficiently involved in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the provision in their subject to ensure that future developments have a positive impact on pupils' attainment. For example, it is recognised that reading and writing need to improve but there is no clear picture about what is succeeding at present and where there are weaknesses. Subject development is too often based on what staff believe should be happening, rather than on a systematic analysis of what is most successful for the pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The school should now:

- improve the effectiveness of monitoring to check the quality of teaching, especially in English, by:
 - setting clear targets for further improvement;
 - identifying clearly what is successful in developing pupils' learning;
 - providing a clearer focus on developing reading and writing strategies which are matched to individual pupils' skills.
- improve the evaluation of targets in the school development plan by setting up procedures for judging whether value for money has been achieved;
- develop the role of subject co-ordinators in evaluating the effectiveness of provision in their subject to ensure further improvement in standards.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	24
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	29	50	17	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	407
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	125

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	69

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	92.4
National comparative data	94.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.8
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	49	54	103

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	25	29	45
	Girls	40	41	48
	Total	65	70	93
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	63	68	90
	National	70	69	78

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	25	28	45
	Girls	40	41	46
	Total	65	69	91
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	64	68	90
	National	68	69	75

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	403
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.0
Average class size	28.5

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	89

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	2	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	548960
Total expenditure	548471
Expenditure per pupil	1338
Balance brought forward from previous year	2190
Balance carried forward to next year	2679

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	407
Number of questionnaires returned	185

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50.0	41.3	4.9	3.3	0.5
My child is making good progress in school.	44.3	50.3	2.7	1.1	1.6
Behaviour in the school is good.	48.6	43.2	5.5	0.5	2.2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34.6	50.3	12.4	2.2	0.5
The teaching is good.	47.0	45.9	4.4	1.1	1.6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40.5	43.2	14.6	1.6	0.0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57.3	34.6	4.3	2.7	1.1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70.1	27.2	1.1	1.1	0.5
The school works closely with parents.	33.5	49.2	8.6	1.6	7.0
The school is well led and managed.	47.8	41.8	3.8	1.1	5.5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48.4	42.9	4.3	1.6	2.7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36.4	50.0	8.7	1.6	3.3