

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY (VA)
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Sheffield

LEA area: Sheffield

Unique reference number: 107116

Headteacher: Mrs A Brighton

Reporting inspector: Dr B Blundell
23868

Dates of inspection: 13th – 14th November 2000

Inspection number: 224948

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Boys and girls
School address:	Chancet Wood Drive Sheffield
Postcode:	S8 7TR
Telephone number:	(0114) 2745597
Fax number:	(0114) 2746499
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Fr. M McManus
Date of previous inspection:	25 th June 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School is a Voluntary Aided School for boys and girls situated in Sheffield. There are 199 pupils on roll. Whilst the majority of pupils attending come from nearby areas, others come from a wider area of southern Sheffield. The percentage of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is higher than in most schools. The school benefits from an integrated resource for pupils with physical handicaps and learning difficulties. Pupils with special educational needs make up a higher proportion of the roll than in most schools and the percentage of pupils having statements of special educational needs is well above the national average. The attainment of pupils on entry is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The overall effectiveness of the school is very good. Standards for pupils aged eleven are well above average in English, mathematics and science. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Leadership and management are very good.

The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in English, mathematics and science for pupils currently aged eleven are well above average; over the last five years, pupils have left the school over one year ahead of pupils nationally in English and mathematics and over two terms ahead in science.
- The leadership and management by the headteacher and deputy headteacher are very good; they work hard for the school, are leading it in the right direction and have implemented a very good system to assess pupils and monitor their progress.
- The overall quality of teaching throughout the school is very good.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good; relationships are also very good.
- Provision for pupils in the foundation stage is very good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

What could be improved

- Whilst standards in information and communication technology are rising, they are still below national expectations.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1996. Standards at the school in English, mathematics and science are higher than they were at the time of the last inspection. The key issue to substantially improve the quality of education and provision for pupils in the reception class has been addressed well. An issue to ensure consistency in assessment has also been well addressed. Schemes of work have been completed appropriately. The role of the curriculum coordinators has been extended appropriately. The school has made very good improvement overall.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	A*	A	B	B
mathematics	A*	A	A	A*
science	A*	A	A	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

A particular strength in the school's results is that, from 1996 to the present time, eleven year olds have left St Thomas over a year ahead academically of pupils nationally in English and mathematics and over two terms ahead in science.

In the table above, the results given as A* were in the top five per cent compared with schools nationally. The school's results are rising at a rate that is in line with schools nationally.

Results for seven year olds from 1996 onwards have been approximately in line with other schools in reading, just over half a term behind in writing and just over half a term ahead in mathematics. Results in 2000 in Key Stage 1 showed an improvement on previous years.

The school's targets are appropriately ambitious, particularly for 2002.

Standards in the work seen during the inspection are well above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2 and above average at the end of Key Stage 1. In information and communication technology, pupils' attainment is below average at the end of both key stages. Pupils' attainment in other subjects is in line with national expectations.

Standards in English, mathematics and science are high enough.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. They enjoy school and are enthusiastic.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour, in and out of the classrooms, is very good. Pupils are polite and courteous. No incidents of bullying, racism or sexism observed.
Personal development and relationships	Opportunities for pupils' personal development are good; relationships are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is now above national averages. Rates of unauthorised absence have declined and are now below other schools.

Strengths in relationships include the very good manner in which adults and pupils treat one another and the way that pupils get on with each other. Pupils like coming to school. They are interested in what they are learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Very 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.

The overall quality of teaching is very good. In the inspection, the teaching seen was very good or better in 65 per cent of lessons seen and good or better in 100 per cent of lessons. No lessons were observed where teaching was merely satisfactory. Good quality lessons were seen in every class in the school. The overall quality of teaching in English and mathematics is very good. Learning support assistants and child care assistants work well with teachers and this enhances pupils' learning.

Particular strengths in teaching include the very helpful way in which teachers explain the purpose of lessons to pupils and then, at the end of the lesson, assess how far they have achieved that purpose. There are no weaknesses. The skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught.

The school meets the needs of all its pupils appropriately.

Pupils' learning is very good throughout the school. Children get a flying start in the Reception class and this very good progress continues through the school. The individual targets that all pupils have help their learning to progress effectively.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of the curriculum are good. There is very good equality of opportunity.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils in the integrated resource are very well provided for.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's provision for pupils' personal development is good overall. Provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is good, for their social development it is very good and for cultural development it is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares very well for its pupils.

A strength in the curricular opportunities offered to pupils includes the manner in which all children are included. All areas of the curriculum meet statutory requirements.

Strengths of the school include the manner in which it assesses pupils formally and the meticulous way in which it tracks its pupils' progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other key staff are very good. They all work very hard on behalf of the pupils.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors' fulfilment of their responsibilities is good. They have clearly defined roles.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's evaluation of its performance is very good.
The strategic use of resources	The strategic use of resources by the school is good. The school benefits from having its own cheque-book and the school's finance officer is most competent.

A strength in leadership and management is the manner in which a very good ethos for learning has been created.

The school applies the principles of best value very well.

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 school has high expectations. • Their children like school. • They are comfortable approaching the school with questions or problems. • The school is well managed and led. • Teaching is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents would like to see a greater range of extra-curricular activities. • Some parents would like more homework for their children.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views; they judge that there are sufficient extra-curricular opportunities and that overall provision for homework is good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards in English, mathematics and science for pupils currently aged eleven are well above average; over the last five years pupils have left the school over one year ahead of pupils nationally in English and mathematics and over two terms ahead in science.

1. Taking the years from 1996 to the present time averaged together, pupils aged eleven have outperformed pupils nationally by over one year in English and mathematics and over two terms in science. This means that when they start secondary school in Year 7, their average attainment is closer to that of Year 8 pupils.
2. In the work seen during the inspection, standards for pupils aged eleven were well above average in English, mathematics and science. In information and communication technology, standards were below national expectations. Other subjects were meeting national expectations.
3. By the age of eleven in English, pupils write accurately and fluently in an appropriate range of forms. Examples include interesting letter writing, appropriate “my favourite book” exercises and cross-curricular work on the Normans in history and “Our visit to Northumberland” in geography. Poetry writing includes appropriate work from pupils’ study of Macbeth. Pupils’ reading, writing, speaking and listening skills are very well developed; the school has identified pupils’ writing as a major focus for development. Pupils’ vocabulary is enhanced, for example, by emphasis on types of words such as “powerful” ones.
4. In mathematics, eleven year olds are competent in all areas. They know their times tables, tackle problems sensibly and have appropriate knowledge and understanding of statistics. Pupils at this school are not afraid of “big numbers”. For example, if asked whether they would know their million times table, they smile and take it in their stride. One group of pupils were not even phased by the infinity times table and were confident that whilst one times infinity was infinity, so was two times infinity! They even ventured that infinity times infinity was infinity, although one or two pupils in the group did not concur.
5. When tackling science, pupils’ investigative skills are well developed. They build up these skills systematically as they go through the school. Teachers expect pupils to think for themselves. For example, in a lesson at the end of Key Stage 1 on devising a simple electrical circuit, pupils were expected to think *why* they touch one of the wires to the side of the bulb and one to the base. They used magnifying lenses to look in detail at the bulb to identify the filament and filament pillars and then drew correctly labelled diagrams using pencil appropriately. Similarly in a Key Stage 2 lesson on conduction by different materials, pupils were encouraged to take all factors into account to ensure that the tests were fair comparisons. A strength of pupils’ attainment in science is the way in which they are expected to build up and use correct key scientific vocabulary from an early age.

The leadership and management by the headteacher and deputy headteacher are very good. They work hard for the school, are leading it in the right direction and have implemented a very good system to assess pupils and monitor their progress.

6. The leadership and management of this school are very good. The headteacher, together with her competent deputy, know just where the school is and where they want it to go. The school has very clear educational direction and complacency does not exist. The headteacher is most receptive to ideas for further improvement and has created an ethos in which pupils are not afraid to “have a go” even if they may be wrong.
7. The role of the curriculum coordinators has improved since the last inspection and they monitor teachers’ planning in the subjects for which they are responsible. Timetable constraints have prevented monitoring of teaching by them. The headteacher carries out both informal and formal

- classroom monitoring appropriately. When the latter is done, teachers receive both verbal and written feedback and teachers are given a copy of exactly what the headteacher wrote about their lesson.
8. Very effective assessment methods have been put in place by the leadership of the school to formally assess what pupils know and understand. The results of the assessment tests are well used to help to plan future teaching and to monitor pupils' individual progress.
 9. From when children take their baseline tests in Reception to the time that pupils leave at the end of Year 6, they are regularly given written tests, sat working on their own. In this way, when it comes to external compulsory national tests, pupils take them in their stride. They are not afraid of tests; they positively enjoy them. Each half term a week is set aside for tests in mathematics, science and English. Even Reception children are expected to try to write independently. The tests have an appropriate whole-school focus in each subject area; for example, this term's English focus is on writing. Once the tests have been marked, pupils are given individual targets in English and mathematics and these are shared with parents. A selection of pupils' work is levelled, using appropriately "broken down" National Curriculum levels and teachers are expected to level all pupils two or three times per year in each of the three main subject areas.
 10. The results of these tests are entered on a database to provide "spreadsheet" style printouts for each class. For example, pupils in a Year 3 class would have all their levelled test work from Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 entered so that the leadership of the school can track the record of each pupil and ensure that progress is maximised. This is a most effective management tool that is substantially helping to raise pupils' attainment and progress.

The overall quality of teaching throughout the school is very good.

11. In all the lessons seen during the inspection in every class in the school, teaching was at least good. In ten per cent of lessons it was excellent, in 55 per cent it was very good and in 35 per cent of lessons it was good. The quality of teaching is a real strength of the school.
12. From the outset of lessons, pupils know *why* they are in the classroom. Teachers explain to pupils precisely what the learning objectives are. Pupils, therefore, realise exactly what they are expected to know, understand or do by the end of the lesson. This results in lessons being very focused on the task in hand. Some teachers re-inforce this by writing the learning objectives on the board and asking pupils to write them down. Teachers are adept at re-visiting the objectives at the end of the lesson, so that pupils are aware of what they have learned. In this way, pupils see a purpose to the lessons.
13. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding. In a very good numeracy lesson in Year 5, the teacher demonstrated, with pupil assistance, useful methods for halving numbers. For example, to halve 298, halve 200 to give 100, halve 90 to give 45 and halve 8 to give 4. The answer was readily seen to be $100+45+4=149$. In an excellent Year 6 mathematics lesson on decimals, that had all pupils facing the front of the class, the teacher had a very patient quiet style that engaged the rapt attention of the whole class throughout and maximised learning.
14. Pupils in a very good Year 4 literacy lesson on words ending in "ight" made very good progress. The lesson had an appropriately fast pace and class management was good. In a very good Year 2 science lesson, pupils made very good progress in their knowledge and use of key scientific vocabulary. The same occurred in a very good Year 1 science lesson where pupils were investigating the properties of paper. Key vocabulary was appropriately emphasised and very good learning took place. By the end of the lesson, pupils could distinguish a variety of textures of paper. In a briskly paced Year 3 English lesson that was very good, the teacher's planning was very clear and the precise teaching ensured correct letter formation when pupils were "writing in the air".
15. During the inspection, the deputy headteacher was unable to teach her Reception class. Nonetheless, an analysis of the children's books showed that they had been very well taught and had made very good progress in all the required areas of learning. A temporary teacher who had

been brought in to take the class at very short notice taught the children well in all the lessons seen. In a numeracy lesson, she demonstrated great confidence in her subject knowledge and explained the learning objectives very well. The lesson linked very well to work in literacy on the story of "The Three Pigs".

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good; relationships are also very good.

16. In all the lessons seen, pupils' attitudes were at least good and were generally very good indeed. They enjoy school, are interested and involve themselves willingly in lessons and other activities. Relationships throughout the school between adults, whatever their role, and pupils are very good.
17. A particular feature of this school is a happy, working atmosphere. Pupils thrive in this atmosphere and like coming to school. Pupils are polite and treat the school's resources with care. There are good opportunities for pupils' personal development and they work well together, whether in groups or in pairs.

Provision for pupils in the foundation stage is very good.

18. There is one class for children under five which is the reception class. In this class, children are given a flying start to their subsequent education. The deputy headteacher has put in place systems that help children to make very good progress.
19. The library area is well equipped with an appropriate range of fiction and non-fiction books. The classroom areas for mathematics and science are well organised and contain appropriate resources to stimulate children's interest and to help them learn.
20. Children are given homework each week and their work is displayed. For example, during the inspection period, there was an attractive display of snakes of different sizes that the children had made at home.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

21. The school has a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Nationally, pupils with special educational needs are graded on a rising scale from Stage 1 to Stage 5. There are 21 pupils on Stage 1, 14 on Stage 2, 11 on Stage 3 and 13 on Stage 5. The majority of the latter are assigned to the school's integrated learning resource, which, as its name suggests, is fully integrated into the life of the school.
22. Pupils with special educational needs, whether part of the integrated resource for pupils with physical handicaps and learning difficulties, or not, make very good progress throughout the school. The Stage 5 pupils are withdrawn for parts of the literacy lessons to receive expert support and the work is tied in wherever possible to that of the rest of the class. Pupils benefit from appropriately sharply focused individual educational plans.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Whilst standards in information and communication technology are improving, they are still below national expectations.

23. Pupils' attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) is below nationally expected standards. It is improving, however, and should receive a huge boost in January when the school's brand new information and communication technology suite opens.
24. At the moment, whilst pupils all receive ICT lessons each week in their classrooms, facilities are very limited and the old computers frequently break down. Additionally, insufficient emphasis is placed on the required elements of control, monitoring and modelling. This is unsatisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve the school further, the headteacher, management team and governing body should:

- raise pupils' attainment in information and communication technology throughout the school by ensuring that the full range of the National Curriculum programme of study is taught, including control, monitoring and modelling (paragraphs 23 and 24).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	20
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	11	7	0	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR-6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	199
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR-6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	13
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	57

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	4.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.7
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 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	18	12	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	18
	Girls	10	11	11
	Total	27	28	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (92)	93 (88)	90 (92)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	16	18
	Girls	10	10	12
	Total	27	26	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (88)	86 (92)	100 (88)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	19	13	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	18	18
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	27	31	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	84 (86)	97 (98)	97 (91)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	13	18
	Girls	13	12	13
	Total	25	25	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (87)	79 (93)	97 (97)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	7
Black – African heritage	6
Black – other	14
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	168
Any other minority ethnic group	4

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

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	0	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.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR-Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28.4
Average class size	28.4

Education support staff: YR-Y6]

Total number of education support staff	7.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	157.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
	£
Total income	376,859
Total expenditure	387,442
Expenditure per pupil	2,018
Balance brought forward from previous year	29,432
Balance carried forward to next year	18,849

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	150
Number of questionnaires returned	70

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	21	3	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	59	39	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	41	1	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	43	41	13	3	0
The teaching is good.	63	30	3	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	45	9	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	20	7	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	23	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	50	40	9	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	71	19	4	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	29	3	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	33	25	6	17