



St Thomas CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105234
LEA Bolton
Inspection number 277323
Inspection dates 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005
Reporting inspector Ms Joan McKenna CfBT Lead Inspector

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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | Molyneux Road |
| School category | Voluntary aided | | Westhoughton |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 | | Bolton, Lancashire BL5 3HP |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01942 634 666 |
| Number on roll | 248 | Fax number | 01942 634 667 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr G Andrews |
| Date of previous inspection | 11 October 1999 | Headteacher | Mrs Catherine Dobson |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size primary school with a nursery. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Five percent are from minority ethnic groups and almost all speak English fluently. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than found in most schools. The local area, although mixed, is more advantaged than the national average and fewer pupils are entitled to free school meals than in most schools. Over the past three years there has been a high turnover of staff. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher joined the school in January 2005. In February 2005 there was a fire caused by an electrical fault which destroyed the Year 6 classroom. This caused considerable disruption but building repairs are now complete.

Key for inspection grades

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education and there are good features to its work. Pupils like school as shown by their enthusiastic attitudes and their very high attendance. Pupils are well looked after and cared for and their personal development and social skills are good. The school has recently been through a period of instability and some aspects of practice, especially in relation to provision and management, are not yet well developed. The curriculum provided, the way it is taught and systems for assessing pupils' work and tracking their progress are all satisfactory overall, with some good elements in each area. Although above the national average by the end of Year 6, standards are lower than they have been in the past. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout the school, including the Foundation Stage. The new headteacher has quickly and very accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has already taken action that is bringing about improvement. Leadership and management at senior level are good, although they are only satisfactory overall as most middle leaders are not as effective. This is being tackled and all staff are keen to work together to improve the school. Progress since the last inspection, although mixed, is satisfactory and the school provides sound value for money. With the new stability and positive direction provided by the headteacher there is good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

In order to improve the achievement of pupils, the school needs to:

- promote improvement and greater consistency in the quality of teaching across the school
- ensure that pupils' performance and progress in all subjects is assessed thoroughly and that the information gained is used to help them improve their work further
- improve the effectiveness of middle management.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The achievement of all groups of pupils is satisfactory. Children enter the school with broadly average standards. Most leave the Foundation Stage having attained levels expected for their age, especially in the key areas of personal development, language and communication and number. At the end of Year 2 standards are broadly average although formal assessments made in 2005 indicate lower standards than in 2004. At the end of Year 6 results in national tests and examinations are generally above national averages although 2005 they were lower than in 2004. Standards in English across the school are less good than in mathematics and science. Standards are not quite as high as they have been in the past, and targets set for 2005 were not met in full. This can be explained largely by the disruption and loss of pupils' work caused by the fire in 2005 and the large turnover of staff, which has had an adverse effect on continuity and progress. However, the new senior leadership team has a good understanding of

strengths and weaknesses and is working effectively to raise standards and improve achievement across the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils are eager to learn and work. Year 5 pupils, for example, voluntarily produced impressive pieces of research during a holiday. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected by the very high levels of attendance. They express great trust in the adults in school and are confident to share concerns with them and also with the 'Helping Hands', Year 6 pupils specifically trained to help others sort out problems. Nearly all pupils behave well and have good relationships with others. A small number, mainly boys, exhibit poor behaviour, but the school's actions to deal with this are beginning to bear fruit. Pupils appreciate that their views are listened to and often acted upon. They were fully involved in the drawing up of the Behaviour Policy and in the choice of playground markings, for example. Older pupils set a very good example for others and show a mature attitude when they take on responsibilities. Pupils know how to keep healthy and safe and they enjoy healthy food and exercise. The well organised school council helps pupils understand about the importance of citizenship and the rights and responsibilities of individuals. It sows good seeds for later life in the workplace.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory. Most lessons have good features and some teaching is very good, but quality is inconsistent across the school. The best teaching, most notably with the oldest pupils, creates a well-ordered and supportive climate for learning. In a Year 6 writing lesson, for example, quiet music was playing to promote a calm atmosphere, but expectations were high and the pace of learning fast. Teachers use appropriate language when explaining new concepts and some use paired discussion between pupils effectively to give them opportunities to consolidate their thinking, such as in a Year 1 lesson on the story of 'Joseph'. In some lessons, however, the pace of learning is too slow and teachers do not use questioning well enough to allow children to show what they have learned nor to develop their understanding further. In the Foundation Stage, adults promote children's independence well, but do not do enough to develop their speaking skills. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively throughout the school, usually to support pupils who find work difficult. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) receive skilled support. Teachers assess pupils' work and give them feedback, and there are examples of good marking and target setting, but this is not yet consistent through the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provided for pupils is satisfactory. All required subjects are taught. There is an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The improved facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) now enable whole classes to be taught ICT skills together. Despite some recent improvement, planning to ensure that all National Curriculum subjects are covered in full and in a way that ensures that pupils make systematic progress is at an early stage. There is not enough liaison between the nursery and Reception classes to ensure appropriate continuity in practice across the Foundation Stage. A good range of opportunities helps pupils develop their interests and talents outside of lessons, such as clubs, and a residential visit organised for Year 6 pupils. About 30 pupils are enthusiastic members of the highly accomplished school choir. Pupils' personal development is promoted well through the formal curriculum and many other activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school places great emphasis on ensuring the care, safety and well-being of all pupils. Pastoral care is strong, and the good promotion of pupils' emotional and physical health has resulted in a 'Healthy School' award. Parents are fully consulted about their children and good links with external agencies ensure that specialist help is available when required. Pupils play a part in caring for others, Year 6 pupils act as 'Playground Pals' for younger pupils. Procedures for safeguarding pupils' safety in school and beyond are good. Thorough assessments of potential risks are made before any visits are undertaken and regular safety checks are carried out to ensure that the pupils work in a safe environment.

Academic guidance is less strong. Appropriate procedures for tracking the progress pupils make are relatively new. Individual targets for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not precise enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. At senior level they are good. The new headteacher has quickly and very accurately identified strengths and weaknesses within the school and has already taken action that is bringing about improvement. She is well supported by other senior leaders and together they make an effective team. The quality of middle leadership and management is more variable. Some subject leaders, such as those for personal, social and health education and physical education are promoting good practice, but this is not the case more generally. The need to extend middle managers' roles is recognised and the training and support necessary for them to become more effective is being provided. Staff are keen to develop and take on more responsibility and appreciate the changes being made.

Governors are very supportive of the school and take their responsibilities seriously, but their monitoring procedures are not yet sharp enough. Progress since the last inspection, while satisfactory overall, has been mixed, partly due to high staff turnover and the impact of the fire. However, with new stability and the positive direction provided by the headteacher, the school is now well placed to improve.

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Inspection judgements

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|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall | 16-19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|--|-----|----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 | NA |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage | 3 | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | NA |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | Yes | NA |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | NA |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|----|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 | NA |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 | NA |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | NA |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 | NA |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 | NA |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | NA |
| The attendance of learners | 1 | NA |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 | NA |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 | NA |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 | NA |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 | NA |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 | NA |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

| | | |
|--|-----|----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 | NA |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 | NA |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 3 | NA |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 | NA |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 | NA |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 | NA |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected | Yes | NA |

| | |
|---|-----|
| The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy | |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise | Yes |
| Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse | Yes |
| Learners are educated about sexual health | Yes |
| The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe | |
| Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements | Yes |
| Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place | Yes |
| Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism | Yes |
| Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them | Yes |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution | |
| Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships | Yes |
| Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being | |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams | Yes |
| Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form | NA |
| Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy | NA |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so friendly and making us feel welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn very much.

What we liked most about your school

- You like school and are keen to come every day.
- Your teachers and other adults care for you very well and make sure that you feel safe and happy.
- Most of you behave well and play nicely with each other.
- You enjoy your work and try hard to do what your teachers ask. This helps you learn.
- The school arranges trips for you and runs activities like the choir for you to enjoy.
- Mrs Dobson and the other members of the senior management team are working hard to make school even better for you.

What we have asked the school to do now:

- Make some of your lessons even better than they are now.
- Give you more information about how well you are doing and how to improve your work in all subjects.
- Make sure that all managers try to make their areas as good as they can be.

We hope that you continue to be happy at school.