



St Thomas's Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105322
LEA Bury
Inspection number 277336
Inspection dates 28 June 2006 to 29 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Marie Cordey CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Pimhole Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Bury
Age range of pupils	5 to 11		Lancashire BL9 7EY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 7647565
Number on roll	217	Fax number	0161 7636269
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Judith Jones
Date of previous inspection	13 September 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Farnworth

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized Church of England voluntary controlled primary school. The school faces challenging circumstances and there are many barriers to the pupils' learning. Nearly all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly Pakistani. Almost all have little or no expressive English on entry. Furthermore, a large proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities with a much larger than average proportion having a statement to meet their special educational need. Eligibility for free school meals is above average and the school is situated in an area of economic and social disadvantage. Standards are low when pupils join Year 1. The school has gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark 2 and is a healthy eating school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Thomas's is an outstanding school that is rightly celebrated by pupils and parents alike. Pupils make outstanding progress because of excellent teaching, a rich and vibrant curriculum and dedicated care and support. Standards are above average by Year 6 and are exceptionally high in science. Standards in Key Stage 1 are below average. Though pupils have come from a low starting point and make good progress, the achievement of some is affected by absence. The school has a planned programme to raise standards for these pupils, particularly in writing. Children in the Foundation Stage make an excellent start to their school life because of outstanding provision for their learning and personal development.

Spirituality and the worship of God are at the heart of this reflective school. Outstanding leadership drives up standards whilst providing exceptionally well for pupils' personal development so pupils are valued and thrive. The governing body is very active and involved. Governors take their role seriously and act as very efficient monitors of school performance. Pupils receive outstanding care and guidance, but despite the efforts of the school, attendance is below average. The school evaluates itself as good in almost all aspects but this is too cautious and does not reflect the outstanding gains made in the pupils' learning because of the excellent quality of education provided by the school. The local community plays a large part in the life of the school and contributes to the richness, tolerance and confidence displayed by pupils. The school provides excellent value for money. Very good improvement has been made since the previous inspection and there is outstanding capacity for it to continue to do so.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve attendance, particularly in Key Stage 1, in order to maximise pupils' learning and to develop skills for their future well-being.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and standards by the end of Year 6 are above average. Pupils start school with little or no spoken English, as this is not the first language spoken at home. Outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage means that the children make excellent progress in spoken English so that by the time they leave the Foundation Stage they have made significant gains in all areas of learning and standards improve to below average. By the time pupils leave school in Year 6 they have improved to such an extent that their standards are exceptionally high in science, above average in mathematics and broadly average in English. Standards are not quite as high in English because of very low starting points in spoken and expressive English. The progress made by pupils in science puts them in the top 1% in the country and reflects excellent teaching of investigative skills.

Results in Key Stage 1 have been more inconsistent but current work indicates that pupils are reaching challenging targets. The good progress in this keystage is slower than that seen in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2. This is related to below average attendance which is at its lowest for Year 1 pupils. A clearly focused improvement plan linked to teaching and attendance has already begun to raise standards in Key Stage 1. Excellent provision for pupils whose first language is not English, higher attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has resulted in these pupils making outstanding progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good with some outstanding features. Children's personal development in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they are very enthusiastic learners. Themed weeks, for example, on racism, anti-bullying and world culture make an excellent contribution to pupils' cultural awareness. Pupils learn to respect and care for themselves and others. Excellent relationships within the school are mirrored in outstanding links with the local church and mosque. Pupils like their teachers because 'they are so kind' and they enjoy the extra responsibilities given to them such as being 'play leaders' or 'anti-bullying ambassadors'. Pupils develop healthy lifestyles through, for example, choosing healthy lunch options, 'walk to school week' and participating in many different sports activities. They have produced a beautiful garden as part of the 'Bury in Bloom' environmental project. Pupils are encouraged to learn about safety, for example, visits to 'Crucial Crew' for upper juniors. Despite the school's efforts, attendance is below average and the learning of skills that affect future economic well-being is interrupted. Difference is respected. The vast majority of the pupils are of the Muslim faith. Nevertheless, pupils readily worship together celebrating Christianity and Islam in this spiritual community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Pupils are making excellent progress in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2 because of this. Teaching and achievement in Key Stage 1 is good rather than outstanding and this is also where the attendance is at its lowest. Recent planning to further improve standards by concentrating teaching on the improvement of pupils' speaking and listening skills is already showing improvement for Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. Both teachers and support staff work very effectively to make sure pupils achieve everything they are capable of. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported so that they make excellent gains in their learning. Pupils are involved, creative and joyful. They enjoy learning and want to share it with each other and their teachers. They know how they are doing in their work and exactly what to do in order to improve. Work is well planned

to match all their different needs and, consequently, pupils make excellent gains in their learning. Excellent relationships and a strong learning ethos promote an intellectual curiosity and a zest for discovery.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It is firmly rooted in the language development of its pupils and, because of this, pupils make excellent progress in acquiring knowledge and skills in English, mathematics and science. There is a particular emphasis on investigations and the application of knowledge to real life situations. Improved standards in science reflect this approach. Healthy lifestyles and personal safety are well developed. The curriculum is well matched to the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those whose first language is not English and the very youngest children in the Foundation Stage.

The curriculum meets national requirements and provides a wealth of learning opportunities and enrichment; for example, the 'Garden Gang' work with the community farm and visits and visitors to the school. After-school activities are very varied and popular with pupils. There are excellent links with the local church and mosque.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support. It is an extremely caring school. Older pupils take their responsibilities for supporting younger ones very seriously, for example, through playground buddies and reading partners. Pupils understand their learning targets and receive very good guidance from their teachers. They know what they have to do to improve their learning. Transition arrangements are very effective so that pupils are welcomed and prepared for the different stages of their education. Parents and carers are made particularly welcome in the school and outstanding examples of how the school involves them are the 'Gatsby Project' and the 'Family Learning' project in the Nursery and Reception classes. Child protection procedures and risk assessments are in place and regularly reviewed in order to safeguard pupils. There are excellent systems in place to ensure the involvement of outside agencies to provide additional support. Although attendance is below average, outside agencies provide appropriate support and help.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding and set the tone for the school. The headteacher is committed to providing the best possible education for the pupils and the rest of the staff follow her example. Despite significant barriers to learning, the headteacher and deputy headteacher lead the school in systematically overcoming them so that the pupils can learn and thrive. An attitude of confidence and self-belief is fostered and pupils welcome visitors with enthusiasm and delight in order to show

off their school and what they do in it. The strong spiritual character of the school is reflected in excellent relationships with the community who, along with the parents, value the school very highly. The school's clear message is that religion provides a cornerstone for the pupils, which is strongly supported by the local community.

Systematic evaluation and analysis of the pupils' performance is rigorous and used to help lesson planning and to set challenging targets. Every pupil is looked at as an individual and leaders and managers track each pupil's development meticulously. Consequently, the school is already working effectively to further improve standards for pupils in Key Stage 1 as well as working with the community in order to help improve attendance. Although the school's self-evaluation was cautious, leaders and managers are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school and question the school's actions and performance. The school has a proven successful track record in improvement and has the capacity to improve still further.

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Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	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	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	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 welcoming us to your school. You were very keen to make sure we enjoyed our visit and spoke to us enthusiastically. We would like to share with you what we thought of your school.

- Your work is good and you make excellent progress.
- You like being at St Thomas's, and your parents and people in the community value the school very highly.
- We think your behaviour is outstanding because of the way you look after each other, work hard in lessons and care about people.
- We think that you act very responsibly and that you make a difference to the life of the school
- your contribution to the appointments of senior staff shows how responsible you are.
- You enjoy your lessons and teaching is excellent.
- Your headteacher, teachers and support staff have worked successfully to improve your school and want to improve it even more.

What we have asked your school to do now.

- We want the small number of you who take breaks in school time to improve your attendance.