



St Thomas' Church of England Primary School Heaton Chapel

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106128
LEA Stockport
Inspection number 277495
Inspection dates 26 June 2006 to 27 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Jim Alexander CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Wellington Road North
School category	Voluntary aided		Heaton Chapel
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Stockport, Cheshire SK4 4QG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 4326809
Number on roll	242	Fax number	0161 4326809
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs H Nance
Date of previous inspection	2 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs J Garner

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 26 June 2006 - 27 June 2006	Inspection number 277495
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school, which is slightly larger than average, serves the parish of St Thomas and the surrounding district of Heaton Chapel. Pupils also travel from other areas of Stockport to this popular school. In 2005 a number of pupils transferred from another local school that closed. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is slightly higher than average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that provides good value for money; a judgement that matches the school's own view. Children enter school with standards of attainment that are broadly as expected for their age. They make good progress throughout the school and reach standards that are above average by the end of Year 6. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school; their attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils have good attitudes to their learning and behave very well. The school cares well for them and keeps them safe. Parents have a particularly high regard for the school and its work. One parent wrote, 'I would have no hesitation recommending St Thomas' to other parents'. Teaching and learning are good. The recent action taken to ensure work challenges pupils of all abilities, particularly the middle and higher attaining mathematicians, is proving successful. However, pupils' work is not marked consistently across the school and does not yet always give clear advice to pupils so they understand how they can improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their needs met well and consequently make good progress. The rich curriculum offers a range of exciting activities for pupils to explore and add to their learning experiences. Pupils develop good skills that prepare them well to live in a diverse community. Leadership, management and governance are good. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are satisfactory, although improving, which is resulting in managers having a better understanding of what needs to be done to raise pupils' achievement further. The school rightly identified the need to track pupils' progress and set individual targets for them to achieve. However, the new system has yet to be implemented and used to set targets for the whole-school, groups of pupils and individuals. The positive steps that have been taken since the last inspection and more recently to raise standards demonstrate that the school has the capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement a system to assess and track pupils' achievements and use the information to support the setting of targets at various levels, and check closely pupils' progress in meeting them.
- Ensure marking is of consistently good quality so that pupils have a better idea of how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school rightly judges achievement and standards to be good. Children enter the school with standards that are broadly typical for their age and progress through the Foundation Stage is good. By the end of Year 2 pupils reach good standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This demonstrates a significant improvement in the past 12 months. The proportion of pupils attaining higher levels is significantly above average in writing and broadly average in reading and mathematics. By the end of Year 6 pupils

usually leave school with above average standards, but these fell to broadly average in 2005 when a number of pupils transferred from another local school that had closed. Effective action taken by the school has led to standards in the current Year 6 returning to the usual high standards in English and mathematics, with science remaining broadly average. The proportion of pupils achieving higher levels is also good, which again demonstrates the impact of actions taken by the school in the past year. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the good support they receive, and due to the careful tracking that is made of their achievements. Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive effective support and achieve as well as other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being, including provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils really enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in their good behaviour and above average attendance. Pupils' ability to relate to others and work together is strong. Pupils show positive attitudes in lessons, while around school they are considerate and respectful, one pupil said, 'we know the school wants us to work hard and be helpful and polite, and that encourages everyone'. Overall, they have a good awareness of how to take care of themselves and others. They feel safe and well cared for in the school. Pupils are active in raising funds for national and international charities. Older pupils help the younger ones settle into new routines. The school council gives pupils a voice in what happens in their school. As a result of efforts made by the school, pupils have a good understanding of the main features of living a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy the opportunities they have for swimming and show plenty of energy at playtimes. At the end of Year 6, pupils say they feel equipped with the basic skills and positive attitudes that will help them in the next stage of their lives, one pupil adding, 'St Thomas' sets us in the right direction'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with some outstanding features. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good and children make good progress. The best lessons are practical, stimulating, challenging and make effective use of information and communication technology (ICT). As a result, learners thrive and make exceptionally good progress. In other lessons, the good teaching is tightly structured to match the pupils' understanding and ability; teachers and their assistants work well together and make good use of ICT to demonstrate teaching points. This is a significant factor in the good progress made by pupils especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language. Strong relationships, backed up by the teachers' frequent use of praise, motivate pupils to try their best. Expectations are high, especially with regard to opportunities for extended work, which

leads to good progress in writing. Good use of questions that require precise explanations effectively improve the pupils' thinking and speaking skills. Even so, methods of questioning require more variation, particularly with regard to allowing more thinking time and in the use of more open-ended questions. Not all marking is detailed enough to ensure pupils know how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers a good range of well planned experiences that meet the needs of all pupils. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good, although the facilities for outdoor play do not provide the children with a very stimulating learning environment. Recent developments are leading to better provision in mathematics and writing, and this is having a positive impact on the progress pupils are making. There is a good programme for the teaching of personal, social and health education. Circle time provides good opportunities for pupils to reflect on personal development. The pupils' experiences are enhanced by the regular enrichment weeks. Pupils enjoy their drama lessons and football training at a nearby college. There is a good range of popular clubs that include sporting and musical activities. Residential visits provide pupils with an intensive opportunity to develop their ICT skills. The school develops basic skills well and is seeking to develop further opportunities for pupils to apply these skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Adults nurture pupils well and help them to feel safe. A strong ethos of care permeates all aspects of school life and pupils become confident learners. Parents are highly supportive of the school and are of the opinion that extremely good care is taken of their children; one parent wrote, 'we couldn't hope for a better school for our children'. Arrangements for health and safety and child protection are in place and known by staff. The recent work to raise standards has caused the school to consider the quality of academic guidance they offer the pupils when marking their work. Although there has been improvement, the school is seeking to address inconsistencies when comments are not always clear enough to guide the pupils to improve. Induction arrangements into the Reception class are good and pupils are well supported as they move on to secondary school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher's vision to promote good academic standards and an enriched, enjoyable curriculum within a Christian ethos is shared by the staff. The headteacher and staff have created a happy learning environment where pupils' self-esteem flourishes. The deputy headteacher and subject leaders carry out their responsibilities well and receive good professional development. The special needs coordinator is effective in her role, ensuring that pupils with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and their achievements carefully monitored; consequently, these pupils make good progress. The governing body makes a good contribution to the school's success. Governors are knowledgeable of the school's strengths and weaknesses and use their expertise well to help the school move forward. There are satisfactory systems in place to check on how well the school is doing and to identify where further improvements can be made. The effectiveness of these procedures is improving which is resulting in a better understanding of what needs to be done to further raise pupils' attainment. The school has rightly identified, for example, the need to track pupils' progress more closely and to set more tightly focused targets for them to achieve. A new system for doing this has been developed, but not yet implemented. This must now be a priority for the school. The school has addressed issues raised at its last inspection. The school offers good value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	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	2	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	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	2	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	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	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	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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 very much for being so welcoming when we recently visited, and talking to us in such a friendly way about St Thomas' School. We would like to let you know the things we thought were good about the school and those things we feel it could do better.

Your teachers and other staff have worked together well recently to keep improving your work. They plan a lot of interesting things for you to do and make sure that you are safe and well cared for. You told us that you really enjoy your lessons and all the other activities in school.

To help you to do even better, we have asked teachers to set you challenging targets and, when marking your work, to let you know how to achieve them. We have also asked your school to keep a careful check on how well you are doing to ensure St Thomas' becomes an even better school.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. We hope that you continue to enjoy school and carry on working hard.