



# St Thomas' CofE Primary School, Leigh

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 106448  
**LEA** Wigan  
**Inspection number** 277564  
**Inspection dates** 14 June 2006 to 14 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Mike Hoban HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Astley Street
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Leigh
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Lancashire WN7 2BP
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 672730
<b>Number on roll</b>	482	<b>Fax number</b>	01942 262238
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Gail Slater
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	25 September 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Barry Foster

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was conducted by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and an Additional Inspector. The inspectors met with the headteacher, staff, parents, pupils and governors, visited sections of lessons and scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school. The inspection also took account of national and school data to compare the progress of the pupils of St Thomas Leigh with the progress made by pupils in similar schools.

## **Description of the school**

St Thomas, Leigh is a large Church of England primary school, and the proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and the number of pupils in the early stages of learning English is also small.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Parents and pupils of St Thomas praise the quality of care and education at their school. They are right to do so - St Thomas is a good school, with some outstanding features. Each pupil matters, and an atmosphere of mutual respect, application and teamwork permeates the school. It promotes good teaching and learning, where the calm classroom environment supports pupils' confidence and involvement in lessons. And pupils do well at St Thomas. They enter with attainment levels just below average, and go on to reach standards that are above national averages, and also make good progress in their wider education. Within that overall picture, the school has taken steps to improve writing, and that is now paying dividends. There is a need, nonetheless, to develop boys' writing further - and the school has the skills and strengths to respond to that matter. In addition, the school needs to raise all marking to the high standard of the marking seen in some work books.

Pupils are assured, confident and supportive to one another and towards staff; and teachers are keen to contribute to extracurricular activities. The curriculum caters for all groups of pupils, and their personal development extends beyond the school gates - pupils know both how and why they contribute to the local community. Attendance and behaviour are exemplary, and contribute materially to pupils' achievements and sense of purpose.

The headteacher provides clear leadership and direction, and the thorough and inclusive self evaluation cycle ensures that staff and the governing body make significant contributions to its development, and to the headteacher's vision of continual improvement through teamwork. The school provides good value for money, and has the capacity to improve further. It has addressed the areas for improvement from its last inspection effectively. Overall, the school offers the children of Leigh a great opportunity to improve their life chances.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Overall, pupils achieve well at St Thomas. Attainment on entry is just below average, and pupils make good progress: most Early Learning Goals are met in the Foundation Stage, and by the end of Key Stage 1 standards reached are above the national average. Validated KS1 data for 2006 show improvement at Level 3 and above.

At the end of Key Stage 2, overall standards are also above national averages, although attainment in English fell below the average in 2005. The trend of pupils' progress between Key Stages 1 and 2 is, overall, above average, although progress was weaker in 2005 compared with previous years. One contributory factor in 2005 was said to have been the withdrawal of the setting of pupils. This has now been re-instated. Another was a decline in standards of writing. Having identified writing as its key improvement priority, the school has introduced sharper target setting, better challenge, and tracking of progress in writing and in other areas. In addition, an emphasis on

independent writing in a range of subject areas has paid dividends; provisional data for the school's 2006 Standard Assessment Tests show improvement at KS2. The school identified the key issue, acted on it, and the impact has been improvements in standards.

The school supports pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) well - there has been improvement in the progress of this group of pupils in recent years. Girls continue to outperform boys at the end of both Key Stages. This lowers standards and means that boys are not so well equipped for the start of secondary education. Efforts to address this are not fully developed.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils say they are happy in school, a view supported by the majority of parents. Pupils comment that teachers care for them and listen to their views. Provision for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is sound. The school's Christian ethos can be discerned through St Thomas's involvement in church events, the regular pastoral visits of the vicar to see pupils and talk to staff, and the palpable atmosphere of care and teamwork. Pupils contribute to charities, and get to know about the work of such bodies through visits to see what actually happens at such institutions. In one nursing home, pupils created a mural with the school's artist in residence, using their talents for the benefit of others in their community. Pupils also gain knowledge of cultures through assemblies, through religious education teaching them about other faiths, and through geography, whereby pupils complete reports on children's issues in other countries. Attendance and behaviour are both outstanding; there have been no exclusions in recent memory. When bullying has occurred, it has been dealt with quickly and effectively. While pupils have ready access to drinking water, and, encouragingly, are increasingly bringing fruit to school, the ability of St Thomas to provide healthy meals is inhibited by the lack of a kitchen. Finally, the school council acts as an advocate for pupils' suggestions to improve the school, and the council's creditable successes include the introduction of 'wet playtime' games and activities.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Relationships are strong. The atmosphere in classrooms is just right, encouraging pupils to work together and enjoy their learning. This is because teachers manage pupils very well and make the learning environment calm but purposeful. Pupils say this gives them the confidence to answer questions and present their work to one another, which helps them to improve. Teachers begin lessons by setting out for pupils what it is they are to learn, but not all staff write these objectives in a language that is easily understood by all pupils. Teachers are particularly good at using 'smartboards' to hold the pupils' attention during

explanations of new learning. Teaching assistants are skilled and by working closely with teachers, they boost the progress of pupils who need extra help to reach their targets. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly: the best marking not only checks on progress of learners, but also gives pupils a clear steer in their future work. However, all marking should be raised to that high level.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The good curriculum caters effectively for all groups of pupils. The school has forged ahead with improving its Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provision since the last inspection and its daily use in lessons promotes better teaching, and makes learning more stimulating. The school successfully provides for physical education in the face of the challenges presented by a cramped site and lack of facilities. There are a number of valuable opportunities for pupils to take part in activities outside the school day, including residential visits and a wide range of clubs. These extend pupils' experiences in the wider world and help build their social, thinking, and team skills. Pupils are very appreciative of what is on offer. A particular success is the mini enterprise scheme through which Year 6 pupils seek to put skills they have learned into operation in a small business venture. Parents share in the process and other pupils benefit when profits are ploughed back into resources such as playground equipment. Within its culture of self-improvement, the school is currently engaged in changing the way it plans and organises its curriculum to achieve a more skills-led than content-led approach.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Teachers and pupils value each other: this is evident in the mutual respect observed in classrooms and the playground. Pupils are happy to confide in staff, and a learning mentor is available to provide effective guidance to pupils. There is clear tracking of academic progress, targets are robust and are known to pupils, and explained to parents. When extra support is thought to be appropriate, the school takes care to explain the background fully to parents. Safeguarding procedures are in place, and progress of vulnerable pupils is reviewed. There are effective relationships with care agencies, which enable such bodies to respond rapidly and appropriately on the rare occasions their services are required. Pupils transferring to secondary schools are confident and content with the robust transfer arrangements, which have included visits to the main feeder secondary.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management of the school are strong and effective. The headteacher's vision of continual improvement of education and care through teamwork is shared by staff, the governing body and the pupils. Performance management

systems bind in with the thorough and established self evaluation cycle. Monitoring is seen by staff as constructive, encouraging their improvement in a positive atmosphere. The self evaluation process also takes account of subject leaders' plans for the forthcoming academic year. The vehicle of self evaluation - the school improvement plan - is shared as a discussion document in a session with teachers and teaching assistants. The result is an informed debate that addresses and develops key areas for improvement. It also means that this collaborative process ensures that staff gain ownership of the plan.

Resources are utilised effectively: interactive whiteboards are helping to spread the use of ICT into other curriculum areas. The governing body has a clear appreciation of its responsibilities and has responded positively to the headteacher's collaborative approach to leadership and management. The governing body also appraises thoroughly any major budget proposals so that the focus of the school's spending is on improving pupils' achievement. The school has taken action to address the recommendations in the last report, and is well placed to move forward. It has clear capacity to improve.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

As you know, I visited your school this month to find out how well you are cared for and taught at St Thomas. Another inspector came with me, and we looked at some of your lessons, and your written work. You will know that we talked to some of your teachers, and some of your parents.

I am very happy with the level of care and education that you are receiving at St Thomas. I think it is a good school because of:

- the good results you get in your SATs;
- the way you help each other and your teachers by your excellent behaviour and good work in lessons;
- the wide range of activities outside school, that help others in your community and enable you to develop skills;
- the leadership that your headteacher gives to the school;
- the keenness and good work of your teachers and teaching assistants.

I hope that St Thomas goes from strength to strength. To get even better, I hope that more work can be done to improve boys' writing. I also would like all the marking to be as good as the excellent marking we came across in some of your books.

We really enjoyed our visit to your school. You made us both feel very welcome, and I wish you all the very best for the future.