



Featherstone Purston St Thomas Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108249
LEA Wakefield
Inspection number 277933
Inspection dates 21 June 2006 to 22 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr James Kilner HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	George Street Featherstone Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF7 5BG
School category	Voluntary controlled		
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01977 723560
Number on roll	342	Fax number	01977 723561
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs M Tennant-King
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2000	Headteacher	Mrs D Randall (Acting)

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Thomas' Church of England Junior School is a voluntary controlled junior school situated in Featherstone, one of the Five Towns Districts in Wakefield. Pupils come mainly from the immediate area where there is a higher than average level of unemployment. Virtually all pupils are of White European origin and only a minority have English as an additional language. The number of pupils on the register for special educational needs is low and there are average numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. There is a wide range of attainment on entry but, overall, pupils' attainment is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Thomas' School provides a satisfactory quality of education and satisfactory value for money. It is emerging from a period of disruption resulting from a number of unforeseen difficulties exacerbated by a series of protracted staff absences, most notably that of the headteacher. The recently appointed acting headteacher, from the school's leadership team, is successfully leading the school, ably assisted for part of each week by an experienced, perceptive associate headteacher from a local school. Together they have identified, and are beginning to address, a number of deep seated issues linked to achievement, standards, monitoring and evaluation.

The school's strengths lie in its Christian ethos and pastoral development: pupils care for one another and their behaviour is excellent both in lessons and during break times.

Standards are satisfactory overall; in English they are only just adequate. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some examples of good practice. For part of each week pupils take part in a carousel of activities. Whilst this fully engages pupils in learning and they enjoy this aspect, teachers' planning lacks sufficient rigour. As a result, pupils do not make enough progress.

Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and there is an adequate capacity for further improvement. Governors and the leadership team are well placed to refocus their efforts to ensure that the school gets back on track. The combined leadership by the associate headteacher and acting headteacher is sound and governors adequately carry out their responsibilities. Recently introduced strategies to look critically at how well the school is doing have begun well under the guidance of the associate headteacher, and middle managers are poised to carry on the work. There is great support from the parents for the work of the school; they strongly appreciate the care shown to their children.

What the school should do to improve further

In order to raise standards, particularly in English:

- ensure that learning objectives and assessment opportunities are clearly identified and consistently implemented in all lessons so that all pupils make good or better progress
- ensure that the planning for carousel activities outlines clearly what pupils are to learn and how they link to other subjects, especially English
- strengthen the effectiveness of the leadership team in raising standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. An exception is the outstanding work in art; the fine displays of pupils' work are very much a feature of the school. Pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress but there is variation between subjects. Pupils

make very good progress in science, satisfactory progress in mathematics but only just adequate progress in English. After a dip in 2004, standards recovered in 2005, especially in science where more than half of pupils did better than expected for their age. In English, few did well. They had not made enough progress from Year 3. The school uses information from tests to set targets for pupils. Where teachers track pupils' attainment and make good use of targets, achievement has improved. The work to implement the local authority's 'Colouring by Numbers' tracking system, which includes information from pupils' previous schools, gives a much improved analysis of pupils' progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Within a strong Christian ethos, the school provides high quality opportunities for pupils' personal development and well-being. There are very close links with St Thomas' church. Assemblies are frequently conducted by members of the local Christian faith community. Here pupils consider their place in world issues, for example, addressing racism in the context of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Many opportunities are provided to consider the beliefs of other faiths and cultures. The school has now identified the need to forge links with other faith communities closer to home.

A democratically elected school council assists in making decisions such as healthy eating options, provision of playground equipment and anti-bullying strategies. Councillors are proud of the key role they play in enhancing opportunities for their peers and enthusiastically raise money to fund their identified projects. There is a good uptake of the healthy choices at lunchtimes and healthy snacks during break times. The school has worked unstintingly to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality. Learning mentors work with outside agencies to support families and unauthorised absence has dropped dramatically. Attendance overall has improved significantly and is now good.

Pupils take a great pride in their school and enjoy their time in and out of lessons. They enjoy the carousel of activities and are motivated to produce some very good work, particularly in art.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary; they are well mannered and courteous to one another, staff and visitors alike. They care for one another; for example, a 'buddy' system enables Year 6 pupils to support newly arrived Year 3 pupils. Older pupils provide presentations for the local community and many participate in activities arising from the school's strong links with local sporting organisations and the wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching overall is satisfactory; it is never less than satisfactory and, in some cases, is much better than this. Good subject knowledge and high expectations are features of

the most successful lessons. Also, they are planned in detail, identifying learning objectives and strategies to motivate all and to challenge the full range of learners. Positive relationships between pupils and teachers are a clear characteristic of all lessons. Interactive whiteboards are used with skill and imagination by teachers to engage pupils and support their learning.

In the lessons in English, mathematics and science when pupils are grouped by ability, teaching strategies are not always sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of all. There is often too little variation in the activities to stretch and motivate those pupils who work at a faster rate or to provide focused support for pupils with specific learning needs. The teachers do not always explain the purpose of the lesson to the pupils. Marking strategies are inconsistent so that pupils are unclear about their standards and progress.

The carousel arrangement enables teachers to teach to their strengths in subjects but their planning often lacks focus.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It is sufficiently broad, balanced and inclusive and there are many opportunities for pupils to express themselves through role play and art. The pastoral curriculum effectively engages the interest of pupils and is a good feature. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is a significant element in developing pupils' confidence to learn. Through this, pupils are able to apply their knowledge of the world to solve problems, engage in role play and express themselves. The academic fabric of the curriculum is satisfactory. The carousel structure provides some opportunities for cross-curricular teaching and learning but the process lacks sufficient planning with focused learning objectives. The curriculum for less able pupils is satisfactory and includes programmes to raise competence in reading.

Learning about healthy lifestyles is a key part of the curriculum and is at the heart of the drive for Healthy School status. There is a good programme of enrichment activities and extended visits. A wide range of popular extra curricular activities is conducted with the assistance of the local sporting community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a high level of pastoral care and support for pupils. The school enjoys a close relationship with St Thomas' Church and is recognised and applauded as a focal point within the community. However, academic guidance is generally satisfactory; it is inconsistent in lessons and assessment for learning remains underdeveloped. Learning targets are not always communicated to pupils and, when they are, they are not always fully understood by them.

Child protection procedures are in place and rigorously adhered to. There are many unique and positive features which encourage good relationships between pupils and teachers. These include the 'pocket park project' and a school prom for leavers. Pupils

talk with affection about their teachers; they feel safe in school, trust the adults and know who to go to when they experience problems. A prominently displayed 'issues box' also enables pupils to express their views and feelings. The anti-bullying policy is clearly communicated and understood by all. The effectiveness of this strategy reassures both parents and pupils that the school is a positive environment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school accurately judges leadership and management to be satisfactory. School leaders promote well their vision for pupils to feel valued and for all to be included in the life of the school. Parents who responded to the questionnaire were overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school and the level of care it provides for their children.

The associate headteacher has been proactive in addressing some deep seated issues. The school has welcomed the high quality support from the local authority in the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP) and the work of the literacy consultants to help raise standards and improve the quality of provision. A robust system of development planning and self-evaluation has been introduced by the associate headteacher, exemplified in the accuracy of the self-evaluation form submitted for the inspection.

Monitoring of teaching and learning by middle managers is underdeveloped. As a result, pockets of good practice are not sufficiently known by all staff. Equally, the shortfalls in the planning of the delivery of the carousel curriculum have largely gone unnoticed until recent weeks. Whilst there is a wealth of data from the assessment of pupils' progress, it is not scrutinised in enough depth to identify individual pupils' needs. Consequently, progress in some areas is no better than satisfactory, particularly in English. With the skilled support of the associate headteacher and acting headteacher, the recently appointed subject managers are, as a matter of urgency, starting to deal with underlying weaknesses.

Governors meet their statutory obligations in areas such as finance and health and safety. They are not yet sufficiently involved in strategic planning and monitoring the effectiveness of the school in respect to achievement and standards. The local authority has assured the continued support from the experienced associate headteacher until the issue of long-term absence is resolved. This, combined with the recent improvements, the skills of the acting headteacher and the high calibre of recently appointed middle managers, gives the school an adequate 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>	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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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	3	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	1	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	1	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?	3	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	3	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 welcoming the Ofsted inspection team into your school last week. We appreciated the welcome you gave to us and the time many of you gave to talk with us and to let us know your views.

These are our main findings from the inspection.

- St Thomas' is a very welcoming school and you enjoy the exciting activities and visits your teachers plan for you. Your standard of art work is very good indeed and you share lots of your good work in art, drama and music with people in your local community.

- Your behaviour is excellent! You look after each other well, care for and respect one another and the adults who help you. Your manners and courtesy are extremely good both in your lessons and at break times. We particularly enjoyed the calm atmosphere and healthy meals during lunchtime.

- The school really wants you to stay healthy and they are doing all they can to help you to achieve healthy lifestyles in what you eat and how you exercise.

- Your parents told us how much they appreciate the work that everyone does in school to look after you.

- We think that your school needs to help you to achieve much higher standards. Your teachers work hard to help you to achieve your full potential in life. We feel that they can now work just as hard but in different ways to get you there even quicker so that all of you can reach the highest standards possible. They will be watching more closely what is happening in your lessons and how well you are progressing towards reaching your targets.

You may want to think about ways in which you could help them towards achieving this as well, we know that they value your ideas.

Once again, may we thank you for your warm and friendly welcome to your school. There is much for you and your teachers to be proud of at St Thomas' School and we wish you every success for the future.