



St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Aided Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115184
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 279535
Inspection dates 14 June 2006 to 15 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Alison Pangbourne AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Sawyers Hall Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		CM15 9BX
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01277223606
Number on roll	222	Fax number	01277232004
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Canon.R B White
Date of previous inspection	15 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs. C L'Estrange

Age group 4 to 7	Inspection dates 14 June 2006 - 15 June 2006	Inspection number 279535
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized infant school. It has very close links with the local church. Most pupils come from White British families with a few from minority ethnic heritages. Very few are at an early stage of learning English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is well below average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. The number of pupils taking a free school meal is well below average. When children start school, standards generally are better than those typical for four year olds. A new headteacher has been in post since April 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Thomas of Canterbury Infant School rightly thinks of itself as a good school. Parents and pupils are extremely positive about all it offers. Inspectors agree that it is a good school with some outstanding features. Children make good progress from an above average starting point, with many exceeding the expected standards by the end of the Reception year. Plans to develop the outside area for this age group are well advanced to enable more learning to take place outdoors and to improve the curriculum for them. Recently, the standards reached by 7 year olds have been well above average and have risen each year. In 2005 and 2006 standards were exceptionally high. Pupils make good progress because the quality of teaching is effective and the interesting curriculum gives plenty of opportunities to develop their skills. The small proportion of pupils with learning difficulties make excellent progress and most reach the standard expected for their age because of the very good provision for them. This contributes positively to the high standards. Pupils' behaviour and personal development are outstanding. All staff take excellent care of the pupils and they enjoy school immensely. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides good leadership, ably supported by the deputy headteacher. She is successfully building on strong foundations. She has already introduced a more rigorous system to monitor the quality of teaching and standards in order to maintain and improve the good quality of education, and particularly as several new teachers have been appointed for next year. The way that the governors have ensured that high standards have been maintained during a period of uncertainty pending the appointment of the headteacher and deputy headteacher is excellent. Together with the improvements that have taken place since the previous inspection, this shows that the school has a very good capacity to improve even further. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to build a more rigorous and routine monitoring and evaluation process throughout the school. - Ensure that the planned improvements to the outdoor areas for the youngest children provide sufficient opportunities for them to develop their skills in all the areas of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good overall. The youngest children make good progress because of the good teaching and the interesting things to do. They broaden and consolidate their skills and, by the beginning of Year 1, many children have exceeded the level expected for their age. Standards in recent years have been well above average in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. They have risen steadily each year. In 2005, they were exceptionally high, particularly in reading. They do so well in this subject because they are taught to love reading from an early age and there are lots of opportunities for them to read individually to adults. All pupils, including those

with learning difficulties, reached the level expected for their age in writing and mathematics in 2005. A very high proportion exceeded expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. This shows that more able pupils do well. Pupils met the challenging targets set for them. Pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, are making good progress from an above average starting point. This year standards remain high and an even greater proportion have exceeded the expected level in mathematics and reading than in 2005. Pupils with learning difficulties make excellent progress. This is because tasks are very closely matched to their needs and they receive first-rate support from teachers and teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are promoted outstandingly well by a caring, Christian ethos that is reflected clearly in every aspect of school life. Pupils' great enjoyment of school is evident in their very enthusiastic approach to learning and good attendance. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding because they are keen to please, value and respect each other and have excellent relationships with all the staff and with one another. Year 2 pupils take on responsibilities willingly to help the smooth running of the school, for example, distributing fruit each day. Pupils have a good understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles. They benefit from frequent physical education lessons and links with sporting organisations. The school council gives them an effective voice in helping to improve the school and supporting those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school makes very good use of worship and religious education lessons to encourage pupils to reflect upon their feelings and values and their contributions to the school and wider communities. For example, pupils have written to the borough council requesting recycling bins for paper as a result of their concern about waste paper. The strong focus on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills provides an excellent basis for pupils' future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good with some outstanding features. The good teaching is valued highly by parents and is a key factor in promoting good achievement. Teachers plan lessons in detail to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Excellent relationships and outstanding class management ensure that all pupils stay focused. Teachers make imaginative use of resources, such as interactive whiteboards, to produce interesting lessons that stimulate a desire to learn. Many teachers inform pupils what they expect them to achieve in the lesson and regularly remind them during the lesson how long they have to achieve it. This maintains a good pace to lessons, although it is not consistent in each class. Teachers use questions effectively to encourage pupils to contribute their ideas, although, occasionally, the learning of more able pupils is

not always extended enough by more complex questions. The school has good procedures to assess pupils' attainment and check on how well they are achieving. Teachers use this information well to guide their teaching. They work very effectively with teaching assistants to help pupils to be included fully and to support individuals to improve their work, particularly those who find learning difficult.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good throughout the school and activities are matched well to pupils' needs and interests. Reception children benefit from a good balance between teacher-directed activities and choosing activities for themselves. The balance reflects their changing needs during the Reception year and helps them to achieve well overall. Opportunities for outdoor learning are restricted by the facilities, but these are planned for improvement. The curriculum is varied and planned in detail to meet pupils' different needs, particularly those who find learning difficult. The good opportunities for more able pupils and those with particular gifts and talents help them to attain well above average standards. A good range of visits, for example to the local church, and visitors such as a group of Indian dancers, enrich pupils' learning. Many enjoy attending lunchtime clubs, such as drama, whilst others benefit from extra reading support. The school has plans in place to enhance the range of additional activities, for example in music.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Teachers and support staff know the pupils very well and provide outstanding care, guidance and support that are valued highly by pupils and parents. A parent commented, 'The individual care and attention he receives are exemplary'. The systems for ensuring pupils' safety, such as child protection arrangements, are secure. Good attendance is supported by pupils' enthusiasm to win the weekly Attendance Cup. Very good links with pre-school organisations and the adjoining junior school help pupils transfer confidently. Pupils say that they feel safe and happy in school and are confident about approaching an adult if they have a concern. Teaching and support staff work very successfully together to ensure that all pupils receive the support that they need, particularly those who find learning hard. Very good marking and the very effective use of improvement targets, particularly in literacy and numeracy, help individual pupils to receive outstanding guidance to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides clear-sighted leadership and leads the school with a vision that is highly focused on continual improvement within a strong Christian ethos. She knows what needs to be done to improve further and is setting about this with dedication, well supported by the deputy

headteacher. Although they are both very recently appointed, they are not new to the school and their knowledge of it is enabling them to build on what was already good practice for the benefit of the pupils. All staff with management roles lead their subjects well. The new headteacher is developing a more rigorous system to enable all staff to monitor and evaluate their subjects more effectively. For example, strengths and areas for development are now being formally recorded and fed back to staff to help them improve their practice. The school has identified the right areas for improvement in its good development plan. This shows that its self-evaluation is effective. The school works well to include pupils from all backgrounds and this contributes to the warm, friendly ethos. The views of all members of the community, especially parents, are sought and welcomed and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One parent said 'Staff have a passion for the children's progress and well-being!' The governors are highly valued members of the team. They are fully involved in the work of the school and the way in which they fulfil their role is excellent. They are not complacent and show a commitment to further improvement. This constant desire to do even better and the improvements that have taken place since the previous inspection, show that the school has a very good capacity to improve even 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?	2	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	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	1	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	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	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	1	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?	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?	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	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

Following our visit to your school, we would like to thank you for helping us. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. We would like to tell you what we liked best. You told us that you go to a happy, friendly school and we agree with you. We thought you behaved excellently and that you all played very nicely with your friends. You have lots of interesting things to do in lessons and all the grown-ups look after you extremely well and help you learn. If you find learning hard then you get lots of help. We were impressed by how well many of you can read. Mrs L'Estrange and your teachers make sure that your school is a lovely place to be. Your families know that you go to a good school. We have asked Mrs L'Estrange to make sure that the children in Reception can learn outdoors as often as possible when the new canopies come. We have also asked her and the teachers to carry on looking at your books and visiting your classes to see how well you are doing. We hope you carry on enjoying your time at St Thomas of Canterbury School and do well in your next school.