



St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 133774
LEA Merton LEA
Inspection number 282380
Inspection dates 24 November 2005 to 25 November 2005
Reporting inspector Daniel Brian Evans AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Commonside East
School category	Voluntary aided		Mitcham
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		CR4 1YG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8648 0869
Number on roll	241	Fax number	020 8640 7056
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr K Butt
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs Ann Oddy

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary is a mixed voluntary aided school. It was established in September 2002 following its reorganisation from a middle deemed secondary to a primary school on the same site. The school has grown rapidly from a very small school of 90 pupils in 2002 to 250 pupils in 2005. This is its first Ofsted inspection report. Of the full-time pupils 80% come from minority ethnic groups. Pupils have a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and cultural experiences. A high proportion of pupils (36%) speak English as an additional language. Currently 27% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities is close to the national average. Numbers of pupils entering and leaving the school at other than the normal times are very high and currently two thirds of Year 6 pupils are in this category. There is much greater stability in the Foundation Years and in Years 1 to 2.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The inspection team and the school agree that St Thomas of Canterbury provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. Provision for the personal development and well-being of pupils is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but there are variations across the school with some teaching that is good or outstanding. Pupils of all ages, ethnic group and gender feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Parents are generally supportive. The school gives satisfactory value for money. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. In Years 1 to 6, pupils attain below average standards and most make satisfactory progress. Standards have been below average in reading, writing and mathematics over past years. Pupils make better progress in English and science than in mathematics because teachers have given these subjects a higher priority in their planning over the past two years. Provision for pupils learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and disabilities is satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher has provided very good leadership to the school in its transition from middle to primary phases. Staff and governors work closely with her and are making good progress towards raising standards. Staff who are new to the school are well supported and quickly adapt to school routines. Efficient use of the accommodation and good learning resources support pupils' achievement well. The school has good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

* Accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards in mathematics by setting sharp targets for pupils, increasing the pace of lessons particularly in solving word problems and investigations.* Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good; in particular, the way teachers engage pupils' interest and make learning relevant to the needs of individual pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter the Foundation Stage with standards that are below expectations for their age. Provision is good; pupils settle in quickly and make good progress because the organisation of their learning helps them to develop their personal and social skills quickly. All groups of pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 although; standards over the past years have been consistently below average in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has commendably focused more on tracking the progress of individual pupils and setting individual pupil targets. This is at an early stage but the evidence shows that pupils' listening and speaking are improving and that this is having a positive impact on their reading and writing. Mathematics skills are lower than those in reading, writing and science. Whilst the pupils' number skills are broadly average, they do not perform well in solving word problems and in mathematical investigations. Significant progress has been made in raising standards from a low base at the time of the school's reorganisation and this is reflected in the improving national

test results. The new target-setting arrangements for individual pupils are beginning to raise pupils' levels of achievement. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6 and standards are broadly average. Pupils learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress because of the support they receive. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress overall. Pupils' make satisfactory progress in information and communication technology (ICT) skills and benefit from regular access to the new technology suite.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They speak warmly of their time in school and feel safe. 'I enjoy my school so much' said one pupil and 'I would never go back to my old school'. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Most pupils behave well in lessons although a few lack enthusiasm, particularly when they find the work too hard or too easy. Attendance has steadily improved and is at the national average. This is particularly noteworthy as many pupils travel some distance to school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Cultural development is strengthened by celebrating the different cultural backgrounds of pupils through events such as 'International Days'. Pupils say there is very little bullying in school but that 'there are disagreements, which we sort out at the mediation point in the playground'. They are eager to become members of the School Council and willingly contribute their views about the school. Pupils use their initiative well around school by being helpful and making friends with new pupils. They participate enthusiastically in projects such as fund-raising and recycling. They are respectful of property and confident that problems that arise will be dealt with promptly and fairly. Pupils are fully aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but there is a variation in its quality that the school acknowledges. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is consistently good. Activities and resources are well planned to meet different needs and motivate pupils to learn and enjoy their work. Teaching in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory. Most lessons have good warm-up activities and ICT resources are used well. Pupils generally are eager to learn. However, group activities in a number of lessons are either too hard or too easy and result in a slow pace of learning or, in some cases, unsatisfactory behaviour. The few good or outstanding lessons were characterised by teaching methods which took account of the different ways in which pupils learn. They were enhanced by the teachers' skilful provision for the wide range of needs of individuals in the class, including pupils new to the school or at an early stage in their acquisition of English. In the best lessons teachers' questions deepened the pupils' understanding and made good use of school's assessment systems. Those pupils with

learning difficulties and disabilities receive satisfactory support that enables them to make satisfactory progress. Support staff are well trained and play an important part in contributing to pupils' learning in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Curriculum provision is satisfactory overall. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is well balanced and broad. Teachers plan together exciting activities which are well matched to the children's needs. They promote language development and social skills effectively using a good range of resources both in and out of doors. Cross-curricular links for literacy and ICT enrich pupils' learning and extend their skills. Across the school there are good opportunities for after-school clubs, the most popular of which is the homework club. Learning is enhanced through talks by visitors and visits that are well chosen to enrich pupils' experiences. The provision for the high numbers of children who join the school after the start of the school year is sound. The school recognises the need to extend the facilities and support for families and pupils who are at very early stages of learning English. There is satisfactory provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Imaginative music and art therapy programmes meet some pupils' very specific needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for pupils. When pupils join the school they quickly develop a sense of belonging because the school is a welcoming family community united by a strong faith. There are good procedures for child protection and possible risks to health and safety are carefully assessed. Supervision during breaks and lunch is good and action is taken quickly to tackle potential difficulties. Pupils with learning difficulties have satisfactory support. The school's procedures for assessing pupils are effective. The tracking of their progress is at an early stage hence, occasionally pupils know what their targets are and make slow progress because they have only a partial understanding of what they have to do to achieve them. The oldest pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education, for example, in their work on investigations in science.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that the leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher took over the school in very difficult circumstances just prior to reorganisation when the school was unpopular in the community and pupil numbers were falling. As a result of her strong leadership pupil numbers are increasing and there is now a firm base on which to further improve the quality of education. Governors and staff fully share her vision of each pupil being able to achieve their best performance. The relatively new management team is settling in well. Analysis of

performance identify appropriate priorities for staff development. As a result, the school has rightly focused on raising standards in mathematics and addressing the lack of consistency in teaching as priorities. The quality of teaching is monitored well by senior staff and by external consultants. All staff have a clear understanding of strengths and areas that need to improve. New and inexperienced teachers are supported very well. The governors work closely with the school management team during a period of continuing change. Financial strategies are skilfully linked to motivate pupils' learning as, for example, in the introduction of interactive electronic whiteboards. Administration staff are a considerable asset to the school. Accommodation is spacious and learning resources are good. Parents generally are supportive but there are a number who would like to have more and earlier information about events in the school.

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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	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?	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	3	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?	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?	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?	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 us to your school and telling us about your work.

There are many things about your school that we like very much. * We admired the interesting work you have been doing this term and which is displayed around the school* Most of you behave well and you are a pleasure to talk to * Many of you are aware of how to live healthily and join in activities outside lessons* We were very impressed with the photographs of your activities during your International Day. You are beginning to pick up new things more quickly because teachers help you learn* You try hard in lessons. Some of your writing is especially good.

We have asked your school to improve a few things to make it even better. These things are:
* To improve your number skills and problem solving in mathematics * The teachers already provide you with some good lessons, but they need to make sure that these occur more often across all subjects and with all classes. You will need to work with your teachers to find different and exciting ways of learning.