



# St Thomas of Canterbury RC School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 105221  
**Local Authority** Bolton  
**Inspection number** 287163  
**Inspection date** 20 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** John Heap

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Eastbourne Grove
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Bolton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11		Lancashire BL1 5LH
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01204 333131
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	316	<b>Fax number</b>	01204 333129
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Paul Lochery
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Frances Lysyj
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 June 2001		

<b>Age group</b> 4-11	<b>Inspection date</b> 20 November 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 287163
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is an above average sized primary school. It serves a residential area with few signs of deprivation and the proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below average. There are small groups of minority ethnic pupils, those learning English as an additional language, and those who are looked after by the local authority. The school has been disrupted in recent times by staff absences and changes in leadership and management. The current headteacher has been in post since January 2006. The school has the following awards: Basic Skills, Investor in People, Active Mark Gold, E Mark and ECO School.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The school rightly judges itself to be good and it provides good value for money. Pupils and most parents are very satisfied with what the school offers and achieves. Parents understandably say children are 'very happy and make good progress'. Despite the difficult period of uncertainty and disruption, the school has maintained the strengths identified in the previous inspection report and since then has improved handwriting and

pupils' annual progress reports. Consequently, the school is well placed to improve further.

Children benefit from a good start in the Foundation Stage (Reception Year) and they make good progress, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. This emphasis on personal development is a strength throughout the school. It is very well fostered by the good curriculum and the very good care for pupils. As a result, personal development is excellent. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is emphasised by their above average attendance. They make a strong contribution to the

day-to-day life of the school. Older pupils are welcoming and helpful to the younger ones

and this plays a large part in all pupils feeling safe and secure in the school. Pupils welcome the many activities that enrich school life and which lead to their good understanding of the benefits of a healthy and safe lifestyle.

Standards are above average and pupils make good progress. The combined effect of these high standards and really good attitudes to learning is that pupils are well placed to

succeed in secondary school and later life. Pupils do particularly well in reading, mathematics and science. Standards in writing are not as high and the school recognises that there is still some way to go to make further improvement. The school's own achievement tracking information shows that progress in writing is satisfactory overall, but varies between classes. There are two main reasons for this: first, the marking of writing does not give clear enough guidance on how well pupils are doing and what they should do to improve and, second, pupils are not doing enough writing in

other subjects. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching and learning is good which

promotes the good progress made by pupils, including those with learning difficulties and

other groups with extra needs. For example, pupils joining the school recently from other

countries have been well supported to settle quickly and happily, and to learn English at

a rapid rate. This demonstrates the effective links the school has with outside agencies and how these promote the personal and academic skills of vulnerable pupils.

None of the many strengths highlighted would be possible without good leadership and

management. The new headteacher has a clear vision for the future and this is shared by the skilful and enthusiastic staff and an effective governing body. A few parents expressed concern about the disruptions to school routines in the recent past, caused by staff absences. The headteacher has successfully established greater stability and promoted good improvement.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure progress in writing is consistently good across the school.
- Increase the amount of writing done across all areas of the curriculum
- Strengthen marking practices, particularly with regard to writing, so that pupils are clear about the targets they have achieved and what they need to do to improve further.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards and progress are good. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. Children reach, and many exceed, the expected Early Learning Goals by the time they enter Year 1. The school's own tracking information shows clearly that the children have poor early writing skills and that even though they improve in Reception year, this is still the weakest area.

High standards have been consistently achieved by Years 2 and 6, particularly in reading, mathematics and science. Where any exceptions to this have occurred, the school has acted swiftly and successfully to re-establish high standards and to ensure that pupils make good progress in their learning. Writing standards are lower and boys do less well than girls. The school is well aware of this and provision is being introduced to improve these two aspects. There are several groups of learners in the school who have extra needs; all evidence shows that they, also, are making good progress in relation to their prior learning.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school's exemplary promotion of Christian values and teachings enables even the youngest pupils to reflect on spiritual issues in their lives. Their excellent moral and social development results in happy, caring and courteous pupils who thoroughly enjoy school. The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is excellent and where there are a very small number of concerns, the school deals with them well. Pupils welcome the work they do about other cultures and recognise the diversity in British society.

Pupils go about their work and play safely. They appreciate the splendid developments to the external premises and have made good contributions to the planning. Pupils know that eating healthily and exercising are very important. An excellent contribution to this has come from a group of pupils and their parents who proposed, organised and now run a healthy tuck shop. The school council is democratically elected and plays a very strong part in the life of the school. Pupils have very positive and ambitious attitudes to learning. They attend well and their good basic skills provide a solid foundation for their future life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Evidence from lessons, monitoring, and children's books show that the quality of teaching and learning is never less than satisfactory. In the Foundation Stage, the strengths of the good teaching include: high levels of challenge in personal, social and emotional development, early reading and mathematical development; good, well targeted planning and support; and excellent relationships. As a result, children grow in confidence, motivation and make good gains in their basic skills. Typically, teaching in Years 1 to 6 builds on the earlier learning effectively. Good classroom management ensures that pupils' learning is not disrupted. Teachers and support staff work well with all groups of pupils and those with extra needs benefit from the good support they receive. Often this work is developing very basic literacy skills, but it is done in a lively way that pupils enjoy and which helps them make good progress. Although teachers' assessment of pupils' learning is increasingly rigorous, their marking lacks consistency, particularly in writing. Staff are increasingly going to great lengths to interest boys and to have high expectations of their work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum successfully promotes pupils' personal development and their academic achievement, particularly in reading, mathematics and science. The curriculum is well enriched through a very wide range of out-of-school activities, visits and visitors.

Pupils with extra needs are given good support so that they can benefit equally from all that the school offers. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good. In Years 1 to 6, there are too few opportunities for learners to develop their writing skills across the full range of subjects.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

This is a very caring school. Procedures for safeguarding pupils, including child protection and risk assessments, are robust and in place. Children know whom to turn to with problems or concerns. Although academic guidance, particularly on improving writing, is not always consistent, pupils' overall academic and personal achievements are carefully and rigorously tracked as they move through the school. As a result, pupils feel well supported and motivated in their learning and know what they need to do next. They value receiving rewards for their achievements. The early identification of pupils with extra needs ensures they receive good support. The strong induction procedures help children settle quickly and well into school routines.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher and leadership team have effectively created a climate where strong teamwork supports pupils' good academic progress and excellent personal development. Relationships within the school are first rate. Leaders' and managers' clear and shared vision has led to marked improvements, for example, to the premises. There is ongoing development of the assessment and tracking of pupils' achievements, but the school rightly recognises that there is still work to be done here. The headteacher is well thought of and receives good support from her senior colleagues. Parents understandably say they are 'particularly pleased with the new headteacher and deputy headteacher' and that they 'are sure that school will go from strength to strength'.

The leadership has a good view of the school's effectiveness and has developed robust systems for monitoring the many areas of the school's work. Improvement planning is good, but some of the priorities in the current plan do not have measurable targets for improvement. Governors have a good understanding of the school's work and are very committed to sustaining its role in the community. They are well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Finances are managed well and the school makes good use of the funding it receives.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I thoroughly enjoyed working with you and your teachers this week. I am very grateful for your warm welcome, courtesy and the help you provided. Please give a special thanks to those who talked with me through the day - very, very helpful indeed.

What I really liked about your school:

- the happy atmosphere in the school and the way you support each other
- the strong teamwork of all the adults that puts your needs first
- the good standards and progress, particularly in reading and mathematics
- your excellent behaviour, strong attitudes to work and the first rate relationships you develop
- the good teaching
- the way that you all contribute to a safe and caring ethos in the school
- the very good and interesting range of activities that enrich your curriculum.

I have asked your teachers to make sure that progress in writing is good across all classes. To help with this, I have also suggested that you have even more opportunities to use your writing skills in other subjects. Finally, I have pointed out to staff that their marking of your work needs to make sure that you are clear about how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve further. You can be a great help by always doing your best writing, whether it is in literacy or in other subjects and please follow the advice and guidance from your teachers.

Good luck for the future and continue to look after each other.