



# Thomas A Becket First School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 125954  
**Local Authority** West Sussex  
**Inspection number** 293412  
**Inspection dates** 11–12 December 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Andrew Olive HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	First	<b>School address</b>	Pelham Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Worthing
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–8		BN13 1JB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01903 235386
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	571	<b>Fax number</b>	01903 215038
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Stephen Wallace
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Margaret Brackley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 June 2002		

<b>Age group</b> 4–8	<b>Inspection dates</b> 11–12 December 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 293412
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## **Introduction**

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

## **Description of the school**

Thomas A Becket is a very large first school. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and their social circumstances are broadly average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average and few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is increasing and is above average.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Thomas A Becket is an improving school, providing a satisfactory standard of education, with several features that are good. The main platform for the improvement has been the good, reflective and well-focused leadership of the headteacher and senior team. They have evaluated the school's performance in an accurate and self-critical manner. The right priorities have been identified and the subsequent actions taken over the past two years have led to considerable improvements. The school offers sound value for money and its capacity to improve further is good.

The pupils very much enjoy their learning and are pleased to be at school. This view is strongly endorsed by the parents; one commented, 'School has been a wonderful experience for my two children.' Behaviour is good and the pupils support and co-operate with each other impressively. The relationships between the pupils and staff are very good and contribute to the school's positive ethos. The contribution the pupils make to the school is outstanding; in particular, the school council has played a significant part in important decisions, developing pupils' understanding of healthy and safe lifestyles.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with some significant strengths. The curriculum is creative and interesting and motivates the pupils to want to learn. The tracking of pupils' progress to ensure all pupils are progressing quickly enough is satisfactory although it is still developing in several subjects. Assessment information is used well in writing and the pupils appreciate that their individual targets make clear how they should improve their work.

The pupils arrive at school with skills and knowledge broadly in line with those seen nationally. The safe, caring environment in the Reception year enables pupils to settle quickly into school routines and flourish. Throughout the school, pupils maintain at least satisfactory progress, enabling them to reach average standards by the end of Year 3. As the school's monitoring identified that the pupils' progress was slower in Year 1, a new, more child-centred approach to the curriculum has been introduced. It is developing well, although the teaching and learning are not consistently good across all classes in the year group. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) make good progress and the school works effectively with a wide range of services to support its most vulnerable pupils.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Build on the current good practice in teaching and learning within Year 1 to ensure the consistency of provision and improve standards in this year group.
- Extend the use of assessment to ensure pupils' progress is accurately tracked and all pupils are challenged.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' attainment on entry to the Reception class is in line with national expectations. They make expected progress overall during their first year in school, achieving well in their knowledge and understanding of the world, and in their creative, personal and physical development. A more intensive programme of work during the current year is improving their writing, communication and mathematical skills. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 1 and 2 and reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. Results in 2004 and 2005 were significantly above average but fell in 2006, although achievement for this year group was satisfactory. Pupils in Year 3 also achieve satisfactorily overall, with most pupils reaching the expected levels in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and English as an additional language make good progress because of the provision made for them and the extra individual support that they receive. In most classes, pupils who are particularly able make similar rates of progress to most other pupils. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls or pupils from ethnic minorities.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, are keen to learn and develop very positive attitudes. Attendance is good. The pupils make a very valuable contribution to the school community as they undertake responsibilities as monitors, playground buddies and represent their peers on the school council. For example, councillors designed posters and wrote letters to parents to raise awareness of safer and healthier ways of getting to school. Pupils also make a good contribution to the local community by fund raising and participating in a range of events, and they gain insights into how they can help to enhance the life of others. Pupils have a good appreciation of safe and healthy lifestyles and benefit from regular physical education lessons and some after-school sports clubs. They feel safe at school and that any rare incidents of bullying are 'quickly sorted out.' The good provision of play leaders, to organise games and activities, makes a positive contribution to calm and well-run lunchtimes and pupils cooperate well together as a result.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They acquire an understanding of different faiths, cultures and lifestyles and a good awareness of the world around them. Assemblies and Christmas concerts reinforce the school's values, and music and prayers are particularly effective in developing pupils' spirituality. Pupils are suitably prepared for life at middle school, and by the time they transfer have sound basic skills to prepare them for later life.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with significant pockets of good practice. Teachers create purposeful learning environments in their classrooms and these help pupils to enjoy learning. They manage pupils well, prepare lessons thoroughly and ensure pupils understand the purpose of the learning. They make effective use of electronic whiteboards to quicken up the pace of many lessons. Often there is a welcome sense of fun as, for example, when pupils in one Year 1 class 'played tennis' on opposite sides of a divide as they counted down alternate numbers to help their understanding of 'one less'. There are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching within different year groups but particularly within Year 1, where some activities do not challenge pupils enough. There is also some inconsistency in the effective use of teaching assistants. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall. Previous weaknesses in language and mathematics have been acted on purposefully and children are now making better progress. The tracking of pupils' work is satisfactory, though still developing in several subjects, for example, in science and information and communication technology. Teachers intervene effectively with pupils who have learning difficulties and English as an additional language and this ensures their good progress.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and generally well matched to the pupils' needs. It is broad, balanced and creative and the pupils thoroughly enjoy the cross-curricular, literacy-led topics. Planning to improve transition procedures for pupils between the Foundation Stage and Year 1 has resulted in more structured play being introduced for older pupils; they enjoy these activities, though not all the pupils are fully challenged. A very good range of first-hand experiences enriches the curriculum and contributes positively to the pupils' personal development, including theme weeks, visitors and many educational visits, particularly the residential visit for older pupils.

The school leaders' recent analysis of the pupils' writing has rightly led to the separate teaching of phonics to improve spelling, although it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this new approach.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

The school's very caring ethos means that pupils are valued as individuals, and thrive and grow in confidence. Teachers know their pupils well and parents are confident that their children are well cared for and that the school will deal effectively with any worries or concerns. One parent said, 'He's settled into school better than I could have hoped for.' Arrangements for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare, including child

protection arrangements and risk assessments, are strong. Pupils say that they feel safe and happy in school and are confident about approaching an adult if they have a concern.

Staff are effectively trained in dealing with learning difficulties and disabilities. Additional programmes to improve pupils' progress are suitably matched to pupils' needs. Good links with outside agencies ensure that these pupils are assessed and their progress reviewed regularly with their teachers and parents. Marking is annotative and constructive. Writing assessments are regular and thorough and pupils are given individual targets that show them what they need to focus on to do better. The thoughtful induction procedures and transfer arrangements mean that pupils become increasingly confident about their ability to cope with new situations.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is well supported by an effective senior team that share her high expectations and clear view about where the school is heading. The senior leaders monitor and evaluate the school's performance to positive effect so that the school knows its own strengths and weaknesses accurately and has identified the correct priorities on the school improvement plan. For example, the pupils' progress slowed in Year 1, so the school obtained funding for a transition project to provide better continuity for the pupils. The project is enthusiastically led and is beginning to have a positive effect, although the school needs to ensure all teaching and learning is as good as the best. The year group leaders are an important part of the senior team and are rightly empowered to ensure high quality teaching and learning across their year groups. Their close monitoring is developing practice, although peer monitoring is not sharply enough focused on improvement.

The school has improved considerably since its last inspection. Governance was then a weakness and is now good; governors have secure systems in place and have improved communication with staff. They are able to hold the school to account and are well placed to contribute to its strategic direction. The performance management of all staff now contributes to school improvement, with objectives sensibly related to whole-school as well as personal development issues.

The school has very good relations with parents. It regularly seeks the views of parents and acts over relevant issues, for example, concerning the communication between school and home. Parents are very supportive of the school and consider that their children make good progress and are very well cared for.

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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>	3
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>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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>	3
<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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

Thank you all for making us so welcome and helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and seeing your lessons and one of the Christmas productions.

What we liked most about Thomas A Becket First School:

- You enjoy school very much and work really hard. Your teachers work hard to make sure the lessons are interesting and there are many visits and visitors that help you learn. Some of the topic books we saw were lovely.
- You behave well in lessons and around the school and play sensibly outside. You are very supportive and understanding of each other when things go wrong.
- Teachers and other adults in school look after you well and there is always someone to help if you have a problem.
- The TASC Force has made some important decisions in making your life at school better.
- You know how to keep yourself healthy and safe and why you should exercise. You also know about eating food that is good for you.
- Your headteacher and school leaders know how to make the school even better.

These are the main areas where your school can improve:

- Make sure all the lessons in Year 1 are as good as the best ones. This would mean that you could all make even better progress and learn even more.
- Make sure your teachers know how well you are doing in all subjects, so they will know if you are learning quickly enough.

I wish you all the best for the future.