

St Thomas Becket Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101796
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	307813
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Grace Marriott

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	412
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Phil Insuli
Headteacher	Mr Noel Campbell
Date of previous school inspection	15 April 2002
School address	Becket Close Birchanger Road London SE25 5BN
Telephone number	020 8654 3006
Fax number	020 8656 6282

Age group	5-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Thomas Becket is a larger than average primary school which serves a wide and very diverse area of South London. The children come from a variety of backgrounds but the proportion of children who are entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and disabilities is also below average. The school has a higher than average proportion of children from black and ethnic minorities, though most are completely fluent in English. The school has achieved the Sportsmark Gold Award, Healthy Schools Award, Investors in People and the ICT Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'We think Thomas Becket is an excellent, brilliant, fantastic, wicked school and we love it!' This was how some of the youngest children described the school and it is typical of the pupils' attitudes. The inspection team agree that the pupils are right to be proud of the school. St Thomas Becket gives its pupils an excellent all-round education in a happy and stimulating environment. It has no major weaknesses.

The pupils develop into mature and likeable youngsters who, in their own words, 'can make sensible decisions for ourselves.' They are keen to come to school and attendance is good. Behaviour and relationships are excellent and pupils work together very well. Pupils are well aware of what to do to stay safe and be healthy. They make very good use of many opportunities for physical exercise, and of the attractive and stimulating outdoor areas. Their views are taken seriously. The school council told the inspection team about improvements the pupils had helped to introduce. The strong partnership with parents contributes to the high quality of education. The Catholic ethos permeates everything the school does. The very good relationship with the local church enhances the school's caring and supportive ethos.

Academic standards are high and pupils make excellent progress. The Foundation Stage gives children a good start. Most start school with average knowledge and skills and, by the end of Reception, almost all have reached the standards expected and very many children have exceeded them. By Year 6 standards are well above average, with a high proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels. Results in writing are not quite as good as those in reading, mathematics and science, particularly for boys. The school made this a priority and standards are rising. Their grasp of basic skills, including information and communication technology (ICT), means that pupils are exceptionally well prepared for secondary school and for later life. Even though the school sets challenging targets, provisional results for 2007 indicate that pupils did better than expected in both English and mathematics.

The consistently good, and often outstanding, teaching leads to highly effective learning. Teachers motivate pupils with challenging, lively and interesting lessons and the pupils respond to the challenge. They want to learn and achieve. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and a good understanding of how children learn. They know their pupils' needs well and, by tracking their progress very effectively, can tackle any difficulties.

The headteacher and senior staff provide very strong leadership and together with staff, governors and parents they are committed to providing a high quality education for each and every pupil. Challenging targets are based on secure knowledge of current performance and thorough evaluation of the school's needs. Senior managers and governors analyse the impact of their decisions to ensure that changes have the desired effect. The school has significantly improved since it was last inspected and it has the capacity to continue to make excellent progress. It provides excellent value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

At the time of the inspection the Reception children had not yet started school. Judgements are therefore based on records and the standards of pupils who have just started Year 1. The inspection findings confirm the school's judgement that the Foundation Stage provides the children with a secure start. A responsive management team identifies and meets the needs of

different year groups so all children make good progress. For example, because two-thirds of the year group were boys last year, additional resources and initiatives were successfully introduced to speed up boys' personal and language development.

The children's introduction to the Reception class is carefully planned and delivered; pupils in Year 1 remember Reception as a safe and happy time. They talked about how they grew flowers and tomatoes for their school community. These children benefited from good teaching and support from dedicated teachers and teaching assistants. Detailed, careful planning and the use of accurate assessments ensure that activities are both interesting and challenging. Good use is made of both the indoor and out door areas, and the full range of well-resourced activities motivated the children to learn. As a result, the great majority of children exceeded the goals expected of them by the time they transferred to Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly for the boys, to match those achieved in reading.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make excellent progress in English, mathematics and science and by Year 6, standards are well above the national average. Pupils learn to read fluently and with understanding, write accurately and are confident and articulate speakers who explain their ideas clearly and use a wide range of vocabulary. The school's own checking of progress showed that in writing, though boys made good, and often very good, progress, they were not reaching the same standard as girls. The school is taking effective action, starting in the Foundation Stage, to deal with this. In mathematics, pupils develop good calculation skills and enjoy using these in problem solving. They use their excellent literacy, numeracy and ICT skills well in other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) or with English as an additional language (EAL) make similar progress to other pupils because their needs are identified quickly and they receive good support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. Pupils understand their own beliefs and learn to respect the values and beliefs of others. They feel valued and respected by staff and respond extremely well both in class and around the school. Pupils say that they treat each other in the way that they like to be treated. They are exceptionally polite and helpful, and welcome visitors with a smile. Pupils of all ages thoroughly enjoy taking responsibilities, for instance as playground buddies, and they carry out their duties sensibly and sensitively. Older pupils give excellent support to younger pupils. Pupils say that there is never any bullying in this school, but they are very clear about what to do should any occur. They collaborate very well with each other when asked to work in pairs or small groups, and they look out for each other in the playground.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The teaching is consistently good and much is outstanding. Teachers create a purposeful and enjoyable working atmosphere where pupils understand what they are expected to achieve, enjoy their learning and are willing to work hard. Teachers challenge pupils to think for themselves. For example, in ICT, they were able to evaluate their own and other pupils' work and in a personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson they were finding solutions to real problems. Reading is very well taught and the current emphasis on writing is raising standards. Number skills are also very well taught and pupils are confident in applying these to solving problems. In all classes, teachers mark work regularly, discuss it with pupils and set targets which they understand. Some written comments also give specific guidance on how are pupils can improve, but this is not done consistently enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets all statutory requirements. Outstanding provision for literacy and numeracy helps pupils' progress in other subjects. The recent emphasis on PSHE is giving new opportunities to challenge pupils' self-awareness and extend their skills. The very effective support and the links with the church enhance the provision for personal and social education, and the curriculum also reflects well the multi-cultural nature of the society in which the pupils live. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about design and technology, and really enjoy using the computer suite. The award of the ICT mark reflects the very good work in this subject. Pupils enjoy the good range of enrichment activities, including sporting activities as well as music, drama and a range of visits to places of interest, and visitors to the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pastoral care throughout the school is outstanding. Pupils are well-known as individuals and very well cared for. The school has surveyed parents' and pupils' opinion and has taken notice of their views. Parents emphasise the family atmosphere that supports their children and makes them feel so welcome. The School Association uses fund raising effectively to enhance the school's facilities, as seen in the superb ICT suite. Safeguarding arrangements including child protection procedures are in place and health and safety issues are well managed. The school is effective in supporting pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles and knowledge of how to stay safe. The staff are analysing a wide range of data from assessment and monitoring and using the information very effectively to set challenging yet achievable targets, and to identify those pupils who need additional support. Pupils are increasingly involved in setting their own targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher, with the other leaders, managers and governors, has a clear vision and determination to help all children to excel. This exceptional leadership is reflected in the major improvements since the last inspection, particularly in raising achievement. As a result of the rigorous monitoring procedures the quality of teaching continues to improve significantly and is now close to being outstanding overall. The staff work very successfully as a dedicated team. Careful, accurate analysis of performance identifies where action is needed. For example, analysis of achievement in recent years revealed lower standards in writing than in other subjects. The action taken has resulted in dramatic improvement this year. However, the school is not complacent; it is working towards raising boys' standards even further.

The governors are closely involved in developing the strategic school improvement plan based on this effective evaluation of performance. This outlines a very clear commitment of what they expect to achieve. They set clear and challenging targets for achievement and standards as well as provision and these targets are usually met. The impact of changes and spending decisions is carefully evaluated. Professional development and additional resources are used very well to establish whole school approaches. This is evident in achieving national accreditation as a 'Healthy School' and in the award of the ICT Mark.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

25 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas Becket Catholic Primary School, London, SE25 5BN

Thank you for your help when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed the two days we spent with you. You were friendly and polite, and obviously wanted to tell us all about the school. We think that you are right to be proud of your school. St Thomas Becket is an outstanding school which is giving you an excellent education.

We were impressed by:

- how much you enjoy school and how well you behave. The way in which you work and play together is excellent. You also treat adults with respect
- the high standards you reach, particularly in English, mathematics and science
- the way teachers make lessons enjoyable and very interesting which encourages you and helps you to work hard
- how hard your headteacher, the staff, the governors and your parents work to make sure you have the best of everything, such as the new ICT suite and the whiteboards in classrooms
- how willing you are to take responsibility for yourselves and others. We liked the way older pupils looked after younger ones.

Even excellent schools can get better and your headteacher and teachers know that your writing is not quite as good as your reading. We have asked them to continue their efforts to improve your writing, particularly for the boys. You can help by making sure that you always take notice of the advice your teachers give you.

We really enjoyed meeting you and listening to your ideas about the school. We are sure you will continue to enjoy school and we wish you well for the future.

Best wishes

Grace Marriott Lead inspector