

# St Thomas Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104919
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sefton
<b>Inspection number</b>	308706
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Allan Torr HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	170
School	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Paul Robinson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs A Lock
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Kenyons Lane Lydiate Liverpool Merseyside L31 0BP
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 531 9955
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 526 6189

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI).

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the quality of teaching and learning; the effectiveness of leadership and management; and provision in the Foundation Stage. Evidence was gathered from brief observations of lessons; discussions with senior managers, governors and pupils; and scrutiny of pupils' work, school documents and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but HMI found evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were justified.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school located in a semi-rural area to the north of Maghull. The vast majority of pupils are White British and a very small proportion is entitled to take free school meals. The proportions of pupils with a statement of special educational needs and with a learning difficulty and/or disability are low. The school is an active initial teacher training partner with Edge Hill University and Lancashire and Cumbria Graduate Training Consortium. The school achieved Healthy School status in 2007 and renewed its Active Mark in 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

St Thomas' has made significant progress since the last inspection and is now an outstanding school. Parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the high standard of education and care. This is certainly justified. Relative to their broadly average starting points, pupils make outstanding progress. They get off to a good start in the Reception class and in Key Stage 1, so that by the time they leave Year 2, their standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. This good progress is sustained in Key Stage 2. Standards have risen in each of the last five years. By the time pupils leave Year 6 they attain exceptionally high standards in English, mathematics and science. In the 2007 national tests, almost every pupil gained the expected Level 4 in English and almost three quarters attained the higher Level 5. Standards are similarly high in science, with 83% attaining Level 5. Standards in some foundation subjects, such as geography and history, are not as high. This is because subject leaders are not always monitoring as rigorously as they could to ensure that standards in these subjects are high.

Pupils enjoy school because teaching and learning are exciting and engaging. Teachers make good use of a range of resources such as interactive whiteboards, practical mathematics equipment, puppets and individual whiteboards to extend pupils' understanding. Activities, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, are purposeful, based on real situations and very well matched to each individual's needs. Learning is active. Through short tasks, songs and constant engagement, pupils take a full and involved role in each lesson. The quality of teachers' questioning is outstanding and this enables pupils to reach the very high expectations that are set for them. Carefully selected intervention programmes ensure that every pupil is challenged and encouraged to succeed. Well qualified and skilful teaching assistants support individuals effectively. Academic guidance is good. Teachers provide useful tips in their marking which enable pupils to know exactly what they need to do to improve. Most pupils know what level they are working at and what they should achieve.

The curriculum is good and is enriched and by a wide range of additional activities, both within school and through out-of-school clubs. Similarly, the school makes good use of interesting and exciting visits and visitors to expand pupils' knowledge and experience of the world. Year 5 and 6 pupils attend an annual residential activity centre and greater use is being made of local resources such as the Sefton Coast in a geography topic in Year 4. There is very good provision for information and communication technology and physical education; these are strengths of the school. There are a few opportunities for pupils to learn a modern foreign language, but these are as yet not extensive. Pupils benefit from links with a high school and also from the very good links with Edge Hill University; for example, it has trained some of the school's teaching assistants to a high level.

Pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is good, aided by productive links with the local church. They behave well and are respectful, polite and well mannered young people. Boys and girls work very well together and all pupils articulate their views confidently and listen carefully to the views of others. There is very little bullying and no recorded racist or homophobic incidents because pupils treat one another in the way in which they would like to be treated. Consequently, pupils feel safe and free from harassment. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe. They are aware of hazards in and around the school and have some idea of Internet safety. Pupils have an outstanding understanding of how to keep healthy, both within and outside the school. Most pupils take advantage of the fruit, vegetables and water provided by the school and take part in physical activities at break time, making very good use of the

play equipment. Pupils' contribution to the local and worldwide community is outstanding. In addition to the school and eco council, pupils take on a full range of roles in the school such as playground patrollers and peer mediation. Worthwhile suggestions about how to improve provision within the school are taken seriously by staff. As a result they feel valued and empowered to influence key decisions, such as the appointment of a new headteacher in April 2007.

Care, guidance and support are good. Systems and procedures to safeguard pupils are in place and meet government guidelines and regulations. The school works very well with outside agencies such as social services and the local authority behaviour support team to protect pupils. There are high levels of supervision at break times and few accidents. Newly established systems to monitor and review risk assessments and policies are having a positive impact on the rigour of health and safety procedures. Transition and induction arrangements are good and this leads to pupils maintaining their academic progress as they move between classes and key stages. Although attendance rates are only around the national average, the school in liaison with the education welfare officer has introduced some good initiatives, such as a presentation to parents and pupils entitled 'attendance matters' to encourage them not to take pupils out of school in term time. This is slowly beginning to have an impact.

Leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher and senior leaders give very clear direction and focus to the school. They are supported by an able and committed staff team. Four teachers have left in the last two years and four new teachers have started. One teacher is on extended sickness absence. Throughout the recent changes, disruption to pupils' learning has been kept to a minimum and this is a credit to the school. A few subject leaders do not monitor teaching and learning in their subjects. As a result, standards in a small number of foundation subjects, such as geography and history, are not as high as they are in other subjects. The school is outward looking and always willing to take on best practice, working very well, for example with colleagues from high schools and partner schools in the local cluster. Governors are knowledgeable and well informed about the school and provide good support and positive challenge to staff. They have a strategic view of the quality of what the school does and about its future direction. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. It provides excellent value for money and has an outstanding capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children enter the Reception class with skills that are broadly typical for this age. They make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world and their mathematical, creative and physical development with the result that by the end of the Foundation Stage most pupils have reached the early learning goals and some have exceeded them. However, children's communication, language and literacy skills are less well developed by the time they enter Year 1. There is an effective balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities. Children are actively involved in influencing the curriculum. For example, after setting up a role play garden centre, they decided to sell plants to parents and to learn more about growing plants and flowers. Teaching and learning time is maximised and very good use is made of the excellent outdoor area.

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

- Develop the role of subject leaders to improve standards and teaching and learning, particularly in history and geography.
- Develop the curriculum further to provide opportunities for all Key Stage 2 pupils to learn a modern foreign language.

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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 <sup>1</sup> 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	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	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.



## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
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 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	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**

Inspection of St Thomas' Church of England Primary School, Liverpool,  
L31 0BP

Thank you for giving me such a warm welcome. I really enjoyed talking to you and finding out about your school.

Your school is outstanding. That means that it is one of the best in the country and you are right to be so proud of it! You make excellent progress and reach standards that are well above average for children nationally; that is because many of your lessons are outstanding. Your teachers work very hard to make learning exciting and interesting. You are very well prepared for your future lives and make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community.

Even schools that are outstanding have some things that they could improve. I have asked your teachers to build on the French lessons in Year 3 so that everyone in Key Stage 2 can learn to speak a modern foreign language. I have also asked the school to develop the ways that teachers lead subjects.

I wish you all the very best of luck for the future.