

St Thomas Moorside CofE (VA) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105695
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	308923
Inspection date	11 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Colin Smith

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	160
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Eric Crompton
Headteacher	Mr Adam Laskey
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Coleridge Road Sholver Oldham Lancashire OL1 4RL
Telephone number	161 6249290
Fax number	161 6204706

Age group	3-11
Inspection date	11 June 2008
Inspection number	308923

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The following issues were investigated: pupils' achievement, particularly in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics; the impact of teaching and additional support upon pupils' learning and personal development; and the extent to which leaders check the work of the school to raise standards. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, pupils' work, discussions with staff, governors and pupils and a scrutiny of school documents and questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average in size. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and entitled to a free school meal are both well above average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small number are from Asian, African or mixed backgrounds but none of these pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English. Movement of families into and out of some year groups is higher than it is in most schools. The school is undergoing a period of staff changes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Thomas' is a good school with outstanding features. The quality of education, the standards achieved and pupils' behaviour have improved enormously since the previous inspection. The headteacher's personal contribution in turning the school around and winning the respect of the local community has been outstanding. The headteacher and staff have established an exemplary level of care, guidance and support in which pupils are highly valued. By forging excellent links with parents and health professionals to ensure that pupils are safe, and working tirelessly to remove any barriers to learning, the doors are now open for all pupils to succeed. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their behaviour, sense of responsibility, understanding and respect of other cultures and appreciation of safe and healthy lifestyles, are all excellent. Attendance is satisfactory and rising well. The school provides a curriculum of the highest quality. All subjects are covered in depth, enabling pupils to acquire good study skills. The quality of artwork is stunning. Pupils derive immense enjoyment from the topics they study and from the excellent variety of additional activities. Parents' support and appreciation of the work of the school is universal. Comments such as, 'Children really enjoy school.', 'They are very well cared for' and 'The school is a credit to the community', typify parents' views.

Pupils achieve well overall. Standards are low when children begin school. Children begin the Foundation Stage with levels of personal development below those typical for their age, they get off to a good start and make good progress. They make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2, where the level of challenge in lessons is not always sufficient to enable the more able pupils to reach the higher levels of which they are capable. This is why standards in Key Stage 1 have remained below average in reading, writing and mathematics in five of the previous six years. Standards can be occasionally adversely affected by pupils joining the school during the year, particularly if their attainment is low. This is what happened in Year 2 in 2007 and explains why standards appeared very low in all subjects.

From Year 3 onwards, pupils' progress accelerates and is particularly good in English and science. Standards in these subjects are average and rising at a good rate. Achievement in mathematics from Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory although standards were below average in 2007. Decisive action taken to improve pupils' calculation and problem-solving skills is making a difference and progress in mathematics in Year 6 has improved. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds make good progress overall.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. A very positive climate for learning has been established in every class. Pupils are extremely well managed and lessons move along briskly, which keeps them on their toes. Teachers use imaginative approaches and provide valuable practical experiences, which engage pupils' attention and illuminate their understanding. Teachers ensure that pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn and set clear targets for them to aim for. The process is exemplary in writing where pupils are becoming very skilled in assessing their own learning, not least because teachers show them exactly how to improve when marking their work. This is fuelling rapid improvements in standards of writing. In most lessons, teachers use assessment well to probe pupils' understanding and to set tasks that are closely matched to their different learning needs. This enables all pupils to learn successfully, particularly where additional support is also provided. The needs of the more able pupils are consistently recognised and provided for in Key Stage 2 lessons, where the higher level of challenge ensures that they are able to fulfil their potential. In the most successful lessons

teachers are quick to recognise and clear up any misunderstanding before moving pupils on to the next step. Asking pupils to hold up white boards to show their answers and checking their written work for errors greatly helps in the process.

The quality of leadership and management is good. Leadership is ambitious and at the same time sensitive to the views of pupils, parents and staff. Consequently, a shared vision and collective determination has developed amongst school leaders, which gives the school its good capacity for improvement and drives forward its quest for excellence. The work of the school is carefully checked. Assessments are thoroughly analysed to ensure that wherever progress falters, swift action is taken to put pupils back on track. Lessons are regularly observed and this is helping senior leaders to ensure that pupils continue to learn effectively during a period of staff changes. The excellent displays and the work in pupils' books are frequently examined to enable senior leaders to evaluate how the curriculum is being taught and received. Such approaches have led to the setting of challenging targets, which have inspired a marked rise in standards in Year 6 over recent years. The school judges all aspects of its work to be outstanding, partly because of sustained high achievement in Key Stage 2 and the remarkable improvements made since the previous inspection. However, there is still more to do to raise achievement and standards in Years 1 and 2 before all aspects of the school's work can be judged as outstanding.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children enter the Nursery with knowledge and skills well below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception class. By the end of the Foundation Stage children's attainment has improved but is still below that expected for their age. Teaching and learning in this part of school are good. A good balance is maintained between activities led by adults and those chosen by children themselves. Consequently, children learn basic skills such as counting and recognising letter sounds successfully. They also gain confidence in exploring and learning for themselves, for example, in pretending to be characters in a story. High levels of care are provided. Children are safe and secure. They settle quickly into daily routines and behave very well. Any learning difficulties are quickly diagnosed and action is taken to support the children and their families. Children soon become eager learners because of stimulating experiences, such as making model rockets and programming instructions to operate electronic toys. Throughout these activities adults encourage children to express their ideas, which make a valuable contribution to their early language development. The quality of leadership and management of the Foundation Stage is good. This is reflected in the way children's progress is assessed and recorded and the information used to provide the next learning steps.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the challenge in Years 1 and 2 to raise achievement and standards in Key Stage 1.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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

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?	1
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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Inspection of St Thomas Moorside CofE (VA) Primary School, Oldham,

OL1 4RL

Thank you for welcoming me to your school and answering my questions so politely and helpfully. I would like to share my findings with you.

Those of you I spoke to were very proud of the school and described it as, 'the best'. I agree with you, St Thomas is a good school. Some things are excellent, such as the way teachers and support staff take care of you, help you when you face difficulties and show you how to improve. Your school also provides an extremely good curriculum, not only in subjects such as a literacy and numeracy, but also in art, design and technology, music and physical education. There are also lots of extra activities provided after school. Many of you explained that this is why you find school so enjoyable. I was impressed by your behaviour, your interest in learning and the care you show towards each other. All of these aspects of your personal development are outstanding. It is also good to see attendance improving so well.

Teaching is good. Lessons are interesting and the work provided helps you to learn successfully. This is why children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception unit and make good progress later, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Standards in your school have been rising well and are now average by the end of Year 6. Standards in mathematics are improving and catching up to those in English and science. Your school is well led and managed. Everything that happens is carefully checked and staff are always trying to improve your progress. Mr Laskey has worked extremely hard to make your school successful but, of course, your parents already know that.

To make your school even better I have asked your teachers to try to help children in Years 1 and 2 to make as much progress as those in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6. This will help to raise standards further in reading, writing and mathematics for children aged seven. You can help by completing your homework and trying to reach the targets that teachers set for you.