

St Thomas' Leesfield CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105714
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	308930
Inspection date	5 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Mark Madeley

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	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs E Dent
Headteacher	Mrs K Smith
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2004
School address	Thomas Street Lees Oldham Lancashire OL4 5AT
Telephone number	0161 624 5152
Fax number	0161 624 5152

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the impact of the school's leadership and management and the teachers' work on pupils' current progress and standards, and on their personal development and well-being. Evidence was gathered from: the school's self-evaluation; national published assessment data and the school's records of pupils' progress; lesson observations; interviews with staff, pupils and the chair of the governing body; the school's policy documents; parents' 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

This is an average sized primary school. The vast majority of its pupils are of White British heritage. About half of the pupils live in Lees. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. In line with the national average, 16% of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities varies significantly from class to class. The school has been awarded the Activemark for its work in sports, the Healthy Schools Award for its promotion of healthy living and the Silver Eco Award for pupils' work on recycling. The school has experienced staffing difficulties over the past few years. Extensive building work is ongoing around the school site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. It has several good features, for example, in pupils' behaviour and their enjoyment of school, the Foundation Stage and in the recently introduced system of learning targets for pupils. These targets are helping pupils strive to do better and to improve their work.

Senior managers know the school and its current development well. They have put in place strategies which provide them with key data about school performance and have made good use of this to ensure that pupils' progress through the school is now more uniform. They and subject coordinators check teaching in a variety of ways and this is beginning to have an impact on pupils' learning. The governing body is supportive of the school and watchful over finances. On occasions, they have not held the school to account sufficiently well regarding the monitoring of standards, particularly in mathematics. The headteacher and the governing body have addressed all the key issues from the last inspection. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. It gives satisfactory value for money.

The achievement of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is satisfactory. Their attainment when they start Year 1 is in line with national expectations across all six areas of learning, though their writing skills are weaker because many start from a very low baseline on entry to the Reception class. Staff, with the effective support of parents, build on the skills acquired in the Foundation Stage through the good teaching of letter sounds and by ensuring that pupils have daily opportunities to read. In recent years, standards by the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics have risen markedly to an average level. Current standards in the key stage are below average due to staffing instability and work in mathematics lessons that is too easy for some pupils. This has led to the more able pupils not making the progress they are capable of. Standards in writing have declined too because pupils have not experienced a consistent approach to developing their skills through the year. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science in the national tests have been average for four years. Progress in English has been consistently good but much stronger in reading than in writing. In the current Year 6 standards are average. Pupils make particularly good progress in Year 6 because the teaching here is consistently good. Relationships are very positive and questioning is used very effectively to encourage pupils to explain their reasoning and further their understanding of a particular subject. In the other Key Stage 2 classes teaching, and pupils' subsequent progress, is satisfactory. In these classes the pace of learning is slow, questioning is not used as effectively as in Year 6 and too often tasks set do not challenge the thinking of the most able, particularly in mathematics.

Pupils enjoy school. They feel that the staff support them well and provide them with interesting activities. They like the practical approach to history and recall in detail dressing up as Tudors and Vikings. Pupils also talk enthusiastically about visits to the computer learning centre, where they get the opportunity to use advanced computer equipment and develop their skills. Music and a modern foreign language are very positive features of the curriculum and enhance pupils' learning and experiences. The new writing programme has yet to be fully effective in raising standards and too little is done to extend the most able pupils, particularly, in mathematics. The curriculum is satisfactory overall.

The pupils skip at playtimes and choose carefully from the salad bar for lunch, which is an indication of their good understanding of how to stay fit and well. Pupils help each other and

the staff particularly well. There is a positive 'family atmosphere', which is commented upon favourably by pupils and parents. Pupils are very active in the school council and having their request met for the toilets to be refurbished is their most recent success. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe.

Procedures to reward regular attendance are having an impact, although a winter 'bug' laid many pupils low and consequently attendance is average. The school's procedures for the care, guidance and support of pupils are good. Induction into the Reception class and transition to secondary school are well managed to enable pupils to settle quickly. Safeguarding procedures are in place. The school holds pupils' safety and well-being as its highest priorities. Senior management and governors are aware of, and are acting upon, parental concerns regarding pupils' well-being during the ongoing building work.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage because teaching meets their needs effectively. They start school with skills below those expected nationally. Language skills are particularly weak, for example children have limited knowledge of early reading activities like traditional tales and rhymes. A good induction programme, praised by parents, helps children settle quickly. The teaching of letter sounds is strong and enables children to start reading quickly and successfully. The 'mark making' and early writing programme is not quite so strong and children make satisfactory progress in this aspect. Good opportunities are taken to improve children's counting skills, for example they count the straws during 'milk time'. Children are confident and have positive relationships with each other and with staff. Their behaviour is particularly good. Staff make adequate use of the outdoor area, which is significantly restricted during current building work. Senior managers effectively check the work of all staff.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teachers' questioning so that pupils further their understanding.
- Ensure that tasks set for the most able, particularly, in mathematics are sufficiently challenging to meet their learning needs fully.
- Raise standards in writing, particularly in Key Stage 1.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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	3

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	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of St Thomas' Leesfield C of E Primary School, Oldham, OL4 5AT

Thank you for making me so welcome during my recent inspection of your school. It was good to see how confident and friendly you were when talking to me. You clearly enjoy school, particularly the good range of visits staff take you on. Those pupils with responsibilities like prefects, school councillors and play leaders take their roles very seriously and do a good job for other pupils. You behave very well in class and show that you are keen to learn by working hard at the tasks set.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education and helps you make satisfactory progress in your learning. The quality of teaching varies from satisfactory to good in the different year groups. Your headteacher recognises this and is working to ensure that it is good in all classes.

I have asked your headteacher and staff to do three things which will help your school be a better place in which to learn.

- Ask questions in lessons which make you explain your thinking or how you got your answer.
- Make sure that the tasks you get are challenging enough for those who learn quickly, especially in mathematics lessons.
- Improve the quality of writing, particularly in Key Stage 1.

You can help by continuing to attend regularly, being attentive to your teachers and working hard at the tasks set for you. Once again, thank you for your help in conducting the inspection. I wish you and the school well for the future.