

# St Thomas Church of England Primary School Stockport

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106109
<b>Local Authority</b>	Stockport
<b>Inspection number</b>	309031
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Stephen Wall

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	125
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Mike Eveson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jill Gray
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 June 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Marriott Street Stockport Cheshire SK1 3PJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 4804742

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 March 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	309031

**Fax number**

0161 4770662

<b>Age group</b>	3-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school serving an urban area of very significant social and economic challenge. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is very high. Most pupils are of White British heritage, although a few are from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds and speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is well above average. Far more pupils than normal join and leave the school at times other than normal. The school has experienced quite severe staffing disruption recently owing to several staff moving to promoted posts in other schools and instances of extended absence through illness. The school holds the Activemark and Inclusion Quality Mark awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. The level of care, guidance and support it provides is outstanding. Exceptionally strong links with outside agencies provide outstanding support for the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have significant barriers to successful learning. The highly effective support they receive ensures that these pupils, like all the others, make good progress as they move up through the school. Pupils achieve well because teaching is good and adults are strongly committed to making sure pupils get the best possible start to their education. Adults treat pupils with deep respect; in return, pupils develop into respectful and polite young people whose behaviour is never less than good in classrooms and around the school. This is a happy school in which children's enjoyment is seen on their smiling faces and frequent laughter. Parents are happy with the education and care the school provides. 'I am very pleased with my child's progress. He really enjoys school,' was a typical comment. Recent staffing disruptions have had little discernible impact on the school's effectiveness. This has been achieved by the headteacher's skilful deployment of staff, very good support from the local authority and because high quality teaching assistants have helped provide continuity and stability.

Children's starting points on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage vary from year to year ranging from below those normally expected in some cohorts, to well below in others. Pupils make good progress as they move up through the school to reach broadly average standards overall by the end of Year 6. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils and build on good relationships to give pupils the confidence and desire to do well. Lessons are well planned but provide too few opportunities to allow pupils to question, explore and investigate independently. The school has worked successfully to improve pupils' reading and writing skills. However, their speaking skills are still not as developed and frequently act as a brake on learning. Too many pupils struggle to express their thoughts and ideas coherently because too often teachers accept brief or one word answers which do not encourage pupils' use of spoken language. Good teaching is supported by a good curriculum. Pupils enjoy the frequent trips out to museums and concerts, for example; these broaden pupils' horizons and make a significant contribution to their personal development and learning.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. They show the right balance between respect and inquisitiveness. By the time they leave, most pupils are mature and self-confident young people who are well prepared for the future. Pupils are very tolerant of those who are different. They enjoy working together in groups and pairs. They are keen to help classmates who are struggling with their work. Pupils say how safe they feel in school because adults are always on hand to help them and care for them.

The headteacher provides highly effective leadership. Consequently, the school is crystal clear about what it stands for and how to achieve its aims. Good management means that expectations are made explicit so that middle managers, many of whom are new to post, are secure in their roles and know what is expected of them. Staff morale is high and good levels of teamwork in pursuit of further improvement are obvious. The fact that standards and achievement have been maintained despite staffing disruption testifies to the quality of leadership and management and the firm foundations on which the school is built. As a result, its capacity to improve is good.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The quality of education in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children's starting points are consistently below those expected and frequently well below. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, standards are either close to expected levels or below for lowest attaining cohorts; this represents good progress. Good teaching and very effective links with outside agencies to support more vulnerable children mean children feel safe, grow in confidence and behave well. They enjoy their learning in a stimulating and nurturing environment. Children work well together. They move smoothly and safely from one activity to the next. A good balance is maintained between teaching children new skills and encouraging them to explore independently within all areas of learning. Attractive and well-planned outdoor provision is used well to extend their learning. Teaching assistants provide effective support to the high proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and to those who are vulnerable so that they, too, make good progress. The Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator has been unavoidably absent for some time. However, just as in the main school, the solid foundations already laid have allowed the work of the Early Years Foundation Stage to continue unabated. Staff new to post and those on temporary appointments have done sterling work to make sure the children continue to get off to a good start and make good progress.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that pupils have more opportunities to question, explore and investigate independently.
- Improve pupils' speaking skills so that they are more comfortable in expressing their ideas and confident in giving extended answers to questions.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

From below or well below starting points, pupils make good progress. Standards by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics vary from year to year depending on the ability profile and size of different year groups. For example, in 2007, end of Key Stage 2 assessments were below average while in 2008, they were at the national average. In Key Stage 2, standards have been rising in recent years as seen in the Year 6 results in national tests, which were at the national average in 2008 in English, mathematics and science for the proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels. Demanding targets were met. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels has also been on an upward trend, although the proportion is below the national average because there are relatively few higher attaining pupils in each cohort. Results in English have seen a significant upturn following the school's concerted efforts to improve pupils' reading and writing skills. All groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as they move up through the school. The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language receive good support and make good progress.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils say how much they enjoy coming to school. Most attend regularly. Despite this, overall attendance is below average, despite the schools' determined efforts to ensure that parents and pupils understand the need to attend regularly. However the attendance rate does reflect

the fact that relatively small numbers of absentees have a disproportionate statistical impact in this small school. In addition, above average numbers of pupils leave the school during the school year, often without notice. They stay on the school's roll as absentees until their whereabouts are known – sometimes this can take several weeks. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. They know the difference between right and wrong. They behave sensibly and respectfully. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and trust teachers to help them deal with any problems. They know the importance of healthy lifestyles and the ways to keep themselves safe; many take part in the programme of sporting enrichment activities. Pupils have opportunities to take on responsibilities in school by becoming playground leaders and buddies, for example. The school council meets regularly but so far has only had limited impact on actually improving the school and its facilities. The school prepares pupils well for the future. Pupils' levels of literacy, numeracy and skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are improving providing pupils with a firm foundation for the next stages in their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and make good progress. Teaching assistants are deployed skilfully. They are very able and have a major impact on helping the large numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Strong relationships are at the heart of teaching and learning. As a result, pupils behave well and grow in confidence as learners. Teaching is usually conducted at a good pace. ICT is used effectively to add extra interest and variety to the tasks pupils are set to do. Pupils are eager to contribute to lessons but, occasionally, teachers ask questions that require only simple answers; this does not encourage pupils' skills at expressing themselves or developing their ideas orally. Teachers mark pupils' written work regularly and conscientiously. Their comments are consistently helpful in showing pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum meets individuals' needs. It is well planned to develop pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Teachers are well on the road to developing exciting links across subjects to make pupils' learning more meaningful. Where this has been introduced, pupils' levels of enjoyment are very high. The school is keen to develop further opportunities for pupils to explore their own learning and develop their skills as independent learners by setting more open-ended tasks for pupils to research on their own. The range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities is very wide. Participation rates are high. Regular trips out to local museums and theatres as well as trips abroad and residential trips extend pupils' horizons, add enjoyment and help motivate pupils to develop into well-rounded individuals. Key Stage 2 pupils particularly enjoy learning French. The after-school French club is very popular and includes an exciting, if somewhat messy, introduction to French cooking!

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

Every child matters in this school, regardless of background or ability. Inclusion and equality are a high priority in the school. To that end the school has forged exceptionally successful links with outside agencies to support the high proportion of pupils with significant barriers to successful learning. The impact is seen in pupils' maturity and in the good progress they make. The learning mentor and behaviour mentor also provide expert support to vulnerable pupils and their families. For example, some pupils are collected from home in the morning when parents or carers are unable to get them ready for school. This is a telling example of how deeply the school cares for the welfare and attendance of its pupils. Procedures and policies for safeguarding children are in place. Health and safety are taken very seriously. Risk assessments are comprehensive and clear. The school's systems for tracking pupils' progress are effective. They enable any underachievement to be identified early and nipped in the bud. Pupils know their targets and most understand fully what they need to do to achieve them.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher provides very effective leadership and a clear vision for the school's further development. Strong leadership has provided stability and maintained the focus on improvement during recent staffing disruption. Morale is high and teamwork is evident in the pursuit of improvement. Many middle managers are new to post and are 'feeling their way'. However, they are enthusiastic and clear about their roles and responsibilities. Achievement and standards have been maintained and improved in recent years. The school seeks the views of a range of stakeholders including pupils and parents to help it evaluate its effectiveness. As a result, leaders and managers know what the school's strengths are and where it could improve further. The school's impact on community cohesion is satisfactory overall. Pupils enjoy making contributions to the smooth running of the school. They also show good levels of understanding and respect for other religions and cultures, the pupils are eager to develop their knowledge and understanding of the lives of the pupils in their link school in Botswana. However, the school's involvement in the local community is satisfactory. For example, the school's links with parents are encouraged but so far, only limited success has been achieved in involving parents more effectively in the life of the school. Governors are becoming more effective. Always supportive, they are now asking more relevant questions about the work of the school to hold it more rigorously to account.



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## Annex A

**Inspection judgements**

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<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>	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
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	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## 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 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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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	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' Church of England Primary School Stockport, Stockport, SK1 3PJ

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school to inspect it recently. I really enjoyed meeting you and talking with many of you. What you told me was very helpful to me in reaching my judgements.

You go to a good school. The adults working with you provide you with excellent care, guidance and support. They help all of you make good progress as you move up through the school. All the adults working with you really want you to do your best and you are not disappointing them. They are providing you with interesting lessons and you are working hard to take advantage of them. Everyone in your school is important. It does not matter whether you find learning easy or if you find it difficult; your school does not give up on you. I was very pleased to see how well you behave and how well you all get along together in classes and on the playground. You are also very polite and respectful to adults and each other - well done! There have been a lot of staffing changes in your school recently. Some of you have had many different teachers, as you know. Your headteacher has worked very hard to make sure that this has not interfered with your education and has succeeded. You have played an important part in this by showing patience and understanding and carrying on working hard.

To make your school even more successful I am asking it to do these things:

- make sure that you have more opportunities to question, explore and investigate on your own so that you get used to learning independently
- help you to improve your speaking skills so that you are able to answer questions more confidently and thoughtfully.

I am confident that you will continue to work hard to make sure your school goes from strength to strength in future.