

The Saint Thomas' Church of England Primary School, Boston

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120546
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	313663
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Jones

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	387
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steven Brown
Headteacher	Mr Mark Millinson
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2003
School address	Wyberton Low Road Boston Lincolnshire PE21 7RZ
Telephone number	01205362860
Fax number	01205362496

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average and serves local pupils, nearly all of whom are from White British backgrounds. A small proportion of pupils have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Attainment on entry to Reception is broadly that expected for children of this age. The proportion of pupils who have additional learning needs is below average. There are thirteen pupils with a statement of special educational need, with seven of these pupils supported by the hearing-impaired unit based at the school. The school has gained the National Healthy Schools and Sports Active Mark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education. It has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and knows what to do to improve. A very large majority of parents are strongly supportive of the school. They say that their children enjoy school and this is reflected in their positive attitudes to learning and the good relationships between teachers and pupils. The school has consistently given high priority to pupils' personal, social and emotional development, and provides very effective pastoral care and support. Consequently, pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils behave well and respect their teachers and friends.

Although there is some inconsistency between years, standards are broadly average and are beginning to improve after a period of decline. The school has been successful in raising standards in mathematics this year, but recognises the need for further attention to standards of writing. Currently, pupils are making satisfactory progress. Although there are some instances of good and sometimes outstanding teaching, a significant amount is satisfactory. Not enough attention is given to sharing good practice to improve teaching. Learning is good when work is well matched to the needs of all pupils. However, in some classes pupil assessment information is not used well enough to ensure that the work challenges all pupils, especially the more able.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their spiritual development is outstanding, reflecting the Christian ethos of the school, and pupils demonstrate a strong respect for the needs of others. Pupils understand clear moral and social codes, and respond well to the opportunities given to support each other. School councillors speak proudly of their contribution and commitment to promoting healthier lifestyles and improving the school's environment. These positive social attitudes, together with their achievement in lessons, give pupils a satisfactory grounding for their future learning. Pupils show a good awareness of how to keep safe and know how to maintain good health through correct eating habits and exercise. The care, guidance and support pupils receive is good overall. Most pupils know their targets and say that these help them to improve their work.

The curriculum offers a good range of experiences, after school activities, visits and visitors. Recent improvements to planning have resulted in more stimulating activities with closer links established between subjects. The curriculum is satisfactory but the improvements recently introduced have not had time to fully impact on pupils' progress.

A renewed emphasis on improving standards and achievement has provided a fresh impetus to the school's work. Governors have an increasing knowledge of the school and provide a satisfactory level of challenge to the headteacher and senior staff. Leadership at all levels is improving, and is having a satisfactory impact on standards and achievement. Consequently, leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start to their education and the Foundation Stage provides a good quality of education, personal development and care. Progress is good and many children are exceeding the nationally expected levels this year, although standards in early writing skills are not as high as in other aspects. Pupils emerge as confident and independent learners. They have enjoyable and rewarding experiences in which they explore, investigate, discover, create, revise and consolidate their developing skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes. All these

aspects of learning are brought together through good teaching and a well-planned and managed curriculum, which meets children's needs effectively. Reading development is a particular strength. There are good links with parents to support learning and inform them about their children's progress. Foundation Stage management is good and takes effective steps to ensure that the quality of provision is improving. Resources and accommodation are also good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in writing across the school.
- Raise the level of challenge in lessons, particularly for more able pupils.
- Share the best practice that exists to improve the overall quality and consistency of teaching across the school.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although there is some inconsistency between years, standards are broadly average and are beginning to improve after a decline in 2007. In the 2007 national assessments, standards at Year 2 were below average in reading and mathematics and well below in writing. At Year 6, standards were below average in mathematics and science and above in English. Over the past year, the school has successfully implemented a number of initiatives to raise pupils' achievement, particularly in mathematics, where standards are now average at Key Stage 1 and above average at Key Stage 2. Standards in writing have also improved, although the school recognises that there is further work to be done. Standards are now broadly average in most year groups and pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Pupils who find learning more difficult or who are learning English receive effective support and make good progress. Those pupils with a hearing impairment are supported well and also make good progress. However, the proportions of pupils who reach higher than average standards in all year groups are lower than expected.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding because of opportunities to explore values, beliefs and feelings within the school's strong Christian ethos. Pupils' moral and social development is good. Cultural development has improved and pupils now have a satisfactory understanding of living in a multi-cultural society. Pupils feel well prepared to be good citizens in the school and local community. Bullying and racism rarely occur and pupils feel safe and free from any form of harassment. Pupils enjoy participating in exercise and other features of healthy living. Pupils' enjoyment of lessons is good, especially when the newly reworked curriculum is taught effectively. Attendance has steadily improved over time and is good, reflecting an effective range of follow-up procedures to promote improvement. As pupils move through the school, they show good personal qualities and increasing maturity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, leading to pupils' satisfactory progress. Teachers enjoy good relationships with their pupils and these promote a positive attitude to learning. Throughout the school, teachers manage pupils well, which leads to calm, orderly classes. In the best lessons, work is well matched to the needs of all the pupils and meaningful activities are taught at a brisk pace. For example, Year 4 pupils successfully wrote persuasive letters to the headteacher to enlist his help in the development of a butterfly area in the school, thus enhancing the school environment and protecting wildlife. However, this good teaching is not consistent and in less successful lessons, the pace is often slow and pupils' work is not sufficiently challenging, especially for the more able. Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils who find learning difficult or who are learning English. As a result, these pupils make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets all the statutory requirements. The reworked curriculum is at an early stage of implementation. Good examples of subjects taught together were seen in several classes. Pupils very much enjoy this mixture of activities that make learning fun and more exciting. Teachers are working to ensure that each subject is taught for an appropriate amount of time. Pupils' literacy skills are developed in a satisfactory manner, but pupils' writing skills are not used widely enough across different subjects. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum is effectively enhanced by a number of visits and visitors, which help to enrich and enliven learning. Many rewarding clubs and activities are well supported and benefit pupils' personal development very well, especially in the arts, sports and health aspects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

High quality pastoral care is provided in this supportive school in which pupils are happy. Pupils have great confidence in the support available should they ever feel troubled. The 'learning mentor' supports vulnerable pupils well and this helps improve learning and provides a better quality of school life for them. There are close links with external agencies to support pupils with additional learning needs, and pupils with hearing impairments are well supported. The procedures for health and safety are adequate. Pupils with medical conditions are well catered for and they are well looked after when they are ill or injured. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils, child protection and for looked after children meet requirements. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Although pupils are aware of how they are performing, they are not always set challenging targets and guided on how to achieve higher standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has created a very positive ethos, and he is well supported by the senior team. There is an increasing emphasis on improving standards and achievement. Senior leaders are becoming more actively involved in checking the progress made by pupils and monitoring more precisely areas for improvement in learning. Consequently, they are increasing their knowledge of the school and what needs to be improved. The new procedures for tracking pupils' progress provide leaders with more information to monitor their achievements. However, the information is not used well enough to analyse the progress of classes and groups of pupils as they move from year to year. Successful teaching methods are not shared enough across the school to improve teaching. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have a growing understanding of how to interpret information on pupils' progress, and they are providing an increasing level of challenge to the school for raising standards and achievement.

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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?	2
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	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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

4 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The St Thomas CE Primary School, Boston, PE21 7RZ

Thank you for making our recent visit to your school such a pleasant experience. We enjoyed visiting your lessons, looking at your books, and talking with you and your teachers. We were very impressed with your attitudes and behaviour. You are polite, well mannered and get on very well together. The teachers and other adults care for you well. They are very kind and helpful and want you all to be safe, healthy and happy.

You are making satisfactory progress in school, and we could see that you enjoy some lessons very much, especially when they are interesting and challenging. However, some of you, especially those who are already doing well could do even better. I have asked the headteacher to ensure that the work you are set is matched very carefully to what you have already learned so that you can make even better progress.

You are getting better at writing. I have asked your teachers to give you lots of interesting and challenging work to improve your writing further. You can help by continuing to check what you have written and by listening to your teachers' advice.

There is some very effective teaching at your school, I have asked teachers to share their good ideas with each other to help you make better progress and reach even higher standards.

We shall take away many good memories of your happy school and have very much enjoyed the time we have spent with you. Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly.

With best wishes for the future

Ian Jones

Lead inspector