

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100357
Local Authority	Hammersmith and Fulham
Inspection number	323263
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Kay Charlton

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	302
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
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Price
Headteacher	Miss Joanne Doonan
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Estcourt Road Fulham London SW6 7HB
Telephone number	020 7385 8165

Age group	4–11
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Fax number

020 7385 0918

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Thomas of Canterbury is a larger than average primary school. Most pupils come from Catholic families. The percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal is well above average. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Around thirty different languages are spoken with the most predominant being Portuguese. A significant number of pupils are at the early stages of speaking English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and many of these are associated with speech and language. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is made up of two Reception classes. The school has achieved Artsmark Bronze, Healthy Schools, Sports Activemark and Investors in People awards. A new headteacher took up post in September 2008.

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 of Canterbury is a good school where pupils learn Christian values in an environment that reflects the very wide range of their cultural backgrounds. Pupils' personal development is outstanding, as is the care, guidance and support they receive. Parents are overwhelmingly delighted with the school. As one commented, 'My daughter's success is down to the great support and dedication of staff.'

Pupils of different backgrounds and abilities achieve well because of good teaching and learning. Standards are average by the end of Year 6 and this represents good progress, given pupils' below average starting points on entry. Staff work well as a team and they use praise very effectively to improve pupils' concentration and behaviour. Teachers plan lessons carefully, and make good use of resources, including interactive whiteboards, to make learning fun. Assessment is much improved since the last inspection so that staff are effective in helping pupils review their learning and realise what they need to do to improve. There are models of outstanding teaching but there are occasions, notably in some mathematics lessons, where staff do not fully challenge the learning of pupils of differing abilities. In these situations, pupils' achievements are not as good as they might be.

The school rightly prides itself on its positive and welcoming ethos. All staff support pupils' personal development extremely well so that pupils learn to explore their feelings and respect those of others. Pupils of all ages make good gains in developing their confidence and independence, and their attendance is good. They respond very well to the school's positive approach to behaviour management and their behaviour is excellent. The curriculum is good. There is an impressive range of enrichment and this plays an important part in pupils' enjoyment of school. High-quality support and advice is given to all pupils, particularly to support their personal development. This ensures that there is a smooth transition when they join the school and when they move to the next stage of their education.

Leadership is good. The newly appointed headteacher provides the commitment, enthusiasm and determination to ensure that every pupil reaches their potential. Along with the deputy, she gives a very clear sense of direction and, together, they instil a 'You can do it' philosophy amongst pupils and staff. In the short time she has been in post the headteacher has established a climate of strong teamwork among all adults so that everyone realises they have a part to play in future improvement. Middle leaders support their areas well. However, they could still go further in taking on increased responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of the subjects that they lead and in sharing good practice. Governors are effective in supporting and challenging the school. They are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's self-evaluation is much improved since the last inspection with very rigorous and discerning monitoring by the headteacher and deputy. One result of this is that everyone is aware that pupils' achievements in mathematics are not as good as they are in other subjects. Strategies have been put in place to address this and these are already paying dividends. The school has excellent links with others, including parents, outside agencies and other schools, and it is very well placed to improve even further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's achievements are good because of good teaching. By the end of the EYFS, children attain the expected goals in all areas other than in communication, language and literacy, and in mathematical learning. In these areas children have very low starting points on entry so their achievements are still good. Staff provide an excellent level of support and children settle easily into school. They quickly develop the daily routines and independence that form the foundation of their future learning. All staff match learning well to the children's ages and needs so that children are motivated in their activities, for example when comparing their own height against balloons of different sizes. There are times when teaching is excellent and this is exemplified by the exceptional quality of questioning by staff to extend children's learning. The leadership of the EYFS is good. The coordinator has worked very effectively to establish assessment systems and tracking which fully meet the needs of the new EYFS curriculum. She has highlighted the need to ensure teaching consistently challenges all children so that their achievements improve even further. In line with the rest of the school, EYFS staff are rightly focusing their efforts on improving children's achievements in mathematics.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching consistently challenges pupils of differing abilities so that they achieve as well in mathematics as they do in other subjects.
- Extend the role of middle leaders so that they take more responsibility for monitoring the areas that they lead and sharing good practice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection when they were below average. Pupils of different abilities, including those with learning difficulties, achieve well and reach the challenging targets set in English, mathematics and science. They make particularly good progress in English, taking account of the weak skills of many when they enter the school. The emphasis given to this subject and the high quality of the support provided to those who speak English as an additional language are important factors in this success. Pupils enjoy the practical nature of science and make very good progress in developing their understanding. The well thought-out mathematics action plan, drawn up by the deputy headteacher and newly appointed mathematics coordinator, is having a positive impact on improving pupils' achievements in this subject. This is evident in pupils' improved skills in calculation and mental mathematics. Even so, inconsistencies remain and there is further to go to ensure that pupils of differing abilities achieve as well as they are able in all lessons in the subject.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school because, as one commented, 'We learn but we have fun too.' One of the oldest pupils said, 'We make good friends and we are proud of being members of one community.' In line with the school's aims, pupils learn 'to respect everyone' and they very effectively think through their actions and the effect these have on others. As a result, all pupils work and play together in a very harmonious atmosphere. Pupils show a high degree of reverence for times of prayer and reflection, as was seen in an assembly where they remembered people

who were special to them. Overall, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils take on extra responsibilities, such as being a monitor or a playground buddy with great enthusiasm and develop the basic skills needed for their future economic well-being. They make an extremely strong contribution to the wider community, particularly through the school's links with the Church. All show an excellent awareness of the need for a healthy lifestyle. They look after each other very well, showing an awareness of safety at all times. Pupils of all ages are confident to give their views because they know their ideas are valued. A good example was when the school council gave advice to the whole school in an assembly as part of the school's anti-bullying week. Pupils' attendance has improved in recent years and is now good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school's monitoring of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and is now very effective in bringing about improvements in classroom practice. Orderly and purposeful lessons, underpinned by very good relationships, are the order of the day. Staff treat pupils with respect and consideration and pupils try hard. In all areas, staff are enthusiastic and motivate pupils to learn. They use resources and practical activities very effectively to make learning meaningful. Some teaching is excellent, as seen in a lesson where pupils applied their mathematical skills very effectively to design a garden. In this lesson, staff set a very high expectation for each pupil. They used a wide range of techniques including solving real life problems, which challenged pupils very effectively to achieve their best. This practice, however, is not consistent across all lessons and there are lessons where pupils' achievements, notably in mathematics, are not as good as they might be.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's good curriculum goes a long way to meeting pupils' needs with a very strong focus on their personal development. It celebrates the cultural diversity of the school and its area, drawing fully on pupils' own cultural backgrounds. There is a very good level of enrichment, particularly through high-quality music and sporting activities. In line with the school's priorities, a review of mathematics provision is rightly taking place to ensure that there is fully systematic progression in this subject throughout the school. The school is making every effort to include parents in this review so that they feel confident in helping their children reach their targets.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The strong commitment of staff ensures that pupils learn in a happy and safe learning environment. All give a high level of support so that pupils show very good levels of maturity by Year 6 and express confidence about moving to the next stage of their education. The systems for supporting pupils' personal development are excellent and pupils say, 'There is always someone you can go to if you have a problem.' The procedures to track pupils' academic progress are very comprehensive. They are used well to identify those in need of extra support, for example pupils with learning difficulties. Tracking information is also used very successfully to set targets for pupils in English, mathematics and science. These are written in terms that pupils understand and are shared with parents. As a result, pupils' motivation to succeed is

increasing. There are thorough child protection and safeguarding procedures. The school works very well with parents and a wide range of outside agencies to support pupils' development. The learning mentor is highly effective in her work with parents, one result being pupils' improved attendance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The vision of the headteacher gives a very clear focus to improving pupils' achievements, particularly in mathematics. Her energy and enthusiasm and that of her deputy are contagious. Staff say that morale is very high and all show that they are committed to future improvement. The focus that the school places on developing the skills of all staff pays dividends, as exemplified by the ways in which support staff are increasingly taking responsibility for checking that pupils are meeting their targets. Governors ensure that statutory requirements are met and that the school provides good value for money. They play a vital role in forging the school's extremely strong links with its local community and in promoting community cohesion. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection. As an important next step it has identified the need to extend the role of its middle managers in monitoring their subjects across the school and in sharing good practice.

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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?	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

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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 learners' needs?	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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

02 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School, London, SW6 7HB

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we came to visit your school. We particularly enjoyed the discussions we had with you. You told us that St Thomas is a good school and we agree with you. You also told us that pupils are extremely well behaved and you make good friends. We were glad to hear how much you enjoy school. We were very impressed with how well you all work and play together and also look after each other so that you all feel safe. You work with others outside school extremely well particularly through the links with the Church. We agree that staff care for you very well indeed and, because of the support they give, you feel confident about moving to the next stage of your education.

All staff are keen to see the school improve even further. To be certain this happens we have asked them to make sure that teaching always challenges all of you so that you achieve as well in mathematics as in other subjects. We have also asked staff to extend the ways in which they check on the quality of work in the subjects that they lead and also share good practice. By trying your hardest at all times you can also help make sure the school improves.

Yours sincerely

Kay Charlton

Lead Inspector