

# St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104236
<b>Local Authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	323997
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 September 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Usha Devi HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	175
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Michael Quinn
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Patricia Perkins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Dartmouth Avenue Coalpool Walsall WS3 1SP
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons, and held meetings with staff, governors, groups of pupils, parents, and representatives from partners who work with the school. A telephone conversation was held with the school's link advisor. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at pupils' work and records of their progress. They also looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, the school's monitoring of its performance, minutes of governors' meetings and a range of policies. The inspectors took account of 49 questionnaires from parents, 67 questionnaires from pupils in Key Stage 2, and 11 questionnaires from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the learning and progress made by different groups of pupils
- pupils' attendance
- how well leaders and managers drive forward improvements in provision and outcomes
- the school's capacity to improve.

## Information about the school

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School is a smaller than average primary school situated in a residential area. Most of the pupils are of White British origin, with the remainder from other ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school has been awarded the Healthy School Award and the Bronze and Silver Eco Award.

At its last inspection in June 2007, the school was judged to require special measures. One HMI and one additional inspector have visited the school each term to monitor its progress in improving the quality of education. Since the previous inspection the school has experienced high levels of staff absence and a high turnover of staff. There have been four headteachers or interim headteachers. The current interim headteacher joined the school in June 2009. Most of the teachers who were in post at the time of the last inspection have left. Only three out of the original eight class teachers remain. The deputy headteacher has been absent through illness during the spring and summer terms of 2009. In April 2009, governors appointed an associate leader on a temporary contract to provide the school with additional support. Governors are in the process of appointing a substantive headteacher.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

### Main findings

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School is a satisfactory and improving school. It has some good features. In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. With strong support from Walsall Children's Services staff and the Diocesan Schools Commission, the school has strengthened all aspects of its provision. As a consequence, pupils' achievement and enjoyment are at least satisfactory. Teachers, support staff, administrative staff and governors have maintained a clear focus on improving the work of the school during some difficult times.

The school has a number of strengths, including:

- a team of staff who are committed to improving the life chances of all pupils
- the good start children make in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of strong provision
- governors who provide a good level of challenge and support and are influential in determining the strategic direction of the school.

Overall standards, having been exceptionally low in the end of Year 6 national tests for the last three years, are improving securely as the school recovers from the legacy of underachievement. Pupils' current work and the school's latest assessment information show that standards vary from class to class and between subjects. They range from average to below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in science are improving but remain well below average. More able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently and as a consequence do not always reach the standards of which they are capable. Achievement is satisfactory. An increasing proportion of pupils are making good progress, especially in Years 2, 5 and 6.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in some lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2. Teachers ask a good range of questions to make ongoing assessments of pupils' learning during lessons. However, they do not always make effective use of this information to move pupils more quickly onto their next stage of learning. Progress accelerates when pupils are given the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning. In one good example, pupils in Year 5 worked in pairs to identify precisely how their writing could be improved and supported each other to make the necessary changes. This effective practice is not yet sufficiently widespread.

Self-evaluation is satisfactory. Senior leaders accurately monitor the quality of teaching and analyse pupils' progress in order to identify which aspects of the school's work require improvement. However, not all leaders systematically check that actions which

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have been identified following monitoring are implemented consistently by all staff. Similarly, the frequency with which pupils' progress is analysed varies across subjects. The newly appointed interim headteacher is in the process of refining the existing systems so that leaders and managers at all levels more rigorously and frequently check the school's work and evaluate its impact on all pupils. The improvements since the last inspection, coupled with the senior leaders drive to secure further improvements, demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Further raise standards by:
  - ensuring all groups of pupils make good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and particularly science as they move through the school
  - consistently providing challenging tasks for more able pupils.
- Ensure teaching is consistently good or better in Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
  - ensuring teachers use assessments of pupils' learning to move pupils more quickly on to their next stage of learning during lessons
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels have a greater impact on school improvement by:
  - more rigorously monitoring the quality of teaching and learning
  - more frequently analysing the progress of all groups of pupils in order to rapidly reduce the variations in pupils' performance between classes and across subjects.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

The quality of learning is improving. In lessons observed, inspectors saw similar performance and progress by boys, girls and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is because teachers are increasingly taking greater account of pupils' interests and learning styles. An effective example of this was seen in a Year 4 literacy lesson. Pupils were presented with visual images reflecting life during the Second World War. They were encouraged to discuss the images and their ideas with each other before putting their thoughts down in writing. In this lesson, all pupils demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm, applied themselves diligently and behaved well. Pupils make satisfactory progress and some make good progress. Standards, as measured by the end of Year 6 test results, are improving from a very low baseline. A greater proportion of pupils are reaching the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics than previously. The school is taking suitable action to improve low attainment in science by increasing the opportunities pupils have to learn through practical experiences and investigations.

Attendance is broadly average for the majority of pupils in the school and steadily improving. Pupils say they usually feel safe in school and staff effectively deal with their concerns. Although the vast majority of pupils show consideration towards each other, a

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very small minority occasionally behave inappropriately. This was a view supported by a few pupils during discussions and in their responses to the inspection questionnaire. Staff are helping these pupils to manage their own behaviour and seeking external support to better meet their needs. Pupils' knowledge of how to keep healthy is good and helped by after-school activities such as cheerleading, football and cookery. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities and make a good contribution during school and community events.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory and improving. It is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in some lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2. Effective features of teaching include:

- teachers using a range of resources, including interactive whiteboards to explain tasks clearly
- pupils being given the opportunity to learn through practical activities
- teaching assistants providing individuals and groups with a suitable level of support.

Although teachers plan for different groups in their class, assessment information is not

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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always used effectively to plan tasks which provide an appropriate level of challenge for more able pupils. The written guidance pupils receive varies between subjects. It is particularly effective in writing, where pupils' errors are corrected and they are given the guidance they need to improve their work. This is contributing to improving standards. The school has rightly placed a greater emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics in the curriculum. A whole school focus on letters and sounds and basic literacy and numeracy skills has helped to raise standards and accelerate progress. Teachers are beginning to make more links between subjects and give pupils the opportunity to use and apply their basic skills in a range of creative contexts. The curriculum is enriched with a good range of visits and clubs, some of which are run by the Parent Teacher Association. Transition arrangements for pupils moving from Reception to Year 1 are in the early stages of development. The school is planning to introduce new initiatives to encourage all pupils, and particularly the few who are persistently absent to attend more regularly.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>3</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The interim headteacher in partnership with the associate leader and the existing members of the senior leadership team has suitably built on the work of previous headteachers. This has resulted in continued improvements in teaching and raised standards. She has maintained an environment where staff work together well and morale and expectations are high. One member of staff, summing up the views of the overwhelming majority who responded to the inspection questionnaire wrote, 'I am happy to be a member of this staff. I feel valued and involved in trying to move this school forward.'

The school improvement plan and subject action plans contain appropriate actions but success criteria are not always measurable. There are suitable systems in place to ensure equality of opportunity. Senior leaders and governors have evaluated the school's contribution to community cohesion, identified where impact has been made and what more needs to be done. The school's commitment to encouraging pupils to understand and value different communities is reflected in pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. At the time of the inspection, all safeguarding arrangements met statutory requirements.

The governing body has sustained a robust focus on improving the school and provided

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stability during some difficult and turbulent times. The chair of governors has worked tirelessly to secure the appointment of senior staff. Governors have played a central role in influencing the strategic direction of the school and in bringing about necessary improvements. They have used their skills and knowledge to provide a good level of challenge and support.

The school has clear plans to increase engagement with parents and carers. The interim headteacher is keen to increase their involvement in the life of the school and to help them further support children's learning.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

**Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children receive a good start to their education. They settle quickly because of effective induction arrangements and excellent relationships with adults. From their low starting points, children make good progress in all areas of learning and begin Year 1 with below average levels of attainment. They are confident and motivated learners who play well on their own. An example of this was observed in a communication, language and literacy session. In the role play area, a child asked inspectors to sign the visitors' book before entering the 'surgery.' She then invited inspectors to take a seat and describe their symptoms. Following a few 'checks' she prescribed both inspectors some 'medicine' and wished them well. During adult led activities, staff occasionally miss opportunities to challenge the more able children because they do not always move them on quickly to their next stage of learning.

Good features of provision include:



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- a strong emphasis on personal development, resulting in good behaviour
- a good range of activities which develop children's independence and creativity both indoors and outdoors
- planning and activities which enable children to do well in all areas of learning
- effective systems for tracking children's progress.

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. For instance, she has already identified the need to establish better links with parents and carers.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

**Views of parents and carers**

Most parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire were positive about the school. A number of parents made additional comments and referred to the 'hard work of the staff' and the better progress being made by their children. One wrote, 'I am proud to say my child attends St Thomas of Canterbury.' Parents whose children had been at another school previously were particularly complimentary about the progress their children were making.

A very small minority of parents raised concerns about almost all aspects. They are most concerned with how well the school prepares their child for the future. Some made comments about unacceptable behaviour. Senior leaders are aware that in order to better prepare the children for the future they need to raise standards. Inspectors found that the school is making improvements with this aspect. While the concerns about behaviour are justified, inspectors found they relate to a few pupils. Senior teachers are using a range of suitable strategies to help improve their behaviour and are currently seeking additional support for these individuals. Inspectors could find no evidence to support all the concerns, the very large majority of parents confirmed they are happy with their child's experience at the school.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 49 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 175 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	39	29	59	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	49	25	51	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	35	27	55	3	6	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	35	28	57	3	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	35	27	55	3	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	43	25	51	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	47	26	53	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	13	27	30	61	5	10	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	29	32	65	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	31	30	61	3	6	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	25	32	65	3	6	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	14	29	30	61	2	4	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	37	28	57	3	6	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



25 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School, Walsall WS3 1SP

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and visiting your lessons. We would like to say thank you to the members of the school council who told us all about their work and the children in Years 3 to 6 who completed the questionnaire. As you know I have been visiting your school regularly since December 2007. I have been really pleased to see your school steadily improve. You have always been friendly and helpful during my visits.

- You told us that you are learning a lot more in lessons. We agree! I am pleased to tell you that your school is now helping you to make satisfactory progress. Some of you are making good progress.
- Your headteacher, the teachers, the other adults who work with you and governors have worked really hard to improve your school.
- You have a good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. You told us that you like taking part in physical activities such as football and cheerleading.
- The children in Nursery and Reception classes have a good start in the school.
- In lessons, you are keen to learn. You like it when teachers encourage you to be independent and help you to learn in different ways. We saw how much the children in Year 5 enjoyed helping each other to improve their writing.

We have asked the headteacher and staff to do a number of things to improve the school.

- Help all of you, and especially those of you who are capable of harder work, to reach higher standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- Make sure there is more good teaching in the school.
- We also want school leaders and managers to more carefully check how well the school is doing.

You can help by working hard and behaving well at all times. Thank you once again to all the staff, governors, the office staff, the adults who work in the local authority, members from the diocese and you for always making me feel so welcome. I will miss visiting your school and will take away lots good memories. I would like to wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Usha Devi

Her Majesty's Inspector

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