

# St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104809
<b>Local Authority</b>	St Helens
<b>Inspection number</b>	324109
<b>Inspection date</b>	8 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janette Corlett

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 aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	227
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 R Houlton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Rory Orlandi
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 February 2006
<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>	Rainford Road Windleshaw St Helens Merseyside WA10 6BX

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	8 May 2009
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievement, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1; the personal development and well-being of pupils; the quality of teaching and learning; the curriculum; and the extent to which school leaders at all levels are effective in ensuring school improvement. Evidence was collected from observation of lessons; pupils' work; discussions with staff, governors and pupils; and a scrutiny of school documents and questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors 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 serving a diverse and widespread community. There are few pupils from minority ethnic heritages and few pupils leave or enter the school other than at the normal times. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school provides education for the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception class and operates before and after-school care provision. The school holds a variety of awards including Sports Activemark, Investors in People, Cabinet Office Chartermark and the International School Intermediate Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which takes exceptionally good care of its pupils and promotes their excellent personal development and well-being. Pupils quickly settle into the school's warm and vibrant environment and become confident, independent and happy learners. By the time they leave the school, pupils are very well equipped to begin the next phase in their education. Parents really appreciate this and speak highly of the friendly and approachable staff, good levels of communication and the way in which any concerns they may have are dealt with courteously and sensitively. The school actively promotes the inclusion of all pupils, particularly those with complex physical and learning difficulties. As a result, learners treat one another with great respect and their behaviour is exemplary in all aspects of school life. Attendance is above average because pupils love coming to school, where they feel safe and know that staff are always willing to listen and offer help when it is needed.

Standards in English, mathematics and science are exceptionally high and pupils make very good progress across the school. Children generally begin Reception with skills that are typical for their age.. A good start in the Reception class is followed by the development of good skills in reading, writing and mathematics throughout Key Stage 1. This leads to pupils' outstanding achievement by the end of Key Stage 2.

These very high standards are reached because the quality of teaching and learning is excellent. Teachers use a wide variety of approaches to support learning most effectively, recognising that children learn in many different ways. Lessons are stimulating and constantly challenge pupils to develop their thinking. Pupils have ample opportunities to develop their skills in speaking and listening and use information and communication technology competently to support their learning. The school effectively deploys well-qualified teaching assistants to support individuals and groups of pupils. As a result, pupils who may need a little extra help, and those who have more complex learning needs, make excellent progress from their individual starting points.

Teachers' marking of pupils' written work is thorough and always gives them clear guidance on the next steps in their learning. This means that pupils are aware of their progress towards challenging targets for improvement, particularly in writing, and can confidently move on to the next stage.

The school offers a good curriculum which meets the needs of all groups of pupils. Recent improvements to the way the curriculum is planned have led to teachers in Key Stage 1 making more opportunities for linking learning across different subject areas. Plans are in place to extend this creative approach into Key Stage 2. The curriculum is enriched through a broad range of outside visits and visitors to the school and pupils enjoy the variety of after-school clubs. Pupils take part in many physical and sporting activities. This, together with the school's promotion of the importance of eating a well-balanced diet, supports them in developing a healthy lifestyle. Displays around the school show the high quality of pupils' artwork. Pupils learn Spanish with the support of a teacher who has used the school's strong international links to develop this subject throughout the school. Many pupils learn to play musical instruments and take part in the school choir which recently performed in Liverpool Cathedral.

Community cohesion is promoted well through the school's strong links with the Parish and local community, including the emergency services. Pupils support a range of local and national charities through the regular fundraising events they help to organise. Similarly, pupils learn

to value cultural diversity and to respect those with beliefs and values which may differ from their own. The school day provides many opportunities for quiet spiritual reflection which help pupils to develop their understanding of moral values and of their responsibilities as future citizens in the world-wide community.

Leadership and management are outstanding. With strong direction from the headteacher and assistant headteacher, school leaders at all levels have developed a school-wide culture of high expectations for every pupil. They have embedded robust systems to ensure that pupils who may not be making quite as much progress as they should are swiftly supported and can move on in their learning. Teamwork is strong and this leads to a shared vision for continuous improvement – only the best will do. Challenging targets are set and achieved or exceeded and this is demonstrated in the improvements to pupils' writing and the learning environment for boys since the previous inspection. Current statutory safeguarding procedures are fully in place. Parents know this and thus have every confidence that their children's welfare is in very secure hands. Equality of opportunity shines through every aspect of the school's work; pupils know that they are each special and valued for the unique contributions they make to the school community. School governors are well-informed and involved in the life of the school. They have supported school leaders in providing excellent value for money and developing the school's outstanding capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are typical of youngsters of this age. Staff provide very good quality teaching and care which result in children making good progress. There is much emphasis on communication and cooperation and this is shown in the support that children give to each other. Children's improvement in the use of spoken language is particularly impressive and this is because adults work exceptionally hard to encourage them to develop good skills in speaking and listening. The outdoor learning environment is not quite as good as that found in the classroom and this sometimes limits children's opportunities to continue their learning outdoors. Procedures for assessment, including regular observations of children's learning, are beginning to be established in the daily routines. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Adults respond sensitively to children's contributions, linking the areas of learning in an interesting and stimulating way. Parents very much appreciate the time taken by staff in helping their children, who come from a wide range of pre-school experiences, to make a smooth and enjoyable transition into the Reception class. From their earliest days in school, children are supported in making informed decisions and choosing resources with which to work. Adults are always there to help but allow children to decide the direction of their learning. As a result, children learn to be confident and independent learners. They are able to take risks without being unnecessarily fearful and just love playing and learning together in this very warm, secure and happy environment.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the quality of the outdoor environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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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?	1
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	1

### 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?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

<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>	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	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	1
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>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

Thank you all for giving us such a warm welcome to your school when we came to inspect it. You were all exceptionally polite and helpful and we really enjoyed talking to you and finding out about all the fun you have in school. A special thank you to the members of the school council and group of older pupils who gave up your lunch break to talk to us.

Your school is outstanding. That means that it is one of the best in the country and you are right to be so proud of it. You make very good progress in your lessons and behave exceptionally well. This means that you are very well prepared to move on to secondary school by the time you leave at the end of Year 6. Your teachers work very hard to make learning exciting and fun. You told us how much you enjoy the visits and clubs they arrange, and that they are all friendly and kind. You also said that they are always willing to give you extra support if you find things difficult, and that no-one ever feels bad about having to ask for help.

One of the jobs inspectors have to do is to try and find things which might make your school even better. St Thomas of Canterbury is already a wonderful school and it was difficult to find anything more which your teachers might do for you. However, we feel that the outdoor learning space for youngsters in the Reception class is not quite as good as the indoor classroom and have asked the school to improve this.

All the adults in your school put you at the very centre of everything they do and make it a wonderful place for you to learn and play. Each one of you is very special to them and I am sure that you will all do very well in the future. Please continue to help them by listening to their suggestions and paying careful attention to their comments on your written work. Each one of you has a very important contribution to make in the future. Your headteacher and all the adults in the school recognise this and will help you to be the very best that you can be.

We wish you all the very best of luck.