

# St Thomas CofE Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105234
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	324187
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Philip Cole

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	264
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 G Andrews
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Robert Dean
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 November 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>	Molyneux Road Westhoughton Bolton Lancashire BL5 3HP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 634 666
<b>Fax number</b>	01942 634 667

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an average size school that serves a district between Wigan and Bolton. Most pupils are White British. Very few of the pupils from a range of other backgrounds are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that in most schools. The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) that consists of a Nursery and a Reception class. Although the local area is mixed it is more advantaged than average, with hardly any pupils being entitled to free school meals. The school has recently renewed its Healthy Schools Award. A new headteacher was appointed in September of this year.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that is showing steady improvement and has many good features. The school is very popular and almost all parents are very happy with the school's work. They particularly appreciate its caring ethos and family atmosphere. The pupils share these views and feel very well looked after and safe. They talk eagerly about their helpful teachers and really appreciate that the school listens to their suggestions. They are proud that these have led to improvements, especially the introduction of the school bank that the older pupils manage, the development of an adventure trail and the decoration of the toilets.

Everyone gets on very well and pupils' behaviour is consistently good. They are keen to take on increased responsibilities as they get older, for example as helping hands, play pals and reading buddies. From an early age, pupils develop a good understanding of what they need to do to keep fit, healthy and out of harm's way. Although their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, pupils' understanding of life in a multicultural country and of the wider world is limited. Their good personal development provides a strong platform for their learning. Together with good basic skills and a developing understanding of enterprise this enables them to face life's future challenges with confidence.

Standards by Year 6 are above average and have been for several years. Compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds and starting points, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Recently, the progress being made by pupils has started to accelerate. This reflects improvements in teaching and in the guidance being given to pupils that are now embedded and are making a consistent impact across both key stages. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because the extra help and support they have with their work is well planned and organised.

Teaching is good. Over the past couple of years, teachers have worked hard to sharpen their focus in lessons to improve pupils' learning. They now ensure that activities are challenging and well matched to the needs of different ability groups. Pupils are helped to improve through the helpful comments teachers make when marking their work. These are now consistent strengths across Key Stages 1 and 2. Combined with the skilful support that teaching assistants give to those who need extra help, pupils' progress is now accelerating. Another key element that underpins this improvement is the effective use of targets that make clear to pupils what they need to do to take the next steps in their learning. Recent developments in the school's satisfactory curriculum also support improvements, particularly in writing. However, strategies to improve the links between subjects have not yet resulted in sufficient opportunities for pupils to use and develop their writing skills across the curriculum. Visits, involvement in school clubs and opportunities to participate in church and community events all add to pupils' enjoyment and enhance their learning. The curriculum promotes pupils' personal development successfully. Adults are very caring, look after pupils very well and do everything necessary to ensure their safety and well-being. Assessments are regularly carried out. They are used to keep a close eye on individual pupil's progress and to ensure that their needs are effectively met in class and, when it is required, by additional support.

Leadership and management are satisfactory, but improving, as the skills of middle managers and subject leaders develop. The new headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, is successfully building on improvements begun earlier and these are now enabling pupils to make better progress. Teachers' expertise in leading subjects and other aspects of the school's

life has improved, but not all middle managers yet have the skills needed to be fully effective in checking the impact of their work. Overall, self-evaluation is satisfactory, if a little overgenerous. Governors have a good understanding of the school and are keen to ensure that the improvements being made are sustainable. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in improving teaching and assessment, but areas to develop in the EYFS remain. The school provides satisfactory value for money and has a satisfactory capacity to make further improvements, with appropriate areas of development being identified in the school's improvement plan.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Children's achievement is satisfactory. They enter Nursery with overall attainment that varies from year-to-year from average to above average. Children make steady progress so that by the end of the Reception year they either comfortably meet, or exceed the goals set nationally for their age.

The last inspection identified that there was not enough continuity between the Nursery and the Reception classes. This is still a weakness and prevents the classes working as a coherent EYFS unit. As a result of different planning, it is not possible for children to benefit from shared provision that would enable their needs to be met more flexibly and effectively. Children in Reception currently make do with separate and limited outdoor provision when they could easily have access to much better opportunities in the Nursery outdoor area. Despite this, provision in each class is satisfactory. Children in the Nursery have carefully planned and effectively supported play-based activities across all areas of learning, both inside and outside. In the Reception class, there are effectively taught, adult-led activities and satisfactory activities that children can choose themselves. All staff work hard to ensure that pupils make good progress in their personal development and that they are well cared for. Although leadership and management of the EYFS are satisfactory, it is not clear who has overall responsibility for ensuring its development as an effective single unit.

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

- Ensure that the improvements being made in teaching and the guidance given to pupils drives up standards and the achievement of pupils.
- Ensure that the EYFS functions as an effective unit that maximises all children's learning.
- Ensure that pupils have a better understanding of their place in a multicultural society and of the different ways of life found in the wider world.

A small proportion of schools where 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**

Overall standards by the end of Year 6 are consistently above average. Unvalidated data indicates that this trend has been continued in 2008. Achievement is satisfactory overall throughout Years 1 to 6, with pupils generally making satisfactory progress from their starting points. In 2008, school data indicates that standards had improved in writing, which had previously been a weaker aspect of pupils' literacy skills. This was a result of the newly introduced strategies

focused on developing pupils' writing skills. Improvements in teaching and learning and the guidance teachers give to pupils on how to improve their work have also had an impact. Provisional results for Key Stage 1 indicate that standards are above average, a similar picture to that in 2007. However, the current Year 2 pupils are on track to attain noticeably better standards in writing. The school's current assessments and evidence from pupils' work and lessons show that pupils' progress is accelerating. This is because teaching is improving and pupils are more aware of what they need to do to improve further. Pupils with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities make good progress throughout the school. This is because they have extra help and targeted support with their work.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils clearly enjoy most of their lessons and the interesting range of clubs they can join. They greatly appreciate the help that teachers give them with their work and the care shown by all adults in school. As a result, they feel safe and secure. They know what they need to eat and the importance of exercise if they are to keep fit and healthy. They participate with enthusiasm in the opportunities they have to exercise at playtime, in lessons and sports clubs. They take seriously their responsibilities, whether these involve supporting each other as play pals or helping hands, or contributing to improving the school through the school council. They also enjoy being involved in church and community events. For example, the popular and successful choir sings at the switching on of the local Christmas lights. Pupils have a good understanding of life in their own community, but are far less clear about life in a diverse and multicultural Britain or of what life is like in the wider world. Despite this, their overall good personal development, their well developed basic skills and some insight into enterprise, through Christian Aid activities and the school bank, means that they are well prepared for the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The last inspection judged teaching as satisfactory but found too much inconsistency in its effectiveness between classes. This issue has been tackled well. Teachers have embraced strategies that have improved their performance and led to much more consistent practice across Key Stages 1 and 2. Lessons have specific objectives that are explained clearly to pupils and used well by teachers and pupils to assess how effective learning has been. In all classes, teachers are careful to ensure that different groups are given work that is almost always well matched to their needs. This is particularly so for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These pupils make good progress because of the targeted help they have in lessons to help them achieve well. The skilful support assistants make a valuable contribution in supporting their learning and as a result they do well. In the best lessons, teachers make excellent use of group targets to ensure that pupils make not only good progress towards the objectives set, but also towards the next steps in their learning. All teachers also provide pupils with very helpful suggestions about how they can make their work better and pupils respond well to these. As a result of these effective strategies, pupils are now making better progress across the school.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory with good features. There are successful strategies to improve writing and links are made between subjects so that basic skills can be taught and practised in meaningful contexts across the curriculum. The school recognises that work still remains to be done to further improve the latter. Provision for pupils who are learning English as an additional language and for those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well planned and effectively implemented. Programmes to support pupils' personal development are working well. A good range of clubs is available to enrich and extend pupils' learning, including card making and sewing, as well as sports clubs. Pupils also benefit from the input of professional coaches, specialist music teachers and a native French speaker who leads the teaching of a modern foreign language from Year 1 to Year 6. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to become involved in church and community events throughout the year. These successfully extend pupils' personal and social skills. The school is currently establishing a link with another school that has a large number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, with the intention of improving pupils' understanding of cultural diversity.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school works successfully to ensure that pupils are safe and happy in school. The general ethos is very caring and all adults contribute well to this. All the necessary requirements to safeguard pupils and ensure their well-being are in place. Attendance is monitored effectively and helps to ensure that this is above average. Vulnerable pupils are identified and their needs assessed and supported well. Individual pupil's progress is carefully monitored and the information gained is used effectively to provide extra help when this is needed. This is especially so for those pupils with additional learning needs, who are given good help with extra individual support and thus make good progress. The information on pupils' progress is also used well to ensure that all pupils are appropriately grouped in class and given work that is matched to their needs. All pupils have targets which help them understand what they need to do to take the next steps in their learning and this additional understanding enables pupils to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together to provide a clear direction for the school and to ensure that it successfully promotes equality of opportunity. They focus on improving standards and achievement and set mostly challenging targets, although the targets for the current Year 2 pupils are too modest given their starting points. Weaknesses, identified at the last inspection, in the skills of teachers as subject and aspect leaders continue to be developed. They are, for example, currently developing their skills in observing lessons to improve further their ability to evaluate the effectiveness of their areas of responsibility. The school makes use of an appropriate range of strategies when checking on its performance. The use of data to compare the performance of different groups is not fully developed and this limits its effectiveness as a management tool. Governors do not rely on the reports they receive, but balance these with what they have found out for themselves, for example by visiting lessons.

They have the professional backgrounds to ask challenging questions should they need to. Governors ensure that the budget is used carefully to support improvements.



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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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
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

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

<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	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	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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 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	3
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**

Inspection of St Thomas C of E Primary School, Westhoughton, Bolton, BL5 3HP

Thank you for making the inspectors welcome when we inspected your school. We enjoyed talking to you about your work and what you do in school. You told us how much you enjoyed your lessons, the other interesting things you can do in school and how helpful and kind your teachers and helpers are. You are well cared for and safe in school. You have a good understanding of what you need to do to keep fit, healthy and out of harm's way. Your behaviour is good and you get on well together. You know a lot about your school and your local community. However, I have asked the school to help you learn more about the different ways of life in Britain and around the world.

Pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 attain above average standards and their progress is satisfactory. Recently, teaching has improved and your lessons are now taught well. Your teachers are careful to ensure that you know what you are learning in each lesson and they make sure that the groups in each class have work that meets their different needs. They also make very helpful comments when they mark your work that help you to make it better and they give you targets to help you take the next steps in your learning. As a result, you are all now making better progress. I have asked the school to make sure that you continue to do this so that all of you can reach even higher standards.

The last inspection found that the Nursery and the Reception class did not work closely enough together. Although this is getting better, we have asked the school to continue to develop this area so that children in the EYFS can improve their rate of progress.

Everyone in school, including the governors, the headteacher, deputy headteacher, your teachers, support staff and helpers work hard to do their best for you.