

# St Thomas' Church of England Primary School Heaton Chapel

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106128
<b>Local Authority</b>	Stockport
<b>Inspection number</b>	324338
<b>Inspection date</b>	10 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mike Hewlett

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)	247
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>	Mrs C Hayes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs J Garner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 June 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>	Wellington Road North Heaton Chapel Stockport Cheshire SK4 4QG

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	10 March 2009
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**Telephone number**  
**Fax number**

0161 4326809  
0161 4326809

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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: the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils' achievement and the impact of measures taken to secure improvement on the key issues from the previous inspection. The inspectors collected evidence from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes. The school was observed at work and discussions were held with the chair of the governing body, with staff and with pupils. Replies to the parents' questionnaires were also considered. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in similar 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 the report.

## Description of the school

This average-sized school serves the parish of St Thomas and the surrounding district of Heaton Chapel. Pupils also travel from other areas of Stockport because it is a popular school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Around a quarter of pupils come from minority ethnic groups and this is close to the national picture. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage through one Reception class. Most children have had some form of pre-school experience in local nursery providers. The school holds several awards including the Healthy Schools Award, Extended Schools Award and the Investors in People Worklife Balance Award. The school also provides a breakfast and after-school club.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. Uppermost of these is the pupils' personal development and the excellent care, guidance and support that is offered. As a result, pupils feel safe, secure and happy in school. Parents have great confidence in the school. Typical comments include, 'It is a very good school with a positive caring atmosphere.' Other parents commend, in particular, the high quality of the relationships between parents and school staff and the wide variety of enrichment opportunities enjoyed by the pupils. As a result of such a supportive

environment, pupils develop exceptionally well the personal qualities they require to succeed in later life.

From starting points which are generally typical for their age, children make good progress in Reception. By the time they start Year 1, pupils' skills and knowledge are slightly above national expectations, although a few pupils are working at a lower level in some aspects of literacy, particularly in their communication skills. Good arrangements for transition into Year 1 ensure that pupils make good progress throughout Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 2, standards are slightly above average in all subjects. Pupils' growing levels of responsibility and the good range of support programmes are important factors in maintaining pupils' good progress in Key Stage 2. In Year 6, standards have been above average in most subjects for several years. Inspection evidence indicates that this pattern is continuing and that pupils achieve well over time, with no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very effectively supported by well trained teaching assistants. This enables these pupils to make the same good progress as their classmates. In these ways the school is effective in ensuring good outcomes for all pupils in their academic development.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They have an excellent awareness of how to stay healthy and keep safe. Older pupils are quick to act to help the youngest, and new pupils are soon made to feel at home. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance and their exemplary behaviour. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils respond exceptionally well in assemblies where moments of spiritual reflection are skillfully linked to reminders of their personal responsibility. As a result, pupils are fully aware of their personal goals and their duties towards others. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to increase their understanding of global issues, including sustainable development. For example, the school makes good use of the multicultural richness of its own community to make links and to study the wider parts of the world that some of its families visit, such as Asia. Pupils are confident, self-assured and behave exceptionally well. A good range of sporting, musical and artistic activities on offer promotes pupils' social and cultural development exceptionally well. Pupils successfully grasp other opportunities as they make an excellent contribution to the life of the school, as school councillors, monitors or play-leaders. Pupils' good achievement in the basic academic skills sets them up well for their later lives.

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' academic and personal development. The school is successful in implementing new initiatives to enhance pupils' well-being, for example, through the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme (SEAL). Its impact is evident in the growing confidence of pupils. The school successfully enriches pupils' experiences through a wide range of visits, including residential trips, as well visitors who come into school, such as artists and sports coaches. Pupils have the opportunity to learn a modern foreign language.

Their interest in French is reflected well in their keenness to share what they know with their classmates and visitors to the school.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, but varies between satisfactory and outstanding. In the best lessons, exciting teaching methods bring learning alive for pupils as, for example, groups of older children discuss the differences between fact and opinion. Teachers encourage pupils to work in pairs to help them develop and share their ideas. This, in turn, helps to build their self-confidence and verbal fluency. In all lessons excellent relationships ensure pupils are responsive and keen to learn. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well and enliven many of the lessons with a sense of fun. Teaching assistants' in-depth knowledge of the needs of the pupils they are supporting enables these pupils to make rapid strides with their learning. On a few occasions, questions and resources are not well enough matched to the needs of all pupils and some lessons are over dependent on worksheets. This restricts the challenge for more able pupils and slows the pace of learning. Teachers provide pupils with good verbal and written feedback. Pupils confirm that they find the ways that teachers mark their work very useful in helping them to improve.

The school's provision for care, guidance and support is excellent. It liaises very well with outside agencies to remove or reduce barriers to learning for those pupils with identified needs. It also works very successfully with parents and local secondary schools to ensure that pupils move smoothly between the various phases of their education. Relevant, required procedures are in place for child protection, for safeguarding pupils, and for health and safety. The school works hard to ensure that its challenging targets for attendance are met, and, consequently, attendance levels remain good. Academic guidance is excellent. The school has strengthened its tracking system which was a weakness identified in the last inspection. It now ensures that teachers and school leaders have more regular updates on pupils' progress and that lesson planning is better informed. This is providing sharper direction for support programmes.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and staff with leadership responsibilities are highly experienced, demand the best for the pupils and provide clear direction for the work of the school. They work successfully to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils and to eliminate any discrimination. Staff work well together and are keen to develop their skills further by leading staff training and sharing their expertise. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion, constantly working to strengthen its links with the local community. The global aspect of this work has been given added momentum by innovative links with a school in China and useful initiatives are in progress to expand the school's contribution in this area. School self-evaluation is accurate in the main. Monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough, but it does not always pick up on the occasional variation in quality found in the school. Governors are highly effective and very committed to the school. Their well established links with classes and other areas of the school's work enable them to play an active, questioning role in its development. Overall, the school has progressed well since its previous inspection, offers good value for money and is well set for further improvement.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a good education for the children and as a result, they achieve well. Staff make good use of recent literacy initiatives, such as the teaching of letter sounds to address areas of relative weakness in children's competencies. This is providing children with a firmer foundation for work in Year 1. Strong links with parents and good induction procedures help children to settle quickly into this very secure setting. All the recently introduced

welfare requirements are fully met. Children are encouraged to grow up as healthy, active youngsters. They have ready access to healthy snacks and enjoy exercising. Children's personal development is excellent because arrangements for their welfare are so strong and because the learning environment indoors is vibrant and well ordered. However, opportunities for pupils to extend their learning outdoors are restricted because of the physical constraints of the building. As a result, they have less chance to reinforce or practise the skills they have learnt in the classroom. Children are enthusiastic and increasingly independent learners, benefiting fully from the well planned, varied curriculum. Teachers, teaching assistants and other adult helpers make a good contribution to their development and work successfully together to ensure children are well taught. Staff collect a good range of information both to assess children's progress and to plan future lessons, taking full account of children's needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well by a teacher who has a good understanding of what children need to ensure they make good all-round progress in their learning.

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

- Improve the opportunities for younger children to extend their learning outdoors.
- Make sure the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good or better.

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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?	2
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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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

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<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	2
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

<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?	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>	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?	2
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**

You may remember that recently I visited your school to carry out an inspection. Thank you for talking to us and sharing your views. I listened carefully to what you said and this letter is to explain to you what I found.

- Yours is a good school and some parts of it are outstanding. It gives you all a great start to school life.
- Your behaviour is exceptionally good and your attitudes to learning are superb.
- You told me there is no bullying and how everyone gets on so well together.
- You enjoy coming to school and your attendance is better than in most other schools - keep it up!
- The teaching you receive is good and teachers try hard to make it interesting.
- You reach good standards by the end of Year 6 and are very well prepared for whatever high school you choose to attend.
- The leadership and management of your school are good and ensure you are very well cared for indeed.

There are two things that we have asked your school to do.

- Provide more opportunities for younger children to learn outdoors.
- Make sure all the teaching is good or better.

Thank you once again for all your help and good luck for the future.