

St Thomas' CofE Primary School, Leigh

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 106448 |
| Local Authority | Wigan |
| Inspection number | 324402 |
| Inspection date | 27 January 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Michael Onyon |

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) | 421 |
| 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 | Fr Anthony Hurst |
| Headteacher | Mr Barry Foster |
| Date of previous school inspection | 14 June 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Astley Street Leigh Lancashire WN7 2BP |

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Age group | 4–11 |
| Inspection date | 27 January 2009 |
| Inspection number | 324402 |

Telephone number
Fax number

01942 672730
01942 262238

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Age group | 4-11 |
| Inspection date | 27 January 2009 |
| Inspection number | 324402 |

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

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 in English, mathematics and science.
- The impact on learning of personal development, well-being, care and support.
- The quality of academic guidance offered to pupils.
- The impact of leadership and management.

Evidence was gathered from performance data and other school documentation, observations of teaching and learning, the work produced by pupils, parents' questionnaires, and discussions with pupils, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school which serves a mixed social area. The vast majority of the pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average as is the proportion eligible to receive free school meals. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes. There is a pre-school provision on site, which is run by a private provider and did not form part of this inspection.

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 where pupils consistently achieve high standards academically and in their personal development.

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of diet and exercise in a healthy lifestyle. They appreciate the healthy, balanced lunches and take part in the range of sports clubs and activities on offer. They feel safe in the secure environment. Pupils are confident that they can approach an adult if they have a concern and are proud of the fact that they support each other through difficulties. The overwhelming majority of parents say how much their children enjoy coming to school. Attendance is excellent. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community as school councillors and eco committee members, often presenting concerts and drama productions to other groups in the community. Pupils are articulate and confident and this prepares them very well for the future. Behaviour is exemplary.

Pupils' achievement is excellent. From a starting point that is below that expected for their age, pupils advance their learning rapidly as they move through the school. Good progress occurs in Key Stage 1. The school's tracking information shows that in the 2008 national assessments, the seven-year-olds maintained the high standards of the previous years, reaching above average standards. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, they reach standards that are significantly above average in English, mathematics and science with an above average proportion gaining the higher Level 5. Leaders fully recognised the need for higher attaining pupils to reach the higher levels in writing and they have successfully taken action to address the issue. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve outstandingly well because of the high quality of the support they receive. The school has very good systems for assessing pupils' progress and this helps to ensure that those pupils who are above average at the end of Year 2 achieve a similar high level in Year 6.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Consistently good, and often outstanding, teaching through the school enables pupils to make excellent gains in their learning. Lessons are very well organised, with a clear purpose so pupils know what to do and they get on quickly. They respond well to the high expectations of behaviour and concentrate well whether listening to teachers' clear explanations or working independently. Consequently, they learn very well. Work is very well planned to meet the needs of different groups so all achieve their best. In the best lessons, activities move at a fast pace and there is a high level of challenge that keeps pupils engaged and fully involved.

The curriculum is excellent. There is a strong and well-balanced emphasis on developing literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills both in specific lessons and in other subjects so pupils reach a high standard. The school delivers a wide, creative curriculum and pupils talk about how much they enjoy the many art, music and sporting opportunities on offer. They are particularly keen to develop their skills in the French language and enthusiastic to email friends in a school in France. The curriculum is enhanced by an extensive range of additional activities to enhance learning. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about opportunities to keep fit at the weekly aerobics session. The very good programme for personal, social and health education contributes significantly to pupils' excellent personal development. Care, guidance and support are excellent. The recommended procedures for safeguarding pupils are

in place and rigorously applied. The school has very good links with other professionals to provide specialist help when needed. Very effective practice sets pupils individual targets so they are very clear about what they need to do to improve. Consequently, standards are high.

Leadership and management are outstanding, and there is a constant focus on sustaining high levels of achievement. The headteacher provides clear leadership, and there is a strong sense of a team, working together to take the school forward. The school evaluates its work thoroughly and accurately and uses the information very well to bring about improvements. This has resulted in sustained high standards and levels of care, and demonstrates an excellent capacity to improve further. The governors have an extremely clear understanding of the school's strengths and needs. They are a very welcome support to the management team, particularly their involvement in evaluating improvements to the school. The school provides excellent value for money. There is a strong commitment to community cohesion and this is seen in the harmonious way in which pupils work together, their close links with the local community, for example, the church, and links the school has established with other schools in this country and abroad. It fosters a sense of belonging and effectively values the diversity of pupils' different cultures and circumstances.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. After starting school with levels of development below those typical for their age, children make good progress and achieve well. The vast majority are confidently working within the recommended early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is rooted in the practical activities that children find fun. Activities are purposeful, practical and children clearly enjoy their tasks. Although many children start school with limited communication skills, they quickly develop into confident speakers. There are good systems in place for assessing children's progress, and information is shared well with parents and carers. The level of care and support provided for the children is outstanding. Many parents remark that the excellent procedures for introducing children to school have helped them to settle quickly. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well with good teamwork amongst the staff. The school recently entered into a partnership with Sure Start, to help build relationships with families as they begin at school. Unfortunately, this success is mitigated by the loss of outdoor space created when the Sure Start building was completed. The classrooms are bright, inviting learning environments, however, the current lack of a dedicated outdoor area impacts negatively on the richness and breadth of the curriculum. Children miss the opportunity to develop their skills in all areas of learning, outside.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide a safe and secure area for outdoor play for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

| | |
|--|-----------------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|--|-----------------------|

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? | 2 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 2 |

Achievement and standards

| | |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 1 |
| The standards ¹ 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 |

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 | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 1 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 |
| 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? | 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? | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |
| 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 for making my colleague and I so welcome when we inspected your school. We enjoyed talking to you all in class and to the school council. We particularly liked joining you all in the assembly where you are able to celebrate many different things that you do so well. The pupils we spoke to told us about how proud they are of your house system where you earn points for good behaviour and achievement. Several parents described St Thomas as an excellent school and we agree. We judge that your school is outstanding, which is the best grade we can give. You play your part by behaving so well, helping each other and working hard. The excellent teaching and your outstanding attitudes to learning help you to achieve high standards by the time you leave Year 6.

The headteacher and other adults have been very successful in making sure that you do your best. You told us how much you enjoy coming to school not only for the interesting lessons but also the wide range of clubs and trips that are on offer.

The children in Reception have made a good start to their time in school. They have settled quickly and are already making good progress. There is one thing that the school can do to make things even better. We have asked that the school provides a safe and secure outdoor play area for the youngest children.

Good luck to you all and I hope you continue to enjoy learning!