

St Thomas' Church of England (V.A.) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100492
Local Authority	London Borough Of Kensington And Chelsea
Inspection number	335554
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2009
Reporting inspector	John W Paull

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Colin Trusler
Headteacher	Miss Sarah Bouette
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2006
School address	Appleford Road North Kensington London W10 5EF
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They took over 200 parents' questionnaires into account and spoke directly to some parents as they brought their children into school in the morning. They observed the school's work, and looked at important documents, especially those related to the safeguarding of pupils and the assessment and tracking of the progress of their work. Some pupils' books were also scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work, looking in detail at the following:

- How leaders, managers and governors ensure that at least average standards are maintained, especially in mathematics and boys' writing.
- What the school does to keep rates of attendance at good levels.
- How well the curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of groups of pupils with different learning requirements.
- How far senior leaders and governors check the school's impact on community cohesion.
- Arrangements for inducting into the Nursery and then transferring children in the Early Years Foundation Stage between age groups and into Year 1.

Information about the school

St Thomas's C of E is an average-sized primary school, which moved into a new building in January this year. Pupils are from a wide range of ethnic groups, of which the largest are Black Caribbean and White British. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is well above the national average and several of these are at early stages of acquiring English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a little above the national average. These pupils have a range of difficulties but most relate to social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties or speech, language and communication. The governors are responsible for the management of the school's own breakfast club and the school holds an ArtsMark award.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school, where pupils from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and social circumstances work and play together harmoniously. Pupils are safeguarded effectively. Since the last inspection, which also judged the school to be good, the school's senior leaders and governors have successfully managed a difficult year or so, when a rebuilding project caused much upheaval. Now, however, staff, governors, pupils and parents are benefiting strongly from this new provision. Together, they are rising excitedly to the challenge of adapting new surroundings to meet pupils' various needs. Linked to their effective track record, this demonstrates that senior leaders and governors have good capacity to sustain improvement.

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and, often from very low starting points, pupils achieve well by the time they leave in Year 6. Attainment is broadly average, although not quite as good in mathematics as in other subjects, and pupils are prepared satisfactorily for the future, with attendance at average levels. Progress, which was good in 2007, slowed during a period when the school was in temporary accommodation. However, it has now picked up again and evidence in the school's own records indicates that recent progress is again strong and sometimes very rapid. Able pupils and those with particular gifts and talents do well, which is confirmed by the proportions of pupils who achieve levels higher than normally expected. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of how the school is led. A typical comment states, 'I cannot praise the headteacher and her staff enough. They surpass what is expected of them.' Pupils' good understanding of how to stay safe is apparent in the way that they move about their new building sensibly and with pride. They appreciate that staff look after them well and follow up effectively any concerns that they might raise. Pupils know much about healthy eating and take part wholeheartedly in physical activity and sports. They contribute well to the community and fully appreciate that the School Council is useful and important to them. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although some pupils feel that they would like to take the initiative more often in telling each other about their cultural and social backgrounds.

Care, guidance and support, and the curriculum are good. Some features are outstanding. For example, strong leadership ensures that specialists and outside agencies are used remarkably well as a way of raising expertise on the school's staff, as well as in supporting pupils effectively. Pupils with identified special needs and those experiencing difficult social circumstances make good progress. This is because barriers to learning are dealt with quickly and knowledgeably. Teaching is also good. Clear planning is a notable strength in all classes, indicating how the wide range of needs of individual pupils are to be met, ensuring that pupils of different abilities, including those

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who speak English as an additional language, progress and achieve effectively in lessons. Nevertheless, on occasions teachers do not offer pupils enough opportunity to absorb and respond to marking or advice about how to improve. Pupils' own ideas about what helps them to learn best are not always considered enough. Teachers' good subject knowledge and teamwork with teaching assistants produces good support for all pupils' learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and achievement further, especially in mathematics, by giving pupils:
 - more time and opportunity for responding to and absorbing the feedback that is given about their work and how to improve it, and
 - opportunities to explain and use their own ideas about what helps them to learn best.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to enter into a dialogue about and thereby influence what is provided for them, especially in social and cultural matters.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils enjoy their learning and progress well in lessons. Achievement in English is particularly good by the time pupils leave in Year 6, although high reading standards to some extent mask that boys' writing is frequently not as good as that of girls. Owing to a strong focus on creative approaches to encourage writing, improvement is securely under way. This is confirmed by work in pupils' books, observation of English lessons and information about progress in the school's good assessment records. In other subjects, including science, achievement and enjoyment are often good. An ArtsMark award celebrates displays of high-quality art around the building and an exhibition of work has recently been set up at the Westway Studio. Pupils' good singing contributes well to spirituality in assemblies and to performances. Standards in mathematics, however, are not as good as those seen in other subjects. The subject leader is an excellent practitioner and good leadership provides him with time to work alongside colleagues to model good practice and to promote improvement. Better progress is emerging, although some pupils feel that there are not enough opportunities for them to say what helps them to learn best and to act on it. Inspection evidence supports their view. Achievement is also good in Years 1 and 2, although standards are usually below average. Despite good progress, pupils have not been in school for long enough to catch up from frequently low starting points. Nevertheless, expectations of pupils are high and targets are set at challenging levels. Good leadership ensures that any barriers to learning experienced by individuals or groups of pupils are identified and addressed. A telling example is how the school's coordinator of provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is attached to Year 3. This teacher's expertise is thereby on hand directly to meet the specific need of several pupils who have arrived at the school in this particular year who do not speak English. This is proving successful, as even

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those pupils who have not experienced formal schooling previously settle in quickly and make rapid progress.

Most other pupils' outcomes are also good. Their moral development is good and they understand the need for following sensible rules in order that their school community functions cooperatively, socially and effectively. As a result, they behave well in class and around the building, which supports their learning. Outside, they play vigorously, which helps to keep them fit and active. A few parents raised concerns about boisterousness, but inspectors found nothing that was untoward and levels of adult supervision on the play areas are above recommended levels. Pupils carry out many small tasks and tidying routines that help the school to run smoothly and they are willing and generous in support of charities. Links with the local church are also mutually supportive. Attendance dropped back from good levels a couple of years ago. This has been targeted by senior leaders with the support of class teachers and administrative staff and is now improving again. A breakfast club also helps pupils to arrive on time and provides a healthy start to the day. Pupils who attend are looked after well. Figures for the current term are a little above average so far. The headteacher has recently identified a difficulty with punctuality in a small but significant proportion of families. This is also being tackled well.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

¹ 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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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good. A very large majority observed in the inspection was of this quality, including some outstanding features. None was inadequate. This is consistent with the school's senior leaders' view that pupils are taught well and it matches the finding that learning and progress are good. Teachers plan effectively to include all groups of pupils of different abilities and adapt what they provide to meet the requirements of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They keep teaching assistants informed about the particular targets of pupils in their groups, so they are enabled to support them strongly. Teachers manage pupils well and use resources effectively to consolidate learning. As a result pupils listen attentively and progress well. Thorough systems for tracking progress quickly pick up those pupils whose progress slows or who need extra support, so intervention occurs promptly to rectify the situation. However, occasions when pupils discuss learning with a partner are used to varying success. An outstanding example occurred in a Year 2 mathematics lesson. Frequently, the teacher encouraged pupils to discuss their learning with each other. He gave them plenty of time to do so, listening to their deliberations to gauge the most opportune moment to stop them and make the next point. Different questions for different pupils then matched their individual stages of learning and moved them on. As a result, the pace of learning was exactly correct for them and hence they made excellent progress. In less successful teaching, pupils did not receive enough time to reach conclusions and the lesson proceeded at a rather frenetic rate.

The curriculum is good, containing all the subjects and aspects that it should. Links between subjects are made effectively when relevant, so pupils understand that acquired skills can often be applied to a range of different situations. Planning is thorough and what is taught is adapted to meet pupils' different needs. Strategies to help pupils who might otherwise fall behind, such as one-to-one teaching in mathematics, or to enrich the learning of gifted pupils are also effectively planned. Visits, visitors and after-school clubs enhance learning effectively, although pupils' own cultural experiences are not used as frequently as they might be as a learning resource for each other. Great care is taken to devise and practise policies to support pupils in difficulty. Seeking and using advice from outside agencies is an outstanding feature. As soon as a pupil's need, whether educational, emotional or behavioural, is identified, the relevant expertise is sought straight away. Subsequent advice is then acted on promptly. The staff are very conscious of using such occasions as opportunities to extend their own expertise, so they can then apply the techniques and methods themselves to support all other pupils. As a result, pupils' progress and learning are maintained at good rates. Individual case studies, scrutinised in the inspection, bear out this finding.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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<p>The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	2
	2
<p>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</p>	2
<p>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</p>	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders, managers and governors monitor the work of the school effectively. They respond well to the information that they gather. Lessons are regularly observed and advice and feedback are given in order to improve performance. The headteacher's open, approachable manner inspires the staff's confidence and morale and she is supported effectively by a knowledgeable deputy headteacher. Safeguarding is taken very seriously and all statutorily required policies and procedures, including the vetting of staff, are fully in place. Parents overwhelmingly support what is done for their children and the partnership is beneficial to pupils' progress. Large meetings have been difficult in the past year, owing to the building project. It was necessary, for example, to move the whole school into very cramped temporary structures, but parents express high levels of satisfaction with the welcome that they receive. One commented on the 'professional way in which every problem was dealt with and the headteacher still had time to listen and talk'. As soon as the new building was open, a community event was arranged. People in the locality were invited to come and see it and its design, including a large hall, meeting rooms and a caf   area, were advertised as places for the whole community. The school's audit and evaluation of arrangements for community cohesion indicate a good, developing picture. Partnerships with a Scottish Island school and a school in Uganda have impressed pupils about similarities that they share with children in these very different localities, as well as respect for the differences. Pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds are included well in what the school provides, thriving as individuals and progressing equally well academically. Taking all this into account, the school provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<p>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning</p>	2
	2
<p>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</p>	2
<p>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</p>	2
<p>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</p>	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery with often very low skills compared with those usually found. Several speak very little English and mathematical skills are also frequently low. As a result, although boys and girls make good progress in all areas of learning, attainment remains below what is usual by the time they enter Year 1. The children enjoy what is planned for them and settle quickly, owing to the strong emphasis placed on personal, social and emotional development when they first enter. The choice of home visits and/or visiting the staff smoothes the induction process effectively, so individual needs can be met well. The welcoming and stimulating learning environment that children find, linked with good levels of care, ensure that they achieve well. Behaviour is good. The children play safely, share equipment and, by the time they reach Reception, talk happily about what they do and know, including 'what is good for you' and what is not. Good teaching captures children's natural curiosity and provides a well-planned range of activities, carefully balanced between those led by staff and those chosen by children. While children are always keen to learn outside, since moving into the new building, provision indoors has been the main priority and this is good, with much that is of outstanding quality, including the bright new resources that engage children's concentration all the time. All the staff in Nursery and Reception are very good at engaging children in conversation, developing vocabulary and sentence construction. Good leadership is now correctly based on a clear vision to improve provision outside, so it is as strong as that which is available indoors. The capacity to achieve this is clearly strong. The staff are skilful practitioners who all understand children's learning and developmental needs. Systems to monitor and track progress are in place and staff know how to target the needs of individuals effectively across all areas of learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

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Views of parents and carers

Parents are very positive about the school. Several highly complimentary written comments were on the questionnaires and only very few negative ones. These views were explored with senior staff and inspectors made other checks of their own. In all cases, they found that the school had responded to parents very well, investigating what they said and acting accordingly. Inspectors agree with the overwhelming view of parents that the school is well led and that teaching is good, so their children are safe and making good progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Thomas' 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 83 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 231 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	64	28	34	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	49	59	30	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	57	69	31	37	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	54	32	39	4	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	52	63	28	34	3	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	44	54	36	43	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	41	43	52	6	7	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)	32	39	33	40	4	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	50	38	46	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	42	41	49	7	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	35	44	53	7	8	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	40	48	40	48	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	58	35	42	1	1	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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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 November 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Thomas's Church of England Primary School, North Kensington, W10 5EF

Thank you for being so kind, friendly and polite when my colleagues and I visited your school. You helped such a lot to make the two days go smoothly. We enjoyed speaking to you and seeing your work. It is great that so many of you told us that you like school and that your teachers teach well and look after you well while you are there. We agree with you about these ideas.

We also enjoyed talking to some of the School Councillors and agree with them that your school is good and that your work is of good quality. We agree that the new building is great and were very interested in your comments about the difficulties of being in temporary classrooms for some time.

Here are some of the good things that we liked about your school

- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes and throughout the school are making good progress and achieving well.
- Your behaviour is good and you all get on well together ' your backgrounds and ethnicity make no difference to this, because you are interested in each other's different cultures and ideas, which is also good.
- Your headteacher and the staff are very good at learning new ways of teaching you from specialists and experts ' this helps children with particular learning needs to do well.
- Your headteacher and deputy headteacher have good ideas for improving your school further.

Here are two important things that we think the staff can do to improve your school

- To listen to you more about what you think are the best ways to teach you, especially in mathematics.
- To give you more opportunities to tell each other about the variety of backgrounds and cultures from which you come.

I should like to wish you the very best for your future and hope that you will always enjoy learning as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

John W Paull, Lead Inspector

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