

St Thomas of Canterbury Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105970
Local Authority	Salford
Inspection number	336594
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Pat Kime HMI

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	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Fr David Macfarlane
Headteacher	Mr David Deane
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed almost seven hours of learning in lessons. They visited 14 lessons, seeing all the teachers, and held meetings with staff, pupils and a representative of the governing body. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including records of pupils' progress, curricular plans and the schools' improvement plan. Inspectors took account of the responses to the inspection questionnaire received from 102 parents or carers, 111 pupils and 21 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception)
- pupils' attainment and progress in English
- the effectiveness of support for pupils at risk of underachieving and those who are learning English as an additional language
- the leadership and management of the various subjects of the curriculum.

Information about the school

This average-sized primary school serves a diverse community in an area facing considerable disadvantage. Around two thirds of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest groups being Black African and those from Eastern Europe. The number of pupils learning English as an additional language is three times the national average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is three times the national average. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a little above average for this size of school. Among the pupils are children in the care of the local authority and a small minority from families seeking asylum in Britain. The number of pupils starting or leaving the school part way through their primary education has reduced, but a significant number still arrive well into Key Stage 2, often with little or no English. For instance, nearly a third of the pupils in the present Year 6 joined the school during Key Stage 2.

The school holds several awards, including Activemark and the quality mark for basic skills. It is a hub school for English as an additional language within the Greater Manchester Challenge.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The school has continued to improve since it was last inspected. The quality of education and care provided is now outstanding. All groups of pupils make outstanding progress academically and in their personal development. They attain above average overall academic standards by the end of Key Stage 2. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds work and play together very harmoniously.

The keys to the school's success are:

- outstanding, clear-sighted leadership with determination that every pupil will do as well as possible and will leave the school literate and numerate
- very high quality teaching, built on very positive relationships
- rigorous assessment of pupils' progress and evaluation of the school's performance
- outstanding pastoral care.

Pupils, parents, staff and governors recognise how much the headteacher has achieved for the school. He leads the school extremely well and has built a high-performing staff team. The school has made very good progress in dealing with the issues raised at the last inspection.

In 2009 the Year 6 pupils' results in the national tests were above average overall. They were well above average in science and above average in mathematics. In English the results were no better than average because, in writing, few pupils attained highly for their age. This attainment represents exceptionally good progress in Key Stage 2 from their starting point at age seven. Pupils are now doing very well in each key stage, with most making better than average progress year-on-year. They get a particularly good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage which has improved greatly since the last inspection. Nevertheless, for these young children, the range of learning activities beyond the classrooms is limited by the cramped outdoor facilities.

The school provides a good curriculum. It is enriched and extended by a good number and range of activities beyond lessons and many successful additional programmes to support pupils who are new to English and those at risk of underachievement. In recent years the school has, understandably, focused on strengthening work in the core subjects, English, mathematics and science, along with information and communication technology (ICT). Teachers have begun to link work in several subjects around 'topics' that appeal to the children but this approach is not equally well developed across the school, nor is the leadership and management of the various subjects of the curriculum. Staff and governors are strongly committed to improving the school further and their successful track record shows they are very well placed to do so. It is testament to the

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accuracy and rigour of the school's evaluation of its effectiveness that all the areas for improvement below, and more, are already included in its improvement plan.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- While maintaining its many strengths and embedding recent initiatives, the school should develop its wider curriculum and the leadership and management of it.
- Raise attainment in writing so that more pupils reach higher than the expected standard for their age.
- Improve the outdoor learning environment for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

When children start in the Nursery, many can do much less than most children their age. Their early skills for literacy and numeracy, and their knowledge about the world around them, are often particularly poor. Additionally, a lot of pupils start the school later, many of them with little or no English. Whatever and whenever their starting points, all pupils make outstanding progress. This is because:

Results of tests and assessments show a strongly rising trend in recent years. In 2009, attainment in Key Stage 1 was broadly average in reading and writing and below average in mathematics. In Key Stage 2 attainment was average in English, though weaker in writing than reading; above average in mathematics; and well above average in science.

Throughout the school pupils are making very rapid progress in their learning. The very positive responses to the inspection questionnaires show that pupils and their parents and carers know this. The pupils are eager learners who enjoy lessons. They want to do well and they heed teachers' comments on their work. In the lessons observed expectations were high and the majority of pupils were working around or above the level expected for their age. Overall attainment was above average in several of the mathematics lessons seen. However, the school's records and pupils' books show that attainment in writing is somewhat below average in most year groups.

Pupils learn about healthy and safe lifestyles. The questionnaire responses from pupils and parents and carers confirm this. Pupils feel safe at school and extra-curricular sports clubs are fully subscribed. The pupils' generally excellent behaviour supports learning because it aids orderly and purposeful lessons. Pupils have good opportunities to contribute to school life and they take responsibilities seriously. They are well involved in the life of the parish and they raise funds for a number of charitable causes. Pupils learn about the world of work, business, and civic life. This, along with their secure basic skills, the personal attributes they acquire, and their habits of good attendance and punctuality prepare them well for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The teaching is never less than good and much is of an outstanding quality. This is why pupils are now making such good progress in learning. A number of strengths were evident in the lessons seen and from examination of pupils' books.

- Teachers expect a lot of their pupils. They pitch the work at a level that is hard but attainable. They question pupils skilfully to push their understanding on and they make the work interesting for pupils.
- They use a variety of resources and activities skilfully so that pupils consolidate new learning well. Learning is often fun.
- There are clear, measurable targets for pupils' learning in each lesson. These are tailored carefully to different ability levels.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very skilfully but unobtrusively so that lessons are orderly and purposeful and move along at a good pace, with the focus firmly on understanding the work in hand.
- Teaching assistants are well-briefed and deployed to good effect. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
- Information and communication technology is used effectively as an integral part of teaching and learning.

When teaching was good, rather than outstanding, it was because of minor shortcomings such as not always giving pupils sufficient time for discussion or not

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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capitalising fully on opportunities for pupils to use and apply new knowledge.

Pupils' work is generally marked well but some teachers point out more precisely than others what pupils need to do to improve their work.

The school's good curriculum is carefully planned to build pupils' learning and personal development progressively. It covers all that is required and has particular strengths in the provision for pupils who are learning English as an additional language, extra-curricular activities, and visits and visitors related to pupils' studies. In recent years the school has emphasised the development of provision in the core subjects and ICT and in ensuring that there are adequate resources across all subjects. Staff are at an early stage of work to develop links between subjects.

The quality of pastoral care is outstanding. Every pupil is valued and encouraged as an individual and those who need support personally or in their learning receive it. Pupils know the adults care about them and help them to do well. There are very good arrangements to help pupils settle in, whenever they join the school, and to smooth the transition from one key stage to the next, especially from Reception to Year 1. The school helps parent/carers to support their children and works in good partnership with external agencies.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has built on the strengths in leadership and management that were evident at the last inspection. The headteacher continues to drive improvement with great ambition for the pupils. Staff and governors are committed to providing the best possible quality of teaching and support in order to narrow the attainment gap and enable every pupil to achieve. The senior staff are a strong team and their skills are being developed systematically to broaden the leadership capacity further. Alongside this, the skills of other teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of lessons and advise and support their colleagues have developed well. Teamwork is strong. Staff undertake a great deal of additional training and they run and evaluate small scale trials before introducing any new approach school-wide. The school has clear, manageable plans to tackle its well-judged priorities. Subject leadership is particularly good for subjects included in the school's current improvement plan.

Governors know the school well. They keep a close eye on how well the pupils are doing and meet their responsibilities for safeguarding pupils. They contribute to the school's

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plans for improvement and strike a good balance between support and challenge.

The school is an example of a cohesive community where pupils from varied backgrounds get along together very well and those who join the school late are well-integrated. Pupils learn about others with different backgrounds from their own through developing links with other schools in Britain. Their appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity is enhanced, for example, by the study of influential role models such as Barack Obama and Ms Dynamite during Black History Month.

The arrangements for safeguarding pupils follow recommended good practice. All relevant policies are reviewed regularly and there is a good level of staff training. The school works in close partnership with other agencies to promote the welfare and safety of its pupils, especially those who may be vulnerable.

At whole-school level, very close checks are kept on each pupil's progress towards targets that are pitched high. Effective steps are taken to nip any underachievement in the bud and to support pupils who need a little extra push or who have gaps in their learning. The school's record of continuous improvement, its clear vision for the future, and its increased leadership capacity mean it is very well-placed to go from strength to strength.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes has improved greatly, and is very well led and managed. The quality of care and education is very high and staff have built a good partnership with parents and carers. Children greatly enjoy learning, they have

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confidence in the adults and they are making excellent progress. By the end of this key stage, they attain broadly average standards with pockets of above average attainment. Progress is especially good in personal, social and emotional development and the development of skills for early literacy and numeracy. Children learn how to keep safe and healthy and they develop good social skills so they get along very well together, take turns and share.

The teaching is predominantly outstanding. There is an interesting range of carefully planned activities for the children, which takes good account of their individual needs and interests. Staff assess children's developing skills carefully in all areas of their learning. Children who need extra help are identified early and given appropriate support. The staff are highly skilled at promoting effective learning through activities that children select themselves as well as in sessions of direct teaching. For example, they use play settings very well to develop children's vocabulary.

There is a strong drive to continue improving the provision and staff have correctly identified the outdoor environment as a priority.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The table below shows that almost all the parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire have a very positive view of the school. They know their children are happy at school and they are particularly appreciative of the quality of teaching, how the school keeps them informed, and the leadership and management of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Thomas of Canterbury Primary School 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 102 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 235 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	77	22	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	65	64	37	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	70	69	30	29	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	69	68	32	31	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	77	75	25	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	69	68	32	31	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	49	49	48	2	2	1	1
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)	57	56	42	41	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	51	50	48	47	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	41	55	54	1	1	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	43	53	52	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	71	70	23	23	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	82	80	20	20	0	0	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.



22 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas of Canterbury Primary School, Salford, M7 4XG

You may remember Mr Halford, Mr Crowther and I visiting your school recently to check how well you are all learning. Thank you for making us welcome and for talking to us about your work and life at school. We learned a lot from seeing your lessons, looking at your work and talking to you. We enjoyed your lessons so much that we often wanted to stay longer. This letter is to tell you the main things we found out about your school.

I am delighted to tell you that we judged your school as outstanding. That is the top of Ofsted's four grades so everyone at St Thomas of Canterbury has a lot to be proud of.

The teaching is extremely good and you make outstanding progress, especially in literacy, numeracy and science and in your personal development. By Year 6, your attainment is above average. We were impressed by your commitment to learning and your excellent behaviour. We were also struck by the great determination of Mr Deane and the staff to do the very best for every one of you. The adults at school take very good care of you and support you and your families really well.

Your school has improved since it was last inspected and we know that the staff and governors are determined that it will go on getting better. We and Mr Deane agreed that the next priorities for improvement are:

- developing the planning for subjects other than English, mathematics and science, especially for 'topics'
- making sure that more of you reach above average standards in writing
- improving the outdoor facilities for children in Nursery and Reception.

For you, the most important things are to do your best in everything and to carry on enjoying learning. I am sure that you will have good ideas about how to improve the school. I hope you will contribute them through the school council. You all have our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Pat Kime

Her Majesty's Inspector

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