

St Thomas CofE Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106487
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	336681
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Frank Carruthers

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Gleave
Headteacher	Dr Jean Forward
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons or parts of lessons, observing eight teachers, and held meetings with the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, staff, visiting specialists and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including policies on safeguarding, the school's development plan, teachers' planning, assessment files and records of pupils' progress, including individual education plans for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff and pupils completed questionnaires and 24 questionnaires returned from parents and carers were also read and analysed.

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

- the achievement of all groups of pupils, especially in writing
- the effectiveness of procedures to promote good attendance
- the quality of teaching and how well areas for improvement at the last inspection have been addressed
- all aspects of safeguarding and provision to secure the welfare of pupils.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average primary school nationally. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The majority have moderate or specific learning difficulties and some have behavioural, social or emotional difficulties. A small number of pupils are looked after by the local authority. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of one Reception class. A privately run pre-school playgroup operates in the school and is subject to a separate inspection. The school has gained the Investors in People Award, the Activemark, the Eco Award (Bronze), the Healthy Schools Award and the foundation level of the International School 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

The school provides a good education for its pupils, who achieve well and enjoy their learning. They make good progress in all areas of learning in the Reception Year and in both key stages in English, mathematics and science. Standards have risen since the time of the last inspection and now match the national average overall but pupils' attainment in writing has lagged slightly behind that in reading and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similarly good progress, including towards targets in their individual education plans, thanks to the effective support they receive from staff. The very large majority of pupils behave well and develop a good awareness of important aspects of their life, such as their personal safety and how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.

These outcomes are the result of effective teaching as well as good care, guidance and support that staff provide. The staff know their pupils very well and this means they quickly identify any concerns about behaviour or underachievement and take appropriate steps to help pupils. For example, writing has been the focus of attention in recent terms and this remains an important area for improvement. The curriculum is satisfactory overall and has strengths in basic skills of literacy, numeracy and science. However, pupils do not always acquire skills in information and communication technology (ICT) in a clear, developmental way. The curriculum supports pupils' personal development well, for example through lessons in personal, social and health education and religious education.

The headteacher has driven forward improvements at a good pace, for example in the quality of teaching and learning, the professional development of staff and the delegation of responsibilities to senior leaders and staff new to the school. The governing body supports the leadership team and holds it to account robustly. Improvements to the accommodation have created an attractive environment for learning and the staff do well to overcome difficulties that the ageing buildings pose. Forward planning is detailed and well focused on improving the performance of the school. Self-evaluation is accurate and based on a careful scrutiny of the progress that pupils make. As a result of these effective procedures and the improvements made since the last inspection, the school has good capacity for sustained improvement. One aspect still being developed is the school's plan to promote community cohesion, including pupils' better understanding of the multi-ethnic nature of British society and their awareness of the wider global dimension.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise standards further in writing in both key stages by:
 - consolidating the way teachers' marking informs pupils about the next steps in their learning
 - making best use of cross-curricular topics to promote pupils' writing
 - celebrating pupils' achievements, for instance through judicious use of display.
- Improve the curriculum for ICT, so that pupils build on their skills progressively.
- Put into action the school's plan to promote community cohesion, especially in the wider aspects of British society today and international links.

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

Pupils develop very positive attitudes to learning and, as a result, they make good progress throughout the school. In class, their enthusiasm and ready responses mean they learn at a good pace and enjoy what they do. They take pride in presenting their work and teamwork is a strong feature. This was evident in a project where Year 4 pupils were asked to imagine that they live in India and had to work together to make paper bags that were fit for purpose and in sufficient quantity to earn a basic wage.

Pupils make good progress from their starting points, which are generally below average overall and well below average in reading, writing and mathematical development on entry to school. Attainment in both Years 2 and 6 has risen since the last inspection and tracking information about the current year groups shows continued improvement in reading and mathematics but more limited improvement in writing. Attainment in Year 6 is in line with national averages. In Key Stage 2, almost all pupils are on target to make at least the expected two levels of progress overall. Progress in reading and mathematics is particularly strong.

Pupils take on responsibilities well for aspects of school life and in the local community, raising money for charity and taking part in parish activities. A few pupils present challenging behaviour and senior staff take effective steps to minimise disruption to learning. The steps taken make full use of support staff, outside agencies, involvement of parents and carers and, on very rare occasions, fixed-term exclusions. Levels of attendance are just below the average for primary schools nationally and punctuality is satisfactory. In conjunction with the education welfare service, the school goes to great lengths to improve attendance, including issuing warnings and penalties to parents and carers. Nevertheless, attendance rates are undermined by some parents and carers taking children on holiday during term time despite these good efforts.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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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
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Most teaching is good and provides a brisk pace and high expectations for what pupils can achieve. In a few lessons, the pace is not as good and sometimes pupils do not have enough time to complete activities, having sat for too long listening to the teacher. The staff have improved their use of marking in recent terms, thanks to good support from local authority specialists. There is some excellent practice in assessment and marking in individual classes but, as yet, this is not consistent across the whole school. In many cases, pupils are gaining a good awareness of how well they are doing and they evaluate their own and their classmates' work regularly.

Promising curricular development since the last inspection has improved links between subjects. Topics are planned to bring subjects together and make a more coherent body of knowledge and skills for pupils to enjoy. This was evident in Year 3 when the teacher used history, in this instance schools in Roman times, to promote writing well. Recent difficulties with hardware, software and internet access have undermined the curriculum for ICT, however, and this subject is an area for development. A programme of activities from the Education Business Partnership promotes a good understanding of economic and other life skills for older pupils.

There are well-organised arrangements for the care of all pupils. Support is clearly targeted for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose circumstances mean they need additional help. This support, at times using the school's nurture room, has resulted in improvements in pupils' communication skills, confidence and attitudes to learning. Links with Nursery classes in other schools, the privately run Nursery which the school hosts, and with secondary schools are good. The links ensure

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a smooth transition into school and on to the next stage of education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The governors and staff take an effective part in the drive to improve provision and are motivated to contribute. The senior staff monitor the learning of all pupils closely, in order to confirm that the pupils are taking full advantage of the opportunities the school offers them. The senior staff acted quickly and effectively, for example, to promote attainment in reading through improved teaching of letters and sounds, one-to-one support for underachieving pupils, and by introducing relevant and exciting texts for pupils to enjoy. Actions to improve writing are developing satisfactorily. Ensuring equality of opportunity and overcoming barriers to learning are central aims of the school, which are effective in helping pupils to achieve their potential. The school's engagement with parents and carers, through meetings and workshops, is good. The school adopts recommended good practice across all aspects of safeguarding, including the safe recruitment of staff. There is carefully programmed training for staff on issues of child protection. The school has well-established links with the church and local schools and has an action plan for improving wider links, including those with schools further afield. Overall, the school's promotion of community cohesion is developing satisfactorily.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2

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	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

A well-planned environment for learning engages the children and promotes their curiosity and enthusiasm very well. Children make good progress across all areas of learning and in the current class most are on target to meet the early learning goals by the end of the school year. In previous years, however, attainment in reading, writing and mathematical development has not been as good and has been below average by the end of the Reception Year. A recent project to promote children's skills of communication, language and literacy has made the difference this year. Since the last inspection, the indoor spaces have been expanded very effectively, so that all the recommended areas of learning for children of this age are catered for well. Similarly, outdoor provision has been extended and there is a sheltered area for children when the weather is poor. A problem of access to the outdoor area is to be addressed through the installation of a ramp making it possible to have continuous provision. Teaching is good and the newly appointed Reception teacher leads and manages the team of assistants well. There is a balance of child- and teacher-initiated activities that promotes learning and independent behaviour well. For instance, children were observed working collaboratively on the story of 'The Gingerbread Man', using puppets. The children had time to explore their interests and ideas in detail. Arrangements for the transition into Year 1 and links with parents and carers are good. Forward planning is comprehensive and all staff involved in the provision have a shared vision of how they want to develop the potential of the whole child.

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

Views of parents and carers

The rate of response to the inspectors' questionnaire was low and so an individual response commands a disproportionate percentage. Most parents and carers who completed the questionnaire expressed support for the valuable work of the school and

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commented favourably on the progress their children make. The inspection team supports these positive views. A few parents and carers expressed concerns about the behaviour of a very small minority of pupils. Inspectors note these views and consider the school takes appropriate steps to improve behaviour when it is unsatisfactory. Where it might impede the learning of pupils the school makes use of fixed-period exclusions appropriately to minimise the impact of unsatisfactory behaviour on other pupils.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Thomas CofE Junior and Infant 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 24 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 180 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	50	11	46	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	67	7	29	0	0	1	4
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	63	6	25	3	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	46	9	38	3	13	1	4
The teaching is good at this school	13	54	9	38	0	0	1	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	46	9	38	2	8	1	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	38	15	63	0	0	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)	10	42	10	42	2	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	50	9	38	1	4	2	8
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	33	9	38	6	25	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	46	9	38	4	17	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	12	50	9	38	2	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	54	8	33	3	13	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



26 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas C of E Junior and Infant School, Golborne, Warrington, WA3
3TH

It was a pleasure to inspect your school. You were all very friendly and helpful and we enjoyed finding out from you how you are getting on. On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to share with you what we found.

Your school is providing you with a good education. You make good progress in lessons and by the time you leave at the end of Year 6 most of you reach the average standards of pupils in English, mathematics and science. This is because the teaching you receive is good and you work hard. Your behaviour in lessons is generally good and this means you learn well and pay good attention. You told us bullying is rare and, if it happens, the staff deal with it promptly. You said mathematics, physical education and art are among your favourite subjects but you feel you do not have enough time using computers. You know your targets for learning well and enjoy the activities out of school and visits you make to places of interest. Your headteacher, teachers and teaching assistants take good care of you all and make sure that you all feel safe and secure.

Part of my job is to identify how the school can be even better. There are three improvements to make and you need to help with the first one.

- You need to improve your skills at writing.
- Your teachers need to help you to improve your computer skills.
- Your headteacher and senior staff need to do more to help you understand about different races and cultures in Britain today and what life is like in other parts of the world.

Please continue to work hard. I send you all my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Frank Carruthers

Lead Inspector

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