

Thomas A Becket First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125954
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	340879
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Margaret Coussins HMI

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	593
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Whyte
Headteacher	Vivien Stevens
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation form, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress and safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires were analysed from 152 parents.

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

- the effectiveness of teaching and assessment to enable all pupils to achieve as well as they can, and especially more able pupils
- how well the school is improving the attainment of boys' reading and writing
- the impact of the developments in outdoor learning
- how well the work of the leadership and management of the school is driving forward and securing school improvement.

Information about the school

This is a very large first school. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Their needs most often relate to speech, language and communication or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Some pupils have been identified for help with dyslexia. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups and those who speak English as an additional language is below average. There is a breakfast club and an after-school club on the school premises. These are managed by a private provider and are not included in this inspection. The school has an Activemark and a Rights Respecting School award from UNICEF.

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

Thomas A Becket First is a good school of which staff, governors, parents and pupils are rightly very proud. Parents are very positive about the school and appreciate the personal attention that their children receive. One parent who typifies this wrote, 'Enormous effort is made to make a large school friendly and welcoming to all pupils and all feel involved and important in the life of the school.' The relentless drive and commitment of the highly effective headteacher to ensure that all pupils have the best learning experiences has successfully improved the school from its satisfactory position at the last inspection and demonstrates that it has a good capacity to improve further. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors work closely to monitor and evaluate accurately the strengths and weaknesses of the school and drive forward improvement. As a result, at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time they leave the school, attainment is above average and pupils achieve well from levels that are in line with expectations for their age when they start at school.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, do well because teaching and the curriculum are good and provide them with opportunities to be creative and develop their talents and interests. As a result, pupils enjoy school. For example one pupil said, 'I am always excited about the next day.' Good improvement has been made in developing and implementing effective assessment procedures, including the use of assessment to inform next steps in children's learning, although this is not yet fully embedded across the school. On occasion, tasks that are planned for independent learning do not provide sufficient challenge and so sometimes some pupils do not make as rapid progress as they might. This has been correctly identified by the school as an area on which to build by extending the existing good and sometimes outstanding practice, which was seen in some lessons during the inspection.

Pupils do particularly well in reading, where a considerable proportion attains higher-than-expected levels by the end of Year 2. This is the result of a whole-school focus on reading, which has seen an increase in good quality resources and a consistent approach to the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) across the school. Writing is the relatively weaker area in English. Pupils enjoy writing but they do not always have the skills to produce writing of a high quality. Again, this is an area identified for improvement by the school and plans are well under way to ensure that the teaching of writing skills is developed further.

Attendance is broadly average and the school works well with parents to promote the importance of regular attendance, for example, through frequent reminders in newsletters. The school also works effectively with outside agencies to support families

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where absence is an issue. However, the school could do more work with the pupils to encourage them to attend regularly and celebrate, on a more frequent basis, good attendance.

A notable development since the appointment of the headteacher has been the distribution of leadership and management responsibilities. This is beginning to have a positive impact on school improvement as leaders and managers are more involved and accountable for the school's work, although it is a relatively recent process and the impact of their work on outcomes for the pupils is not yet fully evident. There is an excitement and determination to move the school forward and staff say they feel valued and empowered to initiate change.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or better by planning activities for pupils' independent learning that are more precisely matched to their needs.
- Improve attendance by involving pupils more frequently in promoting regular attendance and celebrating good attendance of individuals and classes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy coming to school, have good attitudes to their learning and achieve well. The school has successfully narrowed the gap between the attainment of boys and girls, especially in their reading and writing, and, during the inspection, their work shows that they are doing equally well. The development of outdoor learning, including 'The Forest School' approach, has been beneficial to the attainment of all pupils but in particular has motivated boys to help close the gap. For example, a group of boys were really enjoying using a range of materials to make models of a stable for the Nativity story, and boys and girls had great fun constructing a story for their Nativity character using a story line made from pebbles, leaves, sticks and other natural materials. They had great fun and developed story-sequencing skills and story language very well. Most lessons successfully develop speaking and listening skills as pupils are given many opportunities to work with their 'talk partners' to share their ideas and opinions.

Behaviour is good. Pupils get on well together and value and respect diversity in backgrounds, faiths and cultures as well as differences in physical needs. This is demonstrated by the accreditation of a Rights Respecting School award. Pupils' enthusiastic participation in a range of sporting activities and their understanding of healthy eating and balanced diets contribute to their good awareness and commitment to a healthy lifestyle. Pupils take their responsibilities in class and around the school very seriously. Pupils value the role of the 'Becket Buddies', who help others at playtimes. For example one said, 'If you feel upset or a bit sad or haven't got anyone to play with, they look after you.' Members of the school council, known as the TASC force, are proud of their contribution to decision making, for example, drawing up the Golden Rules. The role that pupils play in the wider community is particularly notable. They get involved with activities that help them to develop an increasing awareness and understanding of

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environmental issues in society as a whole, such as recycling. The talented choir performs at many local events, where they have opportunities to meet and talk with elderly residents. Pupils' good basic skills, including those in information and communication technology, their positive attitudes and good personal qualities, prepare them well for their future lives.

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	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The well-balanced curriculum is carefully planned to provide activities that are relevant and meaningful to pupils and makes a good contribution to their academic progress and their personal and social development. The personal, social, health and citizenship programme, for example, is very effective and encourages pupils to reflect on their rights and responsibilities. Social and emotional aspects of learning are also given a high priority and contribute well to developing pupils as well-rounded individuals. Sessions known as 'Turtle Time' are especially effective for supporting pupils with difficulties in social interaction. Themed approaches to learning are enhanced by a wide range of enrichment opportunities, including good use of the school grounds, the local

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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environment, visitors to school and trips out. These activities broaden pupils' interests and experiences. Pupils and their parents appreciate the wide range of after-school clubs.

Teaching is often skilful, motivating and enthusiastic. Teachers manage their classrooms well and teaching assistants provide skilled and generally well-targeted support. Good assessment is an integral part of most lessons. Teachers carefully check on pupils' progress at significant points and encourage them to explain what they have learned. This has so far been focused, with good impact, on mathematics and plans are well under way to extend this to English. However, pupils sometimes say that work is too easy.

Parents and pupils agree that the school looks after them well. Relationships between pupils and adults are trusting and caring. Vulnerable pupils, including those with specific needs, are provided for very well, including support in nurture groups and through the work of the learning mentor. This helps them achieve as well as their peers. A hygiene and therapy room ensures that the standard of care given to pupils with physical disabilities is fully meeting their needs. Partnership with other agencies is embedded within the work of the school and makes a very positive contribution to pupils' well-being and provides well-targeted support for pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination very effectively. It ensures that all pupils have every chance to take part in all of its activities and, as a result, all groups of pupils achieve well. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. It actively promotes global dimensions through its sponsorship of two children in Africa and the multicultural dimension of the curriculum, which develops pupils' awareness of challenges faced by communities around the world. There are good links with the local community, including a local churches' homeless project, a local home for the elderly, a day care centre for adults with learning needs and with a local high school. Pupils support local and national charities, including Mencap. The national dimension is developing, with plans to link with a school in another local authority.

The consistency of approach of all leaders is an example of the effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement. The school has a highly inclusive ethos and ambitious targets are being set and achieved.

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Governors' work is closely linked to school development priorities. The governing body is extremely well organised and the school benefits from a range of expertise within its members. They are supportive and know the school well. They have been particularly active in securing the future building plans. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are good. Resources are deployed effectively to ensure that outcomes for pupils are good and that good value for money is achieved.

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
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 join the Reception classes with skills, knowledge and understanding that are in line with expectations for their age. They make good progress to reach, and often exceed, the expected goals for their learning by the time they move in to Year 1. Skills in linking sounds and letters and calculation have improved from the previous year, but along with language for communication and thinking are the weaker areas of attainment. There are very positive relationships between children and adults, and as a result, behaviour is good and children feel safe and secure. Children thoroughly enjoy all the activities on offer. There are good opportunities for children to take responsibility for their own learning as there is a good balance of activities directed by adults and those where children can make their own choices. As a result, children quickly develop independence. Children enjoy healthy snacks and lots of opportunities for physical activity in the outdoor area, which has been developed over the last year to provide a good resource for play and learning. There is a seamless transition between learning indoors and learning outdoors. The environment indoors and outside is stimulating and exciting for children but sometimes opportunities are missed to plan activities that

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challenge children in their learning, particularly for the more able children. Children make a good contribution to the smooth running of the day by tidying up their classrooms and cooperating well with each other. Children's confidence and self-esteem were evident in their Christmas performance for their parents. They were bubbling with enthusiasm and their singing and dancing was of a high quality. The school forges strong links with parents. One parent wrote of the 'excellent induction process in Reception which fully consulted parents'. Children are supported well and their welfare is given high priority, reflecting the good leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

A small minority of parents responded to the Ofsted questionnaire with their views about the school. The vast majority of those who completed the questionnaire agreed that their children enjoyed school and that they are happy with their children's experience at school. One summed up the views of many with the comment, 'The school is a happy, inclusive and energetic place for learning.' This reflects the finding of the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thomas A Becket First 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 152 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 593 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	111	73	38	25	2	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	105	69	42	28	1	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	74	49	72	47	3	2	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	75	49	68	45	4	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	83	55	64	42	3	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	89	59	55	36	7	5	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	89	59	60	39	1	1	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)	69	45	56	37	5	3	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	73	48	69	45	2	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	69	45	63	41	7	5	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	65	43	69	45	2	1	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	97	64	48	32	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	109	72	38	25	1	1	1	1

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.



11 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thomas A Becket First School, Worthing BN13 1JB

I am writing to thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. What a lovely time we had with you. Thank you for being so friendly and polite and telling us what you thought about your school. You are right to enjoy coming to Thomas A Becket First School because it is a good school.

We agree with you and your parents that your school is a caring and safe place to be and this helps you make good progress. Your school has improved since the last visit by the inspectors because the headteacher and all the adults have been working very hard to make it better for you. You work very hard and by the time you leave you are doing well in your reading, writing and mathematics. You have done especially well in your reading and your mathematics has improved too. Well done for this. You need to try and do as well in your writing. Well done also for trying so hard to become fit and healthy.

Here are two things that we believe will help the school get even better:

- We have asked your teachers to make sure that when they set you tasks to do on your own that they are just right for you and help you learn new things quickly.
- We want the school to encourage you to come to school every day so that you don't miss out on important learning. The school already works very hard with your parents. We think you can help too if the school helps you keep track of which classes have the best attendance. You can celebrate this like you celebrate your other achievements.

The headteacher and staff are determined that you can do even better and you can help them by always working hard and doing your best. Thank you for helping us and for making our visit to your school such fun.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins

Lead inspector

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