



St Thomas' Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104363
LEA Wolverhampton
Inspection number 286920
Inspection dates 6 June 2006 to 6 June 2006
Reporting inspector Linda Rockey HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mattox Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Wednesfield
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV11 3TG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01902 558964
Number on roll	199	Fax number	01902 558297
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Anne Barry
Date of previous inspection	20 May 2002	Headteacher	Mrs Helen Morris

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. During the inspection, a range of documents were scrutinised, discussions were held with staff, children and parents. The inspector met with the chair of governors and two local authority inspectors, and attended a whole-school act of collective worship. All classrooms were visited and children's work and teachers' lesson plans were examined. One hundred parents responded to the questionnaire seeking their views about the school.

Description of the school

St Thomas' CE Primary School is situated in Wednesfield near Wolverhampton. It is slightly smaller than most primary schools; its roll has fallen recently because of demographic changes in the local community. There are more boys than girls. Whilst the majority of children are White British, 16% have a minority ethnic heritage. However, none of the children are at an early stage of learning English. There are few children entitled to free school meals and the proportion of children with learning difficulties is below that found nationally. There is a broad range of social circumstances represented by the families whose children attend. Children start school with a wide range of abilities but overall, their level of skills and knowledge on admission is below that expected for their age.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'St Thomas' is a friendly, happy school with high standards.'

From the start of the inspection, this was the clear message given by parents, staff and children alike. Three friendly and articulate Year 6 councillors greeted the inspector at the school entrance and proudly showed her around. They had many positive things to say about their school. They explained how the school council had worked to improve playtimes in response to children's views expressed in the school's 'opinion box'.

Children and parents are right to be proud of St Thomas'; it is a good school. Since its inspection four years ago, the school has continued to provide good quality education for children, preparing them well for life as active citizens in a diverse society. Exemplary behaviour, high quality relationships and a secure, caring environment enable children to thrive. One parent wrote to the inspector: 'We would strongly recommend the school to other parents'. The areas identified for improvement have been effectively addressed. The school knows it is good and the inspector agrees and judges children's personal development as outstanding.

The Christian ethos and the school's approach to firm, fair discipline permeates all aspects of school life. There is a clear expectation that all children should be enabled to realise their unique and special talents. This is illustrated in a colourful display entitled, 'God gave Joseph a special talent'. Children at St Thomas' develop into articulate, caring young people, prepared for the next stage in their education and keen to make a contribution to the society in which they live.

One parent commented: 'I am particularly grateful to the staff for making school such a wonderful experience for the children'. Learning is fun and children get off to a good start in Reception. Staff carefully plan activities which engage and challenge, successfully developing children's knowledge and skills across all areas of learning. Children make good progress from their starting points. They continue to achieve well as they move through the school because teaching and the curriculum are good and build on what the children know and can do. By the end of Year 6, children reach higher than average standards.

The quality of teaching is good. Talking to children, skimming through their work and listening to them read, confirms that they clearly enjoy school and are motivated to learn. There are more boys than girls in the school and in some classes this imbalance is significant. Staff work hard to ensure that the particular needs of boys are met, and inspection evidence supports the school's view that boys are engaged effectively in learning and achieve well. All children agreed that adults help them when they are 'stuck' and teachers make learning fun. Children are very enthusiastic about practical investigative work, especially in science. 'We've learned about air and water resistance; it was good fun when we did parachutes!' reported one boy. Children's work is marked regularly but does not always provide them with sufficient guidance about how to improve their work. The school keeps detailed records about the attainment of each child but these are not yet precise enough to effectively track children's rate of progress over time. The school is led and managed well. The headteacher is eager to take the

school forward. She is supported effectively by the deputy headteacher. Recently, the local authority asked the headteacher to work alongside two local schools in order to share her expertise and skills. As a result, there has been greater shared leadership amongst this school's staff. This opportunity could be exploited further. Teachers and teaching assistants are deployed effectively in a well co-ordinated intervention programme. This is designed to give children extra support to help them make good progress in their learning, and includes those who have particular talents.

There are efficient systems in place to ensure accurate school self-evaluation involving staff, governors, children and parents. Subject leaders are increasingly playing their part in this. However, they need to take more responsibility to evaluate the impact of the actions implemented in their subject areas. The governors are supportive and help the school to improve and develop. Several are actively involved in the day-to-day work of the school. Although they receive regular progress reports from the headteacher and staff, governors need to develop their role as 'critical friends' in order to ask challenging and probing questions about the impact of actions identified in the school improvement plan. They recognise the urgent need to address the issue of a falling roll and have started to organise a plan of action.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children do well at St Thomas'. Right from the start in Reception, their progress is tracked and support targeted at specific and individual needs. As a result, by the end of Year 6, standards are consistently above average, and in 2005 they were exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. The good progress children make was evident during the inspection. All children, whatever their background or ability, achieve well because of the good quality teaching they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Punctual, enthusiastic and ready to learn, children attend regularly. They say how much they enjoy school and are excellent ambassadors for it demonstrating exemplary attitudes and behaviour. The school actively encourages children to make a positive contribution to the community. An example of this was seen during the lunchtime. Well-trained Year 5 Play Pals reveal a mature and sensible approach when leading play activities for Years 1 and 2. They provide good, responsible role models. Older children show a great deal of initiative in supporting younger children in and around the school. Their sense of social responsibility and respect for others is helping help them to become good citizens. Children have a good awareness of other cultures and beliefs and understand the school's zero tolerance towards racism.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Children are taught well. This was clear from visiting classrooms, talking to children about their work and discussing with them what they had learned. Lessons are well planned and work is matched carefully to children's abilities. Adults model appropriate language well and have high expectations of children's use of specific and technical vocabulary. Those children with specific learning needs are given good quality support which contributes significantly to their success.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is enriched by visits and visitors. Several children recalled their enjoyment of class trips including a visit to Wednesfield market. They remembered talking to visitors from the police, fire service and St John's Ambulance about their jobs. Children appreciate the opportunities they have to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities at lunchtime and beyond the school day. They particularly enjoy the 6-week courses which they can opt for: safe cycling, music and dance and environmental club and the weekly Soccer 2000, Spanish, French and Tri golf.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Children are well cared for at St Thomas' and say they can turn to an adult if there is a problem confident that 'they will sort it out'. One parent echoed this in her comments to the inspector: 'If a problem arises at all, it is soon rectified by the helpful staff'. There are robust arrangements for risk assessments, child protection and health and safety. The small number of concerns expressed to the inspector were checked out. The matters raised had been considered by the school and action taken to address the concerns.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a clear vision which she articulates well, creating a common purpose amongst staff. School self-evaluation is central to the school's development and involves all staff, governors, children and parents. It accurately identifies the school's strengths and areas to develop. Governors actively support the school and are working hard on plans to raise the profile of the school in the community. They are very aware of the precarious nature of the school's finances, given the falling roll, and are seeking ways to manage this.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming me so warmly when I visited your school recently. I particularly enjoyed the tour organised by the Year 6 school councillors. Talking to you really helped me to find out about how well the school is doing and I agree with you that St Thomas' is a good school.

These are some of the things I liked about your school:

- St Thomas' is welcoming; everyone is included and encouraged to find their own special talent.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you have positive attitudes to learning.
- The adults in school do a good job of helping you to learn and reach high standards.
- You have some interesting activities during lunchtime and after school. The history club is very popular with Year 4 girls and the new Tri Golf looked good!
- The Year 5 Play Pals do a very good job organising and leading lunchtime game activities for Years 1 and 2.
- You enjoy school and get on well with each other and your teachers.

Mrs Morris, the governors and staff do a good job and are always thinking of how to make the school even better. I have suggested some improvements:

- Teachers' marking needs to tell you more about how you can improve your work.
- The school's information about how well you are doing needs to be developed to keep an eye on how fast you improve.

Keep working hard on your writing and have fun with your investigative work in science and mathematics. Enjoy wearing your 'wrong trousers' on 23 June! I wish you all every success in the future.