

# St Thomas' Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104363
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wolverhampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	324031
<b>Inspection date</b>	12 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Derek Watts

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	204
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ann Barry
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Morris
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 June 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Mattox Road Wednesfield Wolverhampton WV11 3TG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01902 558964

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	12 May 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	324031

**Fax number**

01902 558297

<b>Age group</b>	4-11
<b>Inspection date</b>	12 May 2009
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how well leaders and managers are improving provision and pupils' progress in writing
- the factors contributing to the exceptionally high standards and pupils' outstanding progress in science
- how well the school is promoting community cohesion, particularly global cohesion.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, and scrutiny of pupils' work and school documentation. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

St Thomas' is below average in size. About three quarters of the school population are from a White British background. Other pupils come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds with Indian being the next largest group. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. These difficulties lie mainly in the areas of language, speech and communication. Pupils come from a broad range of socio-economic circumstances. The school attracts children from over 15 pre-school settings. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the school includes children in Reception.

## 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' Church of England Primary is a good school. There are some outstanding aspects to its work. Children in Reception get off to a good start because of the good provision. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils achieve well because of good teaching and an outstanding curriculum. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average overall. Excellent care, guidance and support, and a very positive school climate lead to outstanding personal development and well-being for pupils. All groups of pupils are successfully included in this thriving school.

Effective leadership and management contribute considerably to the good quality of provision, the positive outcomes for pupils and the good improvements since the last inspection. An experienced headteacher provides outstanding leadership. With her staff, she has created a very positive atmosphere for pupils to learn in. Her expertise and skills are used by other headteachers and schools in the local authority. The deputy headteacher and leaders of English, mathematics and science are effective in their roles and the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is already good, in spite of being at an early stage of development. Subject leaders have become more actively involved in evaluation and improvement planning since the last inspection. School performance is systematically monitored and reviewed by a wider range of staff. As a result, the school has a clear understanding of what it does well and takes effective action to bring about improvement. For example, significant improvements are being made in writing. Very effective systems to assess and track pupils' attainment and progress have been developed, and staff have a clear overview of how well each individual pupil is performing. Governors are also more effectively involved in checking the school's performance than at the time of the last inspection, and their good understanding enables them to offer constructive challenge as well as strong support. The school demonstrates a good capacity to improve further.

Community cohesion is a current improvement priority and is promoted extremely well. The needs of the local community have been carefully analysed and audited. There are very good partnerships with local churches and local Gurdwara. Global cohesion is promoted effectively through projects such as 'Fair-Trade'. The school is successfully meeting the needs of different groups of pupils. The before- and after-school clubs are much appreciated by working parents. Different cultures and faiths are promoted extremely well through the school's imaginative curriculum.

The school clearly has the confidence of its parents and the vast majority are extremely pleased with the care and education provided for their children. Pupils' progress, the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and the leadership of the school receive considerable praise. The following comments from the parents' questionnaires summed up the views of many: 'My child is making great progress.' 'Children are very well taught.' 'Very pleased with behaviour. Children are very polite, well mannered and respectful.' 'Extremely pleased with the way the school is led.' National assessments in 2008 indicated that standards by the end of Year 2 were above average overall. They were above average in reading and mathematics but broadly average in writing. National test results for Year 6 in 2008 were above average overall but with variation in attainment between subjects. Results were broadly average in English, above average in mathematics and exceptionally high in science. Pupils made good progress from their starting points in Year 2 in English and mathematics and outstanding progress in science.

Improving provision and pupils' performance in writing is a whole-school priority. Good progress is being made and the school's assessments show that more pupils are now attaining the higher National Curriculum levels. Speaking and listening activities are used very well to develop writing. Visual stimuli and poetry are used effectively to inspire pupils to write. For example, in a successful Year 1 lesson, pupils created interesting sentences after being inspired by a poem about sea creatures. They expressed their thoughts and feelings imaginatively and wrote: 'I would like to swim with an octopus in the ocean,' and 'I would like to crawl with a crab and dance with an octopus.' Teachers use modelling effectively to demonstrate to pupils how to create interesting sentences. Pupils write for different purposes and in a variety of styles. There are good opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their writing skills in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 5 in history wrote interesting diaries of their imaginary time in a Victorian workhouse. In Year 6, as part of their design and technology and history work, pupils produced accurate and clear instructions on how to build an Ancient Greek chariot.

Pupils perform so well in science because of the plentiful opportunities for practical investigative work. Pupils work enthusiastically in planning and carrying out investigations. They demonstrate extremely competent skills in predicting, making tests fair, gathering and interpreting data and explaining their findings. Pupils apply previous knowledge and understanding of science well in solving problems. Learning is enhanced by teachers' strong subject knowledge and the high quality resources used. A popular science club also contributes to the exceptionally high standards. Good teaching is a key factor contributing to pupils' good progress. Examples of outstanding practice were seen during the inspection. As a parent wrote, 'Teachers make a great effort to ensure pupils enjoy their learning.' Teachers have high expectations of learning and behaviour. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and respond very well to their teachers' clear explanations and instructions. As the pupils reported, 'Teachers make learning fun.' Questioning is used skilfully by teachers to challenge pupils' thinking and check their knowledge and understanding. Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening because of the opportunities provided for them to discuss their ideas and express opinions. Many pupils are articulate and confident speakers. Assessment information is used well to plan teaching and to match activities and tasks to pupils' abilities and needs. As a result, pupils are challenged well and make good progress. Just occasionally, tasks are not sufficiently well adapted for different ability groups, and the rate of learning slows for some pupils. Teaching assistants are well deployed and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for those who need additional help with literacy and numeracy. Pupils are set specific learning targets in literacy, numeracy and science so they know what they need to do to improve. This individual target setting is much sharper than at the time of the last inspection.

The curriculum promotes good academic progress for pupils and makes an exceptionally good contribution to their personal development. Provision for English and mathematics is effective and contributes to pupils' good progress in these subjects. High quality provision in science gives rise to the exceptionally high standards. The teaching of French in Years 5 and 6 contributes well to pupils' language and cultural development. Health and safety education is promoted extremely well throughout the curriculum. The school offers a good range of additional activities such as clubs and visits. These are thoroughly enjoyed by the pupils and much appreciated by the parents. Visiting sports coaches make a valuable contribution to the school's physical education and sports programme.

Care and support for pupils are outstanding. There are highly effective procedures to safeguard pupils. As a result, pupils feel safe and extremely well cared for at school. They are also confident that there is always an adult they can turn to if they are upset or have a serious problem.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is shown by their very keen participation in activities and good attendance. High expectations by staff and the excellent relationships between adults and pupils lead to outstanding behaviour in class and around the school. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and show an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercising regularly. They thrive on the additional responsibilities they are given and make exceptionally good contributions to the school and to the wider community. Members of the school council have contributed to improvements to school decor. Year 6 playground pals organise interesting activities for younger pupils. Pupils raise funds for a variety of national and overseas charities. At St Thomas', pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education. By the time they leave, they have good literacy and numeracy skills and their personal and social skills are outstanding.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children's attainment on entry to the school varies from year to year. The knowledge and skills of those currently in Reception were broadly as expected for their age. By the end of Reception, children reach above average standards in most areas of learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well. Good attention to children's welfare, effective teaching and an interesting range of learning activities enable children to make good progress. Children make good gains in their personal and social development because of the positive relationships established between adults and children. Children thoroughly enjoy their learning and possess positive attitudes. They are well motivated to learn and readily share learning resources and support each other. Good attention is given to children's speaking and listening skills and to their mathematical development. However, there are insufficient opportunities for children to acquire and practise early writing skills. The school has clear plans to increase the outdoor learning equipment and facilities to enhance the development of children's physical skills.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase opportunities for children to develop early writing skills in Reception and extend outdoor learning facilities.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

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

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

## Personal development and well-being

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

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

13 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas' Church of England Primary School, Wolverhampton, WV11 3TG

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we found. Yours is a good school, with some outstanding features. This is a school you can be very proud of.

These are the main strengths of the school.

- You really enjoy school and the activities provided.
- Your school is a friendly and pleasant place to learn in.
- You are making good progress because of the good teaching you receive.
- You benefit from an outstanding range of learning activities, including good clubs and visits.
- Standards in science are exceptionally high by Year 6 because you have plenty of opportunities to carry out practical investigations.
- Behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school and you get on very well with others.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and fit.
- Staff take very good care of you and provide excellent support.
- The school is extremely well led by your headteacher and she receives strong support from other senior staff.
- The school has outstanding partnerships with the community and you have a very good understanding of how different people live.

There is one area we have asked the school to improve.

- Children in Reception could be given more opportunities to practise their writing skills, and your teachers have clear plans to improve the outdoor learning facilities.

Finally, thank you once again for all your help. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Derek Watts

Lead inspector