

# St Thomas a Becket Catholic Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114578
<b>Local Authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	326041
<b>Inspection date</b>	23 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Eileen Chadwick

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	263
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John McManus
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rachel Turner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 September 2005
<b>School address</b>	Tutts Barn Lane Eastbourne BN22 8XT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01323 737221
<b>Fax number</b>	01323 768580

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<b>Age group</b>	7–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

Impact of initiatives to improve achievement in writing, particularly for boys.

The progress of more capable pupils in mathematics and science.

Impact of leadership and management at different levels on raising standards, especially through monitoring and evaluation, on improving achievement and reducing exclusions.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, discussions with pupils and staff, a review of the assessment data the school uses to track the pupils' progress, and analyses of pupils' work. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector 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

The school is a little larger than most junior schools and serves a wide area that includes four Catholic parishes in the centre and on the outskirts of Eastbourne. The majority of pupils, but not all, come from Catholic families. An above average proportion of pupils come from ethnic backgrounds with the largest groups originating from the Philippines and Eastern Europe. Almost a quarter speak English as an additional language and many of these are at early stages of learning English. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including the number with statements of educational needs, is average. These pupils' needs include speech, literacy, and emotional and physical disabilities. Whilst most pupils have previously attended the infant school that is situated on the same site, a significant minority enter from other primary schools or directly from abroad. Pupils' overall attainment on entry is average, although this covers the full range. Substantial building improvement work is currently ongoing.

The school has gained Basic Skills, Artsmark Silver, Healthy Schools Silver, Activemark and Investors in People awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features. The headteacher provides very good leadership and strikes the right balance between striving for academic achievement and promoting pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils' personal development and behaviour are excellent as a result of the school's outstanding care and support. A strong Catholic ethos and the celebration of cultural diversity are supported by excellent links with the diverse community. Pupils thrive because the school really nurtures its pupils and gives them a very well rounded education. Pupils do well academically and are also given strong opportunities for developing their creative, practical and sporting skills. One parent echoed the views of many when saying, 'We are delighted with the school, our child enjoys school and has had many opportunities to develop not just academically but as a person, too.'

Pupils' achievement is good. By Year 6, standards are well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Standards are very high in reading. The arrangements for teaching reading are very rigorous and, as a result, pupils make excellent progress and very nearly all reach at least the standards expected by Year 6. Standards in writing are above average. Pupils write fluently for different purposes, often showing high levels of creative thinking when story writing. However, a significant minority of lower attaining girls and boys still struggle with spelling and punctuation. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do well and make excellent progress in reading. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve well due to the good support they receive in school and the specialist help given by the local authority.

The headteacher has shown sustained strong leadership. This, and her close partnership with an able senior team and governing body, and committed staff, are central to the school's success. The arrangements for self-evaluation are good. New assessment systems for checking how well pupils learn are playing a significant part in helping senior leaders and teachers to accurately pinpoint how well different groups are achieving and then address any weaknesses. There are rigorous programmes for helping pupils who are in danger of falling behind to make up lost ground. These have had an excellent impact on raising standards in reading. The school sets demanding targets and staff tackle any underachievement energetically. Senior leaders rigorously monitor teaching and promote good practice. Subject leaders manage their areas of responsibility and this includes observing their colleagues teach. However, the school understands that subject leaders do not yet play a full part in checking the data used to evaluate how well pupils are doing. This prevents them taking a stronger part in raising pupils' achievement. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well and are closely involved in monitoring the school's work and its management.

The quality of teaching and the curriculum are good. Teachers manage pupils extremely well and make sure their lessons stimulate pupils' interest. They provide a good balance between direct teaching and encouraging the pupils to explore and solve problems for themselves. Work is invariably matched to pupils' needs and setting in Year 6 enables teachers to match work particularly closely to the very wide range of pupils' learning needs. However, in unsettled writing lessons, work is occasionally too hard for lower attaining pupils. At such times, there is not enough emphasis upon teaching these pupils basics, such as spelling. The curriculum is particularly strong in the arts and sports with some high quality work in design and technology and art. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to enhance learning in other subjects. Pupils have a wealth of opportunities for extra-curricular activities, sporting

fixtures and trips. Pupils develop a very good understanding of how regular exercise and a healthy diet help their bodies grow strong. The excellent partnerships with other schools enrich pupils' learning and ease pupils' transfer to the next stage in their education. Links with the main infant feeder school have progressed rapidly in the last year.

Excellent links with the Church and an exceptionally well organised programme of personal, social and health education contributes to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Although the ethos of the school is strongly Catholic, the range of different cultures and faiths in the school are celebrated, for everyone is valued. The school makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion within the school, with the local community and further afield. Pupils' understanding of other communities in Britain is extremely good. They are also developing very good awareness of the global community, for example through visits from teachers from different parts of Europe and through their charity work in Africa. Pupils' own contributions to the school and wider community are excellent. The thriving school council is a very good vehicle for enabling pupils to contribute to school decision making and for developing their leadership skills. Pupils' great enthusiasm for school life is reflected in their good attendance. From the moment they enter the school, pupils are valued, extremely well cared for and kept safe. Building programmes have been extremely well managed so there is minimum disruption to pupils' education and their safety is never compromised. The school has developed well since the previous inspection and is well placed to continue to improve in the future.

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

- Raise standards in writing for lower attaining pupils by ensuring teachers always match work to their needs and pay close attention to teaching basics, such as spelling and punctuation.
- Develop subject leaders' skills in monitoring and evaluating the data used to check how well pupils are doing so that their effectiveness in raising achievement is increased.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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	2

## 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?	2
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	2
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**

23 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St Thomas A Becket Junior School, Eastbourne BN22 8XT

I am writing to tell you how much I enjoyed my visit to your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helping with the inspection. Your views are important, as you are the school's customers. You said your school is a good one and I agree. Here are some good things about your school:

- You make good progress and reach excellent standards in reading and good standards in writing, mathematics and science by Year 6.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you are a credit to your school. This helps to make your school a happy one.
- You have some great opportunities for art, design and technology, and sport.
- You have a really good understanding of the different people who live in Britain today.
- All adults take superb care of you and ensure that you are safe.
- Your headteacher, teachers and school governors are working hard to make the school even better.

This is what I am asking the school to do:

- For those of you who find writing difficult, make sure your work is not too hard and you have more chances to practise important skills such as spelling.
- Help teachers in charge of subjects to be more involved in checking how well you are learning. I hope you will continue to enjoy school and continue to try hard in all you do.

Best wishes

Eileen Chadwick Lead inspector