

St Thomas a Becket Church of England Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126416
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	315536
Inspection date	21 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

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 on roll	
School	49
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Atfield
Headteacher	Diana Bowley
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2003
School address	Tilshead Salisbury SP3 4RZ
Telephone number	01980 620435
Fax number	01980 620435

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievement in English and mathematics, and how effectively leaders and managers bring about improvement by strengthening teaching and learning. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons and school assembly and observations of pupils at lunch and play. It was also gathered from teachers' assessments, pupils' work and discussions with pupils, staff, governors and parents. 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

This is a very small school. Children's attainment broadly matches that expected for their age, but it can vary substantially from year to year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally, but is much higher than this in year groups that contain very few pupils. A below average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and no pupils have English as an additional language. The school holds Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory, but rapidly improving school. Care, guidance and support are good but, within these, pastoral care is an outstanding feature. As a result, pupils' behaviour, their kindly, safe conduct and their contributions to the community are excellent qualities. The school promotes good links with parents and outside agencies. These help to ensure that the pupils' personal development and well-being are good and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. Pupils' full enjoyment of school is clearly evident in their good attendance and the very warm relationships between everyone in the school. Parents welcome these and one typical written comment was, 'I am very pleased and I think the school does its best to give children every opportunity to fulfil their potential.'

Since the last inspection, there have been frequent staff changes and a lack of continuity in the management of the school. For a time, these weakened the school's efforts to promote improvement. Under the guidance of a capable headteacher, the school is emerging well from this difficult period. She has completed an accurate evaluation of where improvement is needed and has set realistic, but appropriately challenging, targets. These have given the school a clear vision which is moving it forward with an increasing momentum. The school has a sound capacity to improve with promising signs of much further potential. For example, there is much good teaching, especially in English, which pupils recognise themselves. They readily refer to their improved reading and writing skills and better learning in groups during mathematics lessons.

Leadership and management are sound. The school is rebuilding its effectiveness by establishing clear monitoring roles and responsibilities for subject managers and governors. Together they are having an increasingly beneficial effect on improving learning opportunities and pupils' progress. As with other initiatives, strengthened management structures have not been in place long enough to achieve these fully.

Children are taught well and make good progress in the Foundation Stage (Reception Year.) Good progress continues through Years 1 and 2. As a result, standards are mostly above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Standards are broadly average in Year 6, but there is some variation in how well pupils do in different subjects. Pupils make good progress and attain above average standards in all aspects of English. Throughout the school, many pupils are very articulate speakers and have good information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Progress is satisfactory and standards are average in mathematics and science.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is good for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This is largely because the school has been able to sustain consistent additional support for these pupils. Across the school, teachers are strengthening how they challenge pupils and are raising expectations of what pupils should achieve. They have been successful in restoring pupils' good achievement and above average standards in English. However, gaps in pupils' previous learning were deeper in mathematics and science, especially for some pupils currently in Year 6. Whilst increasingly good teaching has lifted pupils' achievement to a satisfactory level, it needs more time to bring good achievement in these subjects. In all classes, teachers use questioning well to develop the pupils' speaking and listening skills and are now extending pupils' vocabulary effectively to enrich writing. Teachers and their assistants give good oral guidance and add to this by giving helpful pointers when marking pupils' written work in English. In general, teachers' marking in mathematics and

science is not as effective because it does not set similarly high expectations or give enough guidance on how pupils can improve. As a result, the progress of some pupils, especially average attainers, is not always promoted to best effect in these subjects.

The school provides a sound curriculum for its pupils. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to learn by using computers and outdoor learning facilities for children in Reception have also been improved well since the last inspection. There is a good emphasis on developing pupils' literacy skills and a sound, but improving, focus on numeracy. Given the limited facilities available on site, the school works hard to sustain an appropriate range of sporting opportunities, by using the village hall and using facilities at other schools. Good links with parents also assist the school in providing an interesting curriculum, including, for example, drama, music and dance activities.

Daily assemblies are special occasions. They are much appreciated by the whole school community and very successfully promote the school's welcoming Christian ethos. Assemblies contribute strongly to the pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Members of the school council and Year 6 groups offer their ideas thoughtfully. These reflect their good awareness of healthy living and show that they take their responsibilities and the needs of others seriously. Currently, pupils' numeracy skills prepare them satisfactorily for their future economic well-being.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Leadership of the Foundation Stage is good. Staff promote very good relationships with the adjoining nursery and with parents and their children. These ensure that children transfer confidently and experience a good start to their education in the Reception/Year 1 class. The teacher and her assistant provide good quality teaching and very effective support. As a result, children learn effectively and make good progress. Most children reach or exceed early learning goals set for their age and do particularly well in developing their speaking and listening and personal skills. The school has developed good outdoor learning facilities since the last inspection. These help children to enjoy and benefit from a good range of learning opportunities, including both adult led and activities chosen by the children themselves. For financial reasons, the school has to revert to two classes during most afternoon sessions. This limits the way resources can be organised to enable Reception children to choose and enjoy more substantial role-play activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement and standards in mathematics and science, particularly for pupils of average ability.
- Strengthen the way teachers mark pupils' work, especially in mathematics and science, to lift pupils' expectations and show them how to improve.
- Ensure that strategies put in place to sharpen the role of senior managers, especially subject leaders, and governors are sustained to bring further improvement.

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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?	3
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

22 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas a Becket CofE VA Primary School, Tilshead, SP3 4RZ

I enjoyed my visit. Everyone was so friendly towards each other, making me soon realise why you enjoy coming to school. I would like to thank those of you who took the time to talk to me, particularly members of the school council and those of you in Year 6. I was very interested to hear what you had to say about your school. These are the main things I found:

- It is a satisfactory and improving school. Senior managers are strengthening how they work together and are helping you make better progress.
- You enjoy school and treat each other in a very considerate and safe way. You behave extremely well and contribute fully to the community.
- Yours is a very caring school. Staff work closely with your parents and other people and look after you very well, especially those who need extra help.
- Most of you make good progress in Reception, where the teaching is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but are improving well.
- Generally, you make steady progress. All of you do well in English. An increasing number of you are now doing as well as you should in mathematics and science, but some of you could do even better in these subjects.
- You enjoy a sound range of learning activities and know how to keep healthy.

To help the school to become better, I have asked the headteacher, governors and teachers to do these things: improve your achievement in mathematics and science, including by strengthening the way teachers mark your work to help you realise that you can do even better and show you how to improve. I have also asked senior managers to make sure that recent changes in the way they work together are applied well to bring further improvement. You can help too by continuing to work hard. Thank you once again, and best wishes for the future.

Alex Baxter Lead inspector