

St Thomas' Church of England (V.A.) Primary School

Appleford Road, North Kensington, London, W10 5EF

Inspection dates

4–5 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children settle quickly, because of close working with parents and carers, and make rapid progress from low starting points.
- Pupils sustain this rapid progress in all key stages and achieve well.
- The proportion of pupils making accelerated progress in Key Stage 2 is exceptionally high.
- All groups of pupils achieve equally well. Disadvantaged pupils achieve as highly as their peers.
- Pupils display exemplary behaviour and attitudes. They leave the school as articulate and mature learners, ready for the next stage of their education.
- Committed teachers ensure they deliver interesting lessons, designed to move pupils on swiftly. Teaching is further strengthened through input from middle and senior leaders on a daily basis.
- Leaders work as a close-knit team, led by a highly effective headteacher.
- Governance is strong. Governors know the school extremely well and are able to challenge leaders about their work robustly.
- Pupils are safe and are taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of environments.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural work of the school is a strength. Pupils benefit from a rich curriculum, and a wide range of experiences which equip them for life in modern Britain.
- Parents, pupils and staff are unanimously supportive of the school.

Information about this inspection

- Teaching and learning were observed in eight lessons. Five of these were joint observations with members of the school leadership team. All classes were observed. During observations in lessons, inspectors looked at pupils' books and spoke to pupils about their learning. They also considered the role of additional adults within the classroom.
- Inspectors carried out short visits to classrooms and observed a range of small group teaching activities delivered by both teachers and teaching assistants.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally during break times and lunch times. They met more formally with groups from Years 2, 3 and 6.
- A wide range of school documentation was scrutinised. This included information about pupils' achievement, safeguarding arrangements and minutes from governing body meetings. Information regarding leaders' analysis of the quality of teaching and reports from visiting professionals were also considered.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, and a group of six governors. A further meeting was held with representatives of the local authority and the London Diocesan Board of Education, alongside the School Improvement Adviser.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to discuss the school's information regarding achievement.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents by speaking to them at the start and end of the day, and through 42 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also considered 34 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Gaynor Roberts, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mary Hinds

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Thomas' is an average-sized primary school. It is a voluntary-aided Church of England primary school. There is one class in each year group from Nursery to Year 6. Children in the Nursery class attend full time.
- Three quarters of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. This proportion is well above average. The main groups are Black Caribbean, Black African, any other mixed background and any other ethnic group. The school has identified a small, but significant, group of pupils from Moroccan backgrounds. Just under half of the pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs is slightly above average. In 2014, five pupils had a statement of special educational needs.
- Disadvantaged pupils make up almost two thirds of those on roll. This proportion is well above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the teaching of numeracy and literacy is as consistently good in foundation subjects as it is in English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher has developed a highly competent, committed leadership team who works seamlessly together to ensure that all pupils achieve very well. The school invests considerably in both senior and middle leaders, providing them with time and training so that they can take on full responsibility for specific areas of the school's work.
- Middle leaders feel privileged to be 'trusted' with full responsibility for their specific area of work, and relish the opportunity to be held to account for improvements they have made. They have very detailed knowledge of the needs and abilities of individuals and small groups of pupils. They can describe what is being done about any dips in performance and what difference their work is making.
- The leadership of teaching is particularly strong. Middle leaders work alongside other teachers in class in order to develop their skills further. There are very strong explicit links between the school's plans for improvement, targets for the achievement of pupils and individual targets for teachers.
- Additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used extremely well to ensure that all pupils have an equal chance of succeeding and making maximum progress. As a result, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school has closed, and disadvantaged pupils in this school achieve at least as well as all pupils nationally.
- The culture within the school is one of continual improvement, whether for pupils or staff. There are five key values which are exemplified throughout the school and threaded through the curriculum: loyalty; hospitality; forgiveness; truth; and peace. All members of the school community are valued and their contribution taken into account. The school ensures that there is equality of opportunity for all pupils, regardless of their faith, gender or cultural background.
- Relationships between leaders, governors, staff, pupils and parents are very positive. Pupils say that everyone gets on well together, regardless of their gender, faith or cultural background.
- The curriculum offered is broad, balanced and rich, with a variety of experiences. For example, pupils receive specialist teaching in music, learning violin in Key Stage 1 and ukulele in Key Stage 2. They learn to understand musical notation and appreciate a variety of musical genres. During the inspection, an artist was working with all year groups from Nursery to Year 6 to create a large three-dimensional sculpture of a family tree. This related to the school's theme of personal history during their celebration of Book Week. The school values the work of pupils. They published a hard-backed book containing the winning entries of a story competition, for example. As a result, the school's work to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- The school has used the primary school sport funding to increase the breadth and quality of opportunities for sport offered to pupils. The number of pupils participating in sport has increased. Pupils now have at least two hours per week of physical education, and school information shows that more than three quarters of them meet or exceed their targets in this subject.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 are involved in circle groups, led by Year 6 pupils on a weekly basis. Circle group leaders articulate clearly how their work enables all pupils to have a say in what happens at school. They described to inspectors how they would support a pupil who was reluctant to participate. They report their findings to leaders, and to parents using a blog on the school website. With maturity that belies their years, they could explain that they learn the reasons why other cultures have particular traditions in order to ensure that respect and tolerance are demonstrated by all members of the school. This means that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and are robust. The school works closely with several local authorities who place pupils in the school and ensure that any concerns are followed up rigorously.
- The local authority provides light touch support for the school, and this is appropriate. Recently, the early years leader has been invited to join a group of outstanding practitioners in the local authority in order to share good practice more widely.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are fully committed to the ongoing development of the school. Governors come from a range of backgrounds, and have a depth of knowledge and experience. They ensure they receive appropriate training. They ask probing questions of school leaders to satisfy themselves that the school is performing as well as it possibly can. Governors expect leaders at all levels to present information to them and be held to account within their specific areas of responsibility.

- All governors are involved in the development of the school's vision and policy. They receive detailed information regarding the quality of teaching and how this relates to teachers' pay. They have been proactive in rewarding good teaching, and tackling that which is weak.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are keen and enthusiastic learners. They are attentive in lessons and treat both staff and pupils with respect. They are proud of their school.
- Pupils attend well. In 2013, leaders recognised that attendance was not as high as they would like. They swiftly sought advice from an external consultant and launched a campaign to improve attendance, involving both pupils and parents. Comprehensive systems were put in place to monitor the attendance of individual pupils. As a result, attendance improved significantly in 2014 to above average, and the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school has halved.
- Parents spoken to by inspectors, and those who responded to the questionnaire, Parent View, are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They are certain that their children are safe and well looked after.
- The school has a clear behaviour policy which is understood by pupils, and applied consistently. A named member of staff is informed of any incidents of poor behaviour, and collates information. This means that any patterns in behaviour are identified and rapidly addressed. Pupils whose behaviour declines are offered effective and timely support, and their behaviour improves rapidly.
- The school has robust systems for recording any incidents of bullying, and identifies, in particular, incidents of racist, homophobic or internet bullying. Incidents are extremely rare but, nevertheless, each one is recorded and followed up rigorously.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say that they feel safe, and know who to approach if they feel insecure.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, and can explain how the school does this. For example, pupils in Year 6 could tell inspectors about their lessons in road safety, keeping safe online and stranger danger. With eloquence and maturity, they could explain the work of the learning mentor in teaching all classes about the different types of bullying, and what these are. They were keen to emphasise that there is no bullying within the school. These views were reflected by younger pupils who say that everyone gets on well together, and rate their school as 'ten out of ten'.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is consistently good, and much is outstanding. Teachers expect pupils to participate fully in lessons, and enable them to do so by planning activities that are well matched to their abilities and needs. Teachers question pupils carefully and, if necessary, adapt their teaching to ensure that learning continues at a rapid pace.
- Work in books is marked regularly, and teachers provide feedback to pupils which helps them to improve their work. The standard of feedback is particularly strong in English.
- The school has secured a rapid rise in the quality of teaching through the very effective deployment of middle leaders. Consequently, leaders have a greater depth of knowledge of achievement in the subject for which they are responsible, and can sharply focus their improvement activities.
- The work of the school in carefully matching small groups of pupils to appropriate activities which both support and challenge their learning is a strength. Leaders, teachers and teaching assistants deliver sessions to small groups of pupils within a nurturing environment. Staff members pick up on the responses of pupils very quickly and adapt their teaching appropriately. As a result, pupils make clear, rapid progress.
- Pupils make exceptional progress in reading because of the school's insistence that literacy activities are carefully matched to each pupil's ability and skills.
- Teachers promote the development of communication skills well. Inspectors observed pupils in Year 6 discussing the concept of marriage in a religious education lesson. Pupils were able to use sophisticated debating skills to consider the question, 'Is marriage for life?' They were able to put forward their own point of view and take on board the comments of others, within an atmosphere of respect.

- Pupils attend well in lessons because teaching is always at least good, and engages them. In almost all lessons observed, every pupil remained on task for the whole session. Inspectors saw no disruption to learning, and pupils report that this is typical. Some of the younger pupils are still learning to respond to their teacher's high expectations and do not always pay attention as soon as they are asked.
- Work in books other than English and mathematics is not always of the same high quality as that in these subjects. Opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy and numeracy skills in other subject areas are not extensive and teachers are not as vigilant in their marking.
- Teachers set homework that is interesting and relevant for pupils and, therefore, they work hard at completing tasks they are set to do outside school hours. Recently, for example, Reception children were asked to fill a 'memory box' with items from their own lives that have importance for them. Samples of these boxes were set out on display for others to see and celebrate.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Overall, children join the school with skills which are below those typical for their age. The weakest areas are communication and language, physical development, literacy and mathematics. As a result of effective teaching, children make good and often rapid progress from their starting points.
- The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 is above average in reading and just above average in writing and mathematics. Similarly, at Key Stage 2, the attainment of pupils is above average in all areas, significantly so in reading. From historical low starting points, this represents rapid progress. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The proportion of pupils making expected progress by the end of Year 6 in reading and mathematics is high compared with national figures. In writing this proportion is broadly average. The proportions making more than expected progress are significantly higher than national figures in all three areas. In reading, for example, almost three quarters of Year 6 pupils in 2014 made more than expected progress. In writing and mathematics this proportion was roughly half of the year group.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve similar high standards to their peers, and in 2014 attained slightly better than English speakers in both English and mathematics. There is no significant difference in achievement relating to pupils' ethnic backgrounds.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar rapid progress to their peers. In 2014, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils making more than expected progress was higher than that of all pupils nationally in each of reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2013, disadvantaged pupils were more than two terms ahead of others in the school in mathematics and reading by the end of Year 6. In writing they were almost a term behind. They performed well in comparison with national figures, being two terms ahead in mathematics and broadly average in reading and writing. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils were more than a term ahead of national figures in reading, broadly average in writing and a term behind in mathematics. Within the school, however, disadvantaged pupils attained similar levels to their peers in reading but were, on average, a year behind in mathematics and writing. This was due to the impact of a very small group of disadvantaged pupils who also had significant special educational needs. School information, however, shows that in all other year groups there are no discernible differences between the two groups.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs achieve well. The school has robust systems in place to monitor the progress of these pupils, and ensures that they make similar rapid progress to their peers.
- The most able pupils make excellent progress. In 2014, all of the more able pupils in Year 6 made at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Often they exceeded expectations.

The early years provision**is outstanding**

- Since the last inspection the quality of provision in the early years has been strengthened. The early years leader has developed a highly cohesive staff team who shares her high expectations. From low starting points, children make strong progress and are, therefore, very well prepared for Key Stage 1.
- Assessments are based on regular and accurate observations of children's achievements. Staff record their findings systematically to build up a clear picture of each child's capabilities. This information is used exceptionally well to identify next steps in learning. As a consequence, gaps are closing between different groups of children, including the gap between boys' and girls' writing.
- Children are highly motivated and inquisitive learners. They engage fully in a range of interesting activities, sustaining their concentration for long periods of time. Adults plan carefully to make sure that learning builds on what children can already do, and provides opportunities for them to find out things for themselves.
- Teachers' planning is comprehensive and covers all areas of learning. There is an excellent focus on developing children's communication and language skills, as well as their personal development. Staff use every opportunity to extend children's vocabulary, for example introducing the word 'flore' when serving cauliflower at lunchtime.
- Staff ensure that children's safety and well-being are paramount at all times. They are highly skilled in supporting and nurturing children so that they feel very safe. Every opportunity is used to develop cooperation and respect for one another. As a result, children behave exceptionally well. They work and play together in harmony.
- Parents say they have every confidence in the school's ability to secure the very best for their child. They particularly appreciate the inclusive nature of the school. Parents and staff are able to speak briefly every day while children settle confidently into the routines of the day. Without any prompts, children either identify their own name cards or write their names independently. Parents are exceptionally well informed about how well their child is doing.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	100492
Local authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	448192

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ros Sacher
Headteacher	Sarah Bouette
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 November 2009
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Fax number	020 8964 8625
Email address	infor@st.rbkc.sch.uk

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