

St Thomas Primary School

Union Street, Exeter, Devon, EX2 9BB

Inspection dates

2–3 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- When they first start pupils have well below average levels of skills and knowledge. They make good progress in English and mathematics throughout the school and reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Achievement has improved rapidly since the last inspection and is now good.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good, and sometimes rapid, progress because of the excellent provision made for them.
- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. They know how well each pupil is doing, as they assess and record their progress every half term. Teachers are held accountable by senior leaders for the progress pupils make in their classes.
- There is general agreement that pupils are safe. Behaviour is good. Although some start school with challenging behaviour, staff consistently apply the school's behaviour policy and pupils' individual behaviour plans to support them in making rapid improvement. Attendance is above average.
- Leadership is good and has created a shared vision that has brought about improvement since the last inspection. Leaders have worked closely with teachers to improve the quality of teaching.
- Governance is effective in supporting the school's continued development, especially in raising standards.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching and marking across the school.
- Standards in writing are lower than those in reading and mathematics.
- In a few lessons, the more-able pupils are insufficiently challenged.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, inspectors observed a total of 12 lessons taught by eight different teachers, involving six hours of inspection time.
- Inspectors heard groups of children read and looked at a sample of pupils' work from each class.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and senior staff, teachers, representatives of the governing body and the local authority, pupils and parents and carers.
- Inspectors considered the 20 responses to the online Parent View survey, those from the school's own parental questionnaire and the views of staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including data on pupils' progress, schemes of work, monitoring records, and policies and procedures relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Mary Usher-Clark

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Thomas is an average-sized primary school with nearly all of its pupils coming from the immediate neighbourhood.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average, although the proportions at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding given to schools by the government) is above average.
- A large majority of the pupils are of White British origin and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The before- and after-school clubs are not managed by the school's governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of pupils' writing by:
 - extending opportunities for writing across the different topics being studied
 - raising the profile of writing throughout the school
 - encouraging pupils to write at every opportunity, including in those lessons where the main focus is on speaking and listening.
- Improve the consistency of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers' marking is of a uniformly high standard
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to reflect on how to improve their work and to put this into practice, especially for the more able.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' progress and their achievement show sustained improvement over time that compares well with national figures. The recent emphasis on raising achievement in mathematics has led to improvement among pupils of all abilities. In all subjects and year groups, pupils make good progress and an analysis of pupils' work shows that they are achieving well. However, attainment in writing currently lags behind that in reading and mathematics.
- Children enter Reception with skills and knowledge that are well below the levels expected for their age. They make good progress throughout the year because of effective teaching, although their attainment when they start Year 1 remains below average.
- By the end of Key Stage 1, attainment remains low despite the pupils making consistent progress. Good progress is sustained throughout Key Stage 2 and by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in English and mathematics. This represents good progress from their initial starting points, enabling pupils to move on to the next phase of their education with confidence.
- Pupils read every day, and show a good understanding of content. The teaching of reading is effective throughout the school and even the weaker readers use good strategies to decipher words they find difficult.
- The school uses data on pupils' progress effectively. Teachers assess and record every pupil's progress each half term. Teachers are held to account for every individual they teach, which has had a big impact in helping pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding in a range of subjects, including reading, writing, communication and mathematics.
- Teachers monitor the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs every week, so small steps in their progress can be noted immediately. These pupils make good and sometimes rapid progress, so narrowing the gap in attainment with other pupils.
- The school provides carefully targeted support for identified groups, such as those who are eligible for the pupil premium, or those from minority ethnic backgrounds. This ensures that their progress is at least in line with that made by other pupils, ensuring equality of opportunity for all.
- Pupils' skills are often developed in a cross-curricular way that seeks to promote learning through topics that are relevant to the pupils' lives. This approach engages them well and makes them enthusiastic learners. However, opportunities to develop their writing skills in different topics are sometimes missed.

The quality of teaching is good

- The good teaching underpins pupils' good achievement, including that of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs or supported through the pupil premium. The additional funding attracted by the pupil premium is targeted very carefully. It provides additional support, for example, through one-to-one or small-group support, enabling these pupils to make good and sometimes better progress because it addresses their specific needs.
- Teachers have high expectations and seek to ensure that pupils' specific needs are met effectively. Lesson planning generally takes these into account and activities are matched carefully to pupils' needs so that all can be challenged. However, in a few lessons the more able pupils are not extended sufficiently.
- Within the classroom, teaching assistants work alongside teachers, collaborating well to ensure that pupils receive additional support to meet their specific needs. They provide effective support to teachers and help pupils to make good progress.
- Skilful questioning allows pupils to develop their thinking and ideas and enables teachers to check pupils' understanding. Pupils say that if they do not understand something teachers will

always go over it again, adding further explanation.

- Teachers use technology well to support learning. In a Year 1 literacy lesson, for example, pupils worked in groups to identify adjectives for sentences and used microphones to record their words so that the teacher could play them back to the class.
- Assessment is generally accurate and effective, although it is not used consistently. The best marking gives suggestions for improvement, or identifies the 'next steps' in learning, but this is not always the case. The school's policy of promoting regular opportunities for pupils to engage in peer- and self-assessment of their work is not undertaken consistently across the school.
- Pupils enjoy the topic-based work which provides broad learning experiences and reinforces the core skills of literacy and numeracy. These are generally taught well. However, across the school the teaching of writing is weaker than the teaching of reading or mathematics and pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their writing skills across the whole curriculum.
- Teachers devote considerable time and energy to ensuring that learning is exciting, and engages and inspires pupils. As a result, pupils are usually engrossed in learning and enjoy their lessons. As well as learning the core skills of literacy and numeracy, the thematic approach to learning allows teachers to teach a range of skills and subjects in an imaginative way.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils, staff and parents and carers generally agree that behaviour in and around the school is good. This helps to create the positive ethos and learning environment in which pupils can thrive. Pupils feel safe at school and their parents and carers share this perception.
- Behaviour in lessons is generally good. However, a significant group of pupils receive additional support for emotional and behavioural difficulties. This can create incidents of low-level disruption, particularly with the younger pupils, although the school's effective approach, including detailed individual behaviour plans, helps pupils to improve their behaviour. Disruptive behaviour with the older pupils is rare.
- The emotional support programmes for some pupils who perform well below their chronological age are effective. They help them to improve their behaviour, and to talk and act in ways that would be more normal for pupils of their age, as well as building their confidence. This approach has been so successful that the local authority has used it and other schools have visited to see it in action.
- Pupils have a good awareness of the different forms of bullying and are confident that the school will deal with incidents effectively. For example, some Year 6 pupils last year received inappropriate e-messages from other former pupils and were able to report this so that the school's action immediately stopped further incidents.
- Attendance is above average, reflecting the pupils' enjoyment of school. The school works hard with the small number of families who are less diligent in getting their children to school regularly.

The leadership and management are good

- The sustained improvement since the last inspection reflects the vision and dynamism of leadership to create an effective school. The headteacher has strong support from staff and has created a collaborative team-based approach to school improvement. This has been enhanced by positive and consistent support from the local authority. There have been notable improvements in pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and the development of a wider, more engaging curriculum since the last inspection.
- Systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning are linked closely to performance management and professional development. As well as identifying individual's development needs, the system takes whole-school needs into account. Combined with a range of effective policies and opportunities for teachers to observe each other to disseminate best practice, they

are promoting higher standards.

- The curriculum is well organised and provides many opportunities for learning for all, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. However, opportunities for developing pupils' writing across the curriculum and extending the most able are sometimes missed. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with the support for social elements being particularly strong in helping pupils and their parents and carers to develop positive attitudes.
- Effective self-evaluation underpins good school development planning, which has a focus on identifying key priorities and addressing whole-school needs. Careful financial management ensures that resources are targeted at these key priorities.
- Links with parents and carers are effective in engaging with them as partners. The school has also provided opportunities for some parents and carers to extend their own learning, such as accreditation in literacy skills that some have been able to gain. The school works hard to engage with those who find working with the school difficult. Annual questionnaires reflect strong parental support.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - has improved strongly since the last inspection and has a greater range of expertise to support the school and its leadership
 - has a good understanding of data, which, coupled with the direct linking of named governors with specific elements of school life, has created an enhanced ability to hold leadership to account
 - meets all its statutory responsibilities, including those for safeguarding and ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils.

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	113085
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	405448

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dan Jenkins
Headteacher	Justin Stone
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2010
Telephone number	01392 276854
Fax number	01392 439876
Email address	admin@st-thomas.devon.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012