

St Thomas Cantilupe Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116926
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	338923
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Susan Lewis

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

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Butterfill
Headteacher	Ann Davies
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2007
School address	Coningsby Street Hereford HR1 2DY
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Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2009
Inspection number	338923

Registered childcare provision	St Thomas Cantilupe Playgroup
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	50
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	Not previously inspected

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons as well as part of lessons and held meetings and discussions with governors, local authority advisors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work and its linked childcare facility, St Thomas Cantilupe Playgroup. They looked at the school's policies, school improvement plans, reports on the school's progress, governors' minutes and records of pupils' progress. They also analysed 108 parental questionnaires and took account of staff and pupil questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement and progress of different groups of pupils, to determine whether the teaching is sufficiently challenging and the support and guidance provided fully meet their differing needs
- the use of assessment to track and monitor pupils' progress and to help the school to determine its priorities
- the effectiveness of leaders in self-evaluating and driving improvements.

Information about the school

St Thomas Cantilupe Church of England Primary School admits pupils mainly from north and central Hereford, although a few families come from further afield. The vast majority of pupils are from a White British heritage. However there is an increasing proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language and come from different heritages. There is also an average but growing proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The governing body manages a playgroup that operates within the school building for children aged two to four years. The school has faced several challenges since the last inspection, including considerable staff changes, falling rolls and an increasingly high level of children who join or leave partway through their primary school education. At the time of the inspection two senior members of staff were on long-term leave.

The school has held Artsmark Gold for several years and a Healthy School Award. The governing body has recently achieved the Financial Management in Schools Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Thomas Cantilupe is a satisfactory school with a number of strengths that are reflected in the positive views of parents and pupils. It is a warm, friendly school in which children feel and are safe and which has a real sense of community. Parents overwhelmingly value it, saying that their children are happy there and 'thrive'. The school is focused on developing the 'whole child' including the pupils' enthusiasm for learning and the ways in which they work and play together. Pupils are given a real voice to express their views and influence the life of the school through their child teacher association (CTA). An ethos of care and concern for the individual underpins all that the school does, borne out in the good attention given to children's safety and well-being and good relationships and partnership working with parents.

In spite of the challenges facing the school over the last few years, teaching in lessons has remained good. However, although achievement is satisfactory, standards have been falling, largely as a result of the changing nature of the school's intake. The headteacher, governors and all staff are ambitious for the school and work hard to ensure that families and pupils, whatever their needs and whenever they enter the school, are included. They are determined to raise attainment and achievement and have enlisted the support of the local authority to do this. Attainment on entry is wide ranging, but below that of other pupils of their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and in personal social development. Pupils make good progress in these areas and in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development during their time at the school. Pupils have a good sense of what it means to live a healthy lifestyle and they feel happy and safe. However, not enough pupils attain the higher National Curriculum levels, particularly in English and mathematics, mainly because teachers do not always make the best use of assessment information to pitch work at suitably challenging levels, and marking does not always provide enough information for pupils about how they might improve their work. Although there are no significant differences in the achievements of different groups of pupils, good support ensures that some individuals with special educational needs, or who speak English as an additional language, do particularly well in developing their behaviour, literacy or communication skills.

The school has introduced a number of targeted initiatives such as Big Write and a more creative curriculum to improve standards and capture pupils' interest, but these are too new for the results of this good work to be visible yet in pupils' longer-term achievements. The curriculum is now good, as is care, support and guidance. Clubs and visits really enrich pupils' learning. Pupils behave well, because teachers have high expectations and good subject-specific skills, and make their lessons lively and

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interesting.

The playgroup is highly valued by families and children quickly settle there. Children's welfare and safety are paramount, and well supported. Although a good range of activities are provided for these children to support their learning, planning and record-keeping are not yet fully in line with the new requirements.

Governors provide some strong support for the school, but elements of their role such as the review of the effectiveness of school's policies are less well developed. Some leadership roles such as those of the subject leaders are being strengthened and a good start has been made on analysing the information the school has about its performance this year, but some of the ways in which the school checks up on its work have not been rigorous enough in the past. Despite these weaknesses, the improvements made in recent years and the commitment and new-found stability of the school's leaders show that there is satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rigour of monitoring and evaluation of the school's work by ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels have clearly identified roles and responsibilities for checking on pupils' progress and learning across and within subjects.
 - Raise pupils' attainment further, especially in English and mathematics, and ensure that all pupils make at least good progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers make good use of information about pupils' prior attainment for planning lessons and moving pupils on in their learning
 - all pupils are consistently challenged in their learning, especially more able pupils
 - teachers use oral and written feedback consistently well to help pupils understand better how well they are doing and the next steps in learning.
- Ensure planning and record-keeping in the playgroup rigorously follow published guidance.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' books and lessons observed during the inspections confirm that achievement and attainment are satisfactory overall. Previous test results in Year 6 and Year 2 have been very variable, particularly in writing and mathematics, ranging from low to average. The detailed performance data and more rigorous tracking data the school now have show much of this to be linked to the higher rate of mobility and higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in some classes; where there is more stability, for example, pupils make better progress. Pupils make good progress in their

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reading, science and also in their writing since the school has focused on these areas. Progress in mathematics, although satisfactory, is less consistent throughout the school and is now rightly a focus. Attainment and progress are stronger in science because the more practical curriculum is better suited to those with language and other special educational needs. Progress in lessons is strongest when teachers have thought very carefully about what the different groups of pupils needed to learn to do next and the different tasks that will stretch them, and use different ways to support learning such as group work and paired work.

Pupils respond well to the school's provision to teach them about leading a healthy life and say they really enjoy the range of school and club sport activities that support this. They feel safe and cared for at school, and although a few are concerned about behaviour they say any instances of bullying are dealt with appropriately by staff and resolved quickly. Pupils' good work attitudes and behaviour and the many opportunities they have for collaborative working provide a sound basis for the next steps in their education and for the world of work. They have a good understanding about right and wrong, a strong sense of community and, through special topics and events and their fundraising, a growing understanding of others' different beliefs and cultures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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How effective is the provision?

Teachers provide a wide range of interesting activities which really excite and engage pupils. Lessons are organised well and relationships with pupils are very strong. Teaching assistants are briefed and deployed effectively in the group parts of lessons, usually supporting those pupils needing additional help. In stronger lessons they also have a planned role in whole-class teaching time, such as recording pupils' responses or making materials. In the best lessons seen, each group or individual was challenged with slightly different tasks, so that everyone learnt new skills and knowledge. These lessons provided pupils with many different ways of learning that really helped pupils to learn from and with each other as well as from adults. The key feature missing from the weaker lessons was the use of assessment to tailor learning tasks to pupils' differing needs.

Developing literacy and numeracy skills is a curricular priority, as well as the move to a more thematic, creative approach. A good start has been made on this, well supported by the good range of clubs, visits and other activities as well as and providing more systematic opportunities to support literacy and numeracy skills in all lessons. Pupils are rightly proud of their artwork, which is of a high standard but also is being used well to make links to literacy and other subjects. The good work in personal, social and health education and citizenship is evident both in pupils' growing sense of responsibility for their own behaviour and learning and awareness of others' needs. Pupils say things like, 'We have loads of exciting lessons,' and, 'Teachers really make you understand.'

This is a caring school in which each individual is valued. Pupils say it makes them feel 'special'. They, including the most vulnerable children, are well supported by staff who work well with outside specialists as appropriate, so that their safety and learning benefit. The school works well with other schools and parents to ensure that children 'hit the ground running' when they first attend. However, although good informal links with the playgroup support children's transfer into Reception, information about children's achievements is not shared formally and this is a missed opportunity. Close links with partner secondary schools for sport and other activities support transition arrangements for pupils transferring to secondary school and ensure that this also works well and pupils are more at ease about moving on.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

Everyone in the school is ambitious to increase pupils' progress and raise achievement and is working hard to do this. The headteacher has worked tenaciously since her appointment two years ago to deal with all the new challenges the school has faced, but had too much to do and limited leadership support because of staff absence and reduction. However, the senior leadership team has now been reorganised and training been put into place to allow others to develop their leadership role further. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, have identified the correct priorities for improving pupils' performance and have sought local authority help so that they can accelerate this. Monitoring arrangements have been strengthened and subject leaders beginning to take more responsibility for standards in their subjects. Governors too are more involved in checking on the school's work and play an increasing role in the school's development.

Pupils' safety in both the playgroup and school is paramount. Safeguarding arrangements are secure and at the time of the inspection, met all statutory requirements. The school has good links with parents, including providing training opportunities in literacy and other areas and increasing the range of opportunities parents have to discuss their children's progress. It also has good partnerships with a range of local schools and businesses that support pupils' learning and the school's involvement in the local community. The school works hard to promote harmony and tolerance between the different sectors of the community. A range of visits, both local and further afield, helps pupils gain an identity and wider understanding of their country's cultural background.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3
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Early Years Foundation Stage

Good arrangements before children start school and close working with families mean that children quickly settle into both the playgroup and the Reception class. Whatever their starting points, children make at least satisfactory progress in all of the areas of their learning, and good progress in their language and personal development, developing good attitudes to learning and behaving well. The Reception class is well organised and children really enjoy their learning there. Activities are carefully planned to provide a good balance of child- and adult-led learning. The Reception and Year 1 staff work well together as a team and this supports continuity as children progress in school. The learning environment in both the playgroup and Reception is designed well to excite children's curiosity and interest in their surroundings. Adults are adept at intervening in child-initiated activities to extend the children's thinking, but sometimes there is not enough challenge in activities to move all children on to the next stage. The school is in the process of developing the outdoor play area, which, though adequate, is rather spartan.

The playgroup provides satisfactory support for children's learning and development and their welfare, including keeping children safe. However, it is not yet planning using the different areas of learning or recording children's achievements in line with the new guidance. Systems for checking on its work are less developed than in the rest of the school. The Foundation Stage coordinator knows the Reception provision's strengths and weaknesses well and has the right priorities as to how to improve the provision further.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of the parents who responded to the questionnaire are positive about their child's experience at the school. They almost all judge that the school keeps pupils safe and many comment about how friendly, helpful and supportive staff are. They feel informed about their children's progress and that their child's needs are being met well. In particular they value the way the school supports the 'whole child' and family.

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A small number of parents had particular concerns either about their own child's progress or about general issues such as behaviour management in particular classes, bullying, and the leadership and management of the school. Inspectors looked carefully at such concerns, in classes and in the playground, examined documentation and had discussions with staff and children. They found no evidence to substantiate that bullying was a problem. Although some children within the school have identified behavioural needs, these are provided for appropriately and disruption to other children's learning minimised because behaviour management has improved. The pupils that the inspectors interviewed said that on the rare occasions when problems do arise, they know the procedures to follow and the staff quickly resolve the matter successfully. Pupils' progress was found to be satisfactory overall and the school is working hard to improve this further. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and have been strengthened through reorganisation and local authority support.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Thomas Cantilupe Church of England Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The Inspection team received 108 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 194 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	57	43	42	2	1	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	63	60	40	36	4	3	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	37	34	66	62	4	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	41	60	56	3	2	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	52	48	52	48	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	35	64	60	4	3	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	46	56	52	3	2	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	41	39	58	55	5	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	37	62	58	4	3	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	30	64	60	5	4	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	37	57	55	5	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	41	39	55	53	5	4	4	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	46	54	52	2	2	2	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Thomas Cantilupe Church of England Primary School, Hereford HR1 2DY

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and lessons when we visited you recently. We really enjoyed talking with you, being in your lessons and looking at your work. Thank you to everyone who completed the pupil questionnaires; these really helped us to understand your views. You told us you really like your school very much and think the lessons are really interesting. We agree with you that it is a very friendly school, but that it provides a satisfactory education. It has some good features, which you enjoy.

These are the main things that we found out about your school.

Children starting in Reception settle really quickly, have lots of interesting things to do and start to listen well.

You behave well, enjoy school, play well together and really want to do your best.

You enjoy the different clubs, sports and the visits you make and particularly your art work.

The Big Write is helping you to improve your writing.

The teaching is good, but some of you think your work is too easy sometimes.

You are not always sure what you need to do to make your work even better.

We have asked the school to do three things to improve the quality of education that you receive.

Make sure that the work you are given helps you to make even faster progress and reach higher standards, particularly in English and mathematics, and that you understand the targets that you are set and what you need to do to achieve them.

Involve more people in checking up on the school's work, because the headteacher has had too much to do.

Ensure that the playgroup leaders plan their work and check on children's progress in a different way.

We hope that you continue to enjoy and be proud of your school.

Yours faithfully

Sue Lewis

Lead inspector

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