



**Office for Standards  
in Education**

**Inspection report**  
**Thomas's London Day School, Battersea**  
**Independent school**  
**DfES ref no: 212/6401**

Dates of inspection: 10 – 13 January 2005

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## **Introduction and summary**

### **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

### **Information about the school**

Thomas's, Battersea is a selective mixed school which admits pupils between the ages of four and thirteen. It is part of a family-run group of schools. The extended period property provides accommodation for 482 pupils from reception to Year 8. Most year groups consist of three classes, each of no more than 21 pupils. Many pupils live in the area around the school although a considerable number travel some distance.

Thomas's, Battersea is a Christian school open to pupils of all faiths. It aims to offer a broad curriculum within a stimulating environment in which pupils are happy and able to achieve high academic results. The school aims to teach pupils at an early age that the most important school rule is: "Be Kind".

### **Summary of main findings**

Thomas's, Battersea is a very effective school which is successfully meeting its aims to provide a broad curriculum within a framework of 'enjoyment, learning and performance'. The enthusiastic pupils and dedicated staff team enjoy learning and working at the school. The teaching provided ensures that pupils make good progress, attain high standards and are well prepared for the next stage in their education. The school meets fully all the regulations for registration.

### **What the school does well**

- the teaching is good or better, with a significant proportion that is very good;
  - it provides a very positive ethos and a stimulating learning environment which supports and challenges pupils, who as a result demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning;
  - it provides pupils in the lower school with a flying start to their education;
  - the broad curriculum is enhanced by a wide variety of extra-curricular activities;
  - it places a high priority on the welfare, health and safety of the pupils; and
  - it takes account of recent developments in education to make improvements under the strong leadership of the headteacher.
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**What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations**

The school meets fully all the requirements.

**Next steps**

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- consolidate the recently revised management structure in order to facilitate the full implementation of planned developments in the upper school.

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## **Compliance with the regulations for registration**

### **1. The quality of education provided by the school**

#### **The quality of the curriculum**

The quality of the curriculum is very good. It is broad and balanced and covers the six areas of learning for pupils in the Foundation Stage, all subjects of the National Curriculum. It includes aspects of citizenship as well as personal, social and health education (PSHE) throughout the school.

The curriculum builds successfully upon pupils' well-developed communication and thinking skills. Pupils are prepared very successfully for the next stage of their education.

All subjects are supported effectively by comprehensive and detailed written policies, providing a clear overview of each subject. Schemes of work ensure the continuity and progression of pupils' learning. Teachers use additional commercial schemes to further supplement this. Throughout the school yearly planning indicates what is to be taught each term and is broadly based on the National Curriculum. Regular planning discussions between staff in year groups and subject leaders ensure a clear and common approach.

Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). There are no pupils in the school with a statement of SEN.

The curriculum is enhanced by planned visits to places of interest, and further boosted by a wide range of high quality extra-curricular clubs. These include sports, drama, music and art.

#### **The quality of the teaching and assessment**

The quality of teaching is good or better in the majority of lessons: much of it is very good. Lesson planning is thorough and underpinned by comprehensive schemes of work which ensure continuity and progression in learning. Teachers make clear to pupils what they are going to learn in the lesson, and what is expected of them. Pupils respond well to this, have very positive attitudes to their learning and make good progress.

Teachers' subject knowledge is very good. The best lessons are characterised by a lively enthusiastic approach, tasks which motivate pupils well and make efficient use of time. Teachers are skilled at questioning, challenging and supporting their pupils. Teaching assistants provide very effective support for those with learning difficulties, especially in the lower school. A very good feature of most upper school teaching is the skilled use of questioning, to assess pupils' understanding and move their learning forward.

Teachers provide frequent opportunities for collaborative work, including paired and group discussions, which contribute to the pupils' confidence and articulate communication skills. Independent learning skills are also encouraged.

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The Foundation Stage curriculum is taught very effectively in the reception classes, because teachers have a very good understanding of what the pupils need to achieve. The Key Stage 1 curriculum is gradually and appropriately introduced to pupils by the end of their reception year. As a result, pupils make very good progress overall. The increasing use of good specialist teaching as the pupils move through the school contributes to the high standards being achieved. Homework is used effectively throughout the school to reinforce and support children's learning.

All staff work hard to provide a stimulating learning environment for the pupils, and excellent relationships exist between staff and pupils. As a result of this, along with the good teaching and positive whole school ethos, pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good.

Resources in the school are very good. Teachers make good use of these resources, the school environment and the display of pupils' work to support learning. Although the library is adequate, the school has plans to further improve resources in this area, including the installation of additional information and communication technology (ICT) facilities for upper school pupils.

The school has a well-structured assessment framework and a comprehensive policy including staff guidance on good practice in assessment. Regular tests measure progress in subjects, and pupils are tested against national norms using standardised assessment tests. The results are used to help track pupils' progress and set targets. The school identifies any possible underachievement of individuals so that action can be taken and teachers' planning adjusted accordingly. More able pupils are given additional challenges as appropriate to their needs.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The school makes very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. There is a very friendly, welcoming atmosphere and pupils feel happy and enjoy coming to school. The staff are warm and friendly towards the pupils who respond by trying hard and behaving very well.

The school is run on Christian principles, although pupils of all faiths are welcomed. Spiritual awareness is raised mainly through assemblies, religious education (RE) and PSHE lessons. Close links have been established with a local church where middle and upper school pupils attend weekly services, celebrating events such as the harvest festival. Assemblies are planned thoughtfully and based on a range of personal, social and community themes. 'Circle times' for younger pupils provide opportunities to consider, amongst other things, the circumstances of others less fortunate than themselves. Following the recent Tsunami disaster the school has dealt very sensitively with the issue through PSHE lessons where pupils had the opportunity to discuss the events and how these have affected the school community. The pupils have decided to raise funds as part of their regular charitable efforts.

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The school provides a very clear moral code as a basis for behaviour, which is promoted consistently through all aspects of its work. Pupils distinguish right from wrong and relationships are very strong at all levels. Above all pupils are encouraged to follow the most important school rule to 'be kind' to each other. The development of pupils' self esteem, self-awareness and confidence is given a high priority. Older pupils are encouraged to be responsible and support younger pupils around the school. Pupils eat their wholesome school lunch together, which they are now encouraged to select for themselves, and every opportunity is used to encourage good manners and politeness to others.

Thomas's, Battersea is effective in helping its pupils to develop personal qualities such as thoughtfulness, honesty, independence and respect for the differences of others. Older pupils, in particular, appreciate the way that the school allows them to make their opinions known. In the middle and upper schools, for example, the school council, made up of the head boy and girl and elected members, decide which issues they wish to bring before the school's management team. Pupils learn how society works and they participate in local community activities. Older girls, for example help at a local community centre.

Pupils are encouraged to appreciate cultural diversity and respect the values and beliefs of others through a thoughtfully planned programme of RE, PSHE, assemblies and subjects such as art, history and geography. For example, Chinese New Year will be celebrated shortly in the lower school with the help of a Chinese theatre workshop. A wide range of visits to museums, galleries and places of interest further extends pupils' awareness of cultural heritage. In the middle and upper schools, pupils have the opportunity to take part in residential visits both in this country and France.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is very good and is a strength of the school. A very comprehensive and carefully thought out range of policies and procedures thoroughly address all aspects of pupils' welfare. Detailed and effective behaviour, discipline and anti-bullying policies underpin the very good behaviour of the pupils both in class and around the school. Positive behaviour is emphasised and pupils are rewarded for good behaviour and courtesy to others through a merit system. All staff are alert to issues to protect pupils from abuse. Two members of staff have been trained in child protection and additional training is to be undertaken soon by others. Pupils are closely supervised at all times on the school premises.

The school has extensive health and safety policy documents, which relate well to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance. The importance of pupils' welfare and safety on school visits is given a high priority with detailed risk assessments undertaken for all trips. The school adheres closely to its comprehensive policy for First Aid. The school's First Aiders are very well trained and appropriate provision has been made for the care of sick pupils.

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Very good provision for fire safety is in place. This includes a very detailed fire risk assessment. A specialist firm tests all appliances regularly and half-termly fire drills take place. These are accurately documented with a good summary which includes the date, time, duration and evaluative comments regarding their efficiency. The local fire officer has approved the fire risk assessment.

The school keeps appropriate written records of sanctions for the rare serious disciplinary offences in a separate incident book. The admission and attendance registers are maintained in line with current regulations. The school has prepared a detailed accessibility plan to show how it will fulfil its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**

The school is owned and managed by members of the Thomas family. The headteacher, who has been at the school for six years, has devised a clear, detailed and comprehensive school improvement plan which is in the process of being implemented. The school makes appropriate checks on staff prior to their appointment. These include checks carried out through the Criminal Records Bureau.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation**

The premises and accommodation are very suitable for the purpose, as the school occupies extensive Grade II listed buildings formerly used as a school. The premises have recently been extended and upgraded to a very high standard and make a valuable contribution to teaching and learning. All the classrooms are appropriate in size and attractively decorated with well-mounted and displayed examples of the pupils' work, celebrating their achievements. Specialist accommodation for music, ballet, art, pottery, ICT, drama, science, physical education (PE), design and technology (DT) and SEN further enhance learning. These rooms are all sufficiently spacious and effectively used. Resources are stored sensibly and are easily accessible. This enables pupils to be more independent in their learning; they look after the resources very carefully and help to keep classrooms neat and tidy.

The school is very well maintained, decorated and clean. All school areas are provided with appropriate furniture and fittings. The school benefits from a very large rear hard-surfaced playground, which is used extensively for playtimes and games activities. In addition the school has recently constructed a very exciting roof top playground for the lower and middle school pupils on the lower school building. It is superbly equipped with climbing and balancing apparatus on a rubber safety surface. The school also uses local sports centres and swimming pools. It is fortunate in having a fleet of minibuses for this purpose. The sole

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vehicular access route is organised very efficiently by the caretaking staff at the beginning and end of the day.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**6. The quality of information for parents and other partners**

There is an extensive range of high quality information provided for parents and other partners. An attractive and informative prospectus outlines the school's aims and is enlivened by the use of photographs. The prospectus is supplemented by a full and detailed parents' handbook.

Detailed reports, with each subject itemised and progress reported on, are discussed at parents' evenings. These reports are sent out each term to parents of upper school pupils, and twice annually to parents of pupils in the lower and middle schools. Regular and informative bulletins and a notice board keep parents up to date with current school events. Homework diaries are also effectively used.

Curriculum guides are given to parents at the start of each year. A full range of policies and procedures is in place, all of which are made available or already provided to prospective parents. The majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints**

The school's complaints procedure is clearly written and meets all the requirements. A copy is distributed with the prospectus and made available to all parents. It clearly states the stages which may be followed should they wish to make a complaint.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

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**School details**

Name of school:	Thomas's London Day School, Battersea
DfES ref number:	212/6401
Type of school:	Preparatory
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	4 – 13 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 257,      Girls 225,      Total 482
Annual fees (day pupils):	£7,830 - £11,005
Address of school:	28 - 40 Battersea High Street London SW11 3JB
E-mail address:	battersea@thomas-s.co.uk
Telephone number:	0207 978 0900
Fax number:	0207 978 0901
Headteacher:	Mr Ben Thomas
Proprietor:	Mr Tobyn Thomas, Mr Ben Thomas, Mr David Thomas and Mrs Joanna Thomas
Lead Inspector:	Kekshan Salaria HMI
Dates of inspection:	10 – 13 January 2005

**Notes**