

Thorpe Hall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103060
Local Authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	376807
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2011
Reporting inspector	John Laver

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	500
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Brooks
Headteacher	Paulette Houghton
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 May 2009
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 25 lessons and observed 15 teachers. They held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and members of the governing body. They talked to parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of the monitoring of teaching and learning, the school improvement plan, data on pupils' progress and reports from the School Improvement Partner. They analysed questionnaires received from 70 parents and carers, 154 pupils and 14 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively the school is addressing the issue of slower progress in the younger year groups, especially in writing and mathematics.
- The extent to which the school has successfully improved the overall consistency of teaching and learning, including the use of assessment.
- How effectively staff, especially middle leaders and managers, are being held accountable for pupils' progress and are sharing the drive for improvement.
- How well children in the Nursery and Reception classes are provided for, and what impact this is having upon their progress.

Information about the school

Thorpe Hall Primary School is a much larger than average school. The majority of pupils come from a range of minority ethnic heritages and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, which include a range of learning, behavioural and emotional needs, is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery and also attend two Reception classes. The school has the Healthy Schools Award, the International Schools Award (Intermediate Level) and the Certificate of Commitment to the Unicef Rights Respecting Schools Award.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Thorpe Hall Primary School is a good school which ensures that pupils from a wide range of backgrounds make good progress in acquiring knowledge, learning skills and in developing personal qualities which prepare them well for the next stage of education. It is a very inclusive school, as acknowledged by most parents and carers, a typical parental comment being, 'My child is very happy here and you can't really ask for much more!'

Children make a good start to their school career in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although they make faster progress in Reception than in the Nursery. This is because, although children in the Nursery are well cared for, staff in Reception use learning objectives and methods of assessment more effectively to maximise learning opportunities for every child. The good progress is maintained and built upon as pupils move up through the school, so that, although pupils join the school with levels of skill which are mostly well below age-related expectations, by the age of 11, attainment is average. One of the school's great successes is ensuring that all pupils share in the good progress. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those with English as an additional language, regardless of their backgrounds or whether they join the school other than at the usual transition points. This is the result of good teaching by dedicated staff and the school's success in developing positive attitudes towards learning among pupils which is also reflected in improved attendance. Teachers and other staff support very effectively potentially vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties. They also use assessment well to show pupils how to improve their work, for example through constructive comments in their marking, involving pupils in the assessment and through the use of targets which are known by pupils and regularly reviewed. Although the progress of all pupils in English and mathematics is good overall, including for the most able, occasionally pupils do not achieve as well as they might in individual lessons. This is when there is limited challenge for the more-able pupils, or when teachers talk for too long at the expense of developing more independent learning skills.

Pupils' good academic progress is strongly underpinned by strong personal development and good care, guidance and support. The great majority of pupils feel very safe in school, behave well and get on well together. They are enthusiastic about the curriculum, especially the topics such as 'Circus' and 'Rainforests', which develop a range of skills as well as subject knowledge. Pupils enjoy enrichment activities such as the choir. They help each other and show responsibility through activities including fundraising and serving on the active school council. Pupils' good personal development is evident in the celebration of cultural diversity and the promoting, understanding and appreciation of different values and lifestyles. This has contributed to the school's success in achieving the Certificate of Commitment to the

Unicef Rights Respecting Schools Award.

The school's leadership has moved the school on considerably from the previous inspection. The monitoring of teaching and learning, and the use of assessment, are now more systematic, and increasingly involve subject leaders and other coordinators. The quality of teaching has improved, the governing body is more active and constructively challenging, and staff are enthusiastic and committed to improvement. Above all, pupils' progress has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The improvement in several key areas, combined with accurate self-evaluation, realistic planning and a clear understanding of how to build on existing successes, shows that the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all pupils achieve to the best of their ability in all lessons by:
 - encouraging teachers to consistently provide challenging tasks for more-able pupils
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to learn independently.
- Ensure that staff in the Nursery use learning objectives and assessment more constructively in order to enable children to make even faster progress in acquiring basic skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children demonstrate below-average attainment for their age when they leave Reception, particularly in communication, language and numeracy skills, but pupils' attainment is average in all aspects by the end of Year 6. The good progress which pupils make as they move up through the school is evident from national assessment data in recent years and inspection evidence confirmed pupils are on track to meet appropriately challenging targets.

Lesson observations during the inspection showed strengths both in pupils' academic progress and in their personal development. Pupils of all levels of ability respond enthusiastically to the good teaching, working well both independently and collaboratively. In a mathematics lesson for younger pupils, they responded enthusiastically to a briskly paced 'starter' activity and then engaged in group and paired discussions involving the practical application of numeracy skills to real-life problems. At the same time, there was good support for those pupils identified as having special educational learning needs. The result was that all the pupils in the lesson were challenged or assisted and everyone showed good gains in skills and understanding. Similarly good progress and an enthusiastic response from pupils were observed in a lesson for older pupils in which a visiting student, dressed as Samuel Pepys, answered questions in the context of teaching pupils how to write interesting diaries. Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to engage pupils more directly in their learning by talking for too long to the whole class and not moving more-able pupils, in particular, on to more challenging independent tasks.

Pupils behave well in lessons and collaborate well with each other. They generally feel safe in school, apart from occasions when there is over-boisterous activity in the playground. There is a very high take-up of enrichment activities, such as after-school or lunchtime sport, and pupils show a good understanding of why a healthy lifestyle is important, which is reflected in the school’s award of Healthy Schools status. Pupils talk enthusiastically about how the school council has helped to improve the school environment, and they enjoy helping younger children. Improved attendance and punctuality have resulted from the school’s commitment to persuading all parents and carers of the importance of regular attendance for their children. Pupils are now better equipped in the use of information and communication technology than at the time of the previous inspection. The school helps pupils to develop responsibility and enterprise skills, for example in fundraising and in projects which have resulted in successful participation in a London enterprise challenge. Pupils’ good spiritual, moral and social development is evident in assemblies which encourage pupils to reflect on what it means to be respectful and to work well with others. Cultural diversity is respected, celebrated and reinforced by popular events such as when parents and carers come into school to teach pupils ethnic dances.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The teaching, which is good and has improved since the previous inspection, is a major factor in pupils’ good progress. Teachers use assessment well, to show pupils exactly how they can improve their work to the next level, to identify underachievers quickly and to ensure that they benefit from a range of in-class or out-of-class

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

support to learn effectively. Teachers show good subject knowledge, manage classes effectively and deploy support staff very well in the classroom. Occasionally, teachers keep the whole class together for too long and, while there is usually a good range of activities within lessons, more-able pupils are sometimes not moved on quickly enough to more independent, challenging tasks.

The school’s use of topics to develop skills across the curriculum is well planned and successfully motivates pupils. The school also enhances learning through the deployment of visiting specialists, for example in French, while good links with other schools give pupils the opportunity to use food technology and sports facilities. There is a very high take-up of lunchtime and after-school clubs.

The school meets the personal needs of all pupils well. There is good support for those at an early stage of learning English. Strong links with outside agencies ensure targeted support for potentially vulnerable pupils, and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also have closely tailored support programmes. Reward systems have been brought in to improve attendance. Well-developed arrangements ensure a smooth transition for pupils moving on to their next school. The personal, social and health education programme teaches pupils a range of social and personal skills as well as enhancing their understanding of safety issues, for example, when using computers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team knows the school well and is quietly determined to sustain and build upon the several improvements made in recent years. Other staff share in the drive for improvement, and the governing body is now more active, knowledgeable and challenging in helping the school to move forward. All staff are now more accountable, with a clearer understanding of how to use tools such as assessment data to inform teachers’ planning and meet the needs of all their pupils. Subject and phase leaders are increasingly involved in planning for improvement and welcome their enhanced responsibilities.

There are good partnerships with parents and carers and with other schools and outside agencies. Parents and carers are encouraged to attend workshops and, although the school finds it difficult to engage some parents and carers, increasingly they do attend assemblies and other school events. The school is part of a successful partnership with other schools, and this has resulted in joint projects and the provision of additional support such as a pupil counselling service. It also provides opportunities for the professional development of staff. The school has dealt

effectively with the few cases of discrimination between pupils. The promotion of equal opportunities has real meaning in the school, as is evident in its success in integrating pupils from very different backgrounds and enabling all of them to make good progress. There are secure safeguarding procedures, with pupils taught to be safe in all circumstances, and there are relevant procedures which are monitored and reviewed regularly. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. The International Schools Award reflects the school’s efforts to enhance pupils’ global understanding. There are links with other schools in the United Kingdom and further afield, for example in France, although the leadership recognises that some of the links need renewing or reinforcing. The school utilises the cultural diversity of its own pupils successfully, in furthering their understanding of different cultures, lifestyles and beliefs, both within the curriculum and through visits.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress from when they join the Nursery to when they leave Reception. While progress has improved overall since the previous inspection, the rate of progress in the Nursery is slower than in Reception. This arises from staff in the Nursery making less effective use of explicit lesson objectives when planning activities, especially for the outside area, and making more limited assessments of individual children when determining how those activities could be used to further enhance learning. Although attainment in communication and language skills is particularly low for many children, they do settle very quickly into the school, learning everyday routines. A feature of the inspection was how settled even the youngest children were, including those speaking little English, and how they cooperated well with each other when playing in pairs or learning in larger groups. There is good teaching and learning, and use of resources, particularly when teaching sounds and letters in Reception. These strengths were also obvious in the Nursery when small groups of pupils were observed in activities ranging from role

play to making ‘mud pies’ and to working individually on computers; and when children were identifying the sounds made by different percussion instruments. Children in both Nursery and Reception were often able to explain with reasonable clarity to visitors exactly what they were doing. There is generally a good balance of activities, and children are encouraged to be independent, especially in Reception, although the limited size of the outdoor environment restricts the quality of some activities. While staff track children’s progress, the tracking procedures are not always analysed rigorously. The Early Years leader ensures that the whole setting runs smoothly. Staff have good relationships with parents and carers, and there are strong links with outside agencies, as well as good transition procedures for children joining or leaving the Early Years setting for the first time.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The return of the parents’ and carers’ questionnaires was below average. Parents and carers are appreciative of most aspects of the school’s provision for their children. The great majority praise in particular the quality of care and support, provided by dedicated staff, which helps to ensure that their children enjoy school. They express sentiments such as ‘Thorpe Hall is a happy, nurturing school.’ A few parents and carers have some concerns: principally, that their views are not sufficiently taken into account, that they are not sufficiently informed about their children’s progress and that they are not helped sufficiently to support their children’s learning. A small minority feel that the school does not manage behaviour effectively. The inspectors found during the inspection that behaviour was managed well. From talking to parents and carers and reading their comments, inspectors found that most parents and carers feel that the school communicates with them well and involves them as much as possible in their children’s learning, through activities such as parental workshops.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thorpe Hall 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 70 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 500 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	56	31	44	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	40	38	54	4	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	26	37	35	50	6	9	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	37	39	56	5	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	27	39	39	56	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	22	31	38	54	7	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	30	43	61	5	7	0	0
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)	23	33	33	47	6	9	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	20	29	44	63	5	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	26	32	46	9	13	9	13
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	24	38	54	10	14	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	24	34	30	43	9	13	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	30	43	34	49	5	7	0	0

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



16 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thorpe Hall Primary School, London E17 4DP

Thank you for welcoming us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed seeing you in lessons, assemblies and around the school, as well as talking to you.

Thorpe Hall Primary School gives you a good education, and you make good progress. In the Nursery, progress is a bit slower, because the children there sometimes need more guidance. However, your progress is good because your teachers teach you well and because you enjoy being in school. Most of you say that you feel safe in school, except sometimes when there is a lot of activity in the playground at lunchtime. You behave well and more of you attend school regularly than you did in the past. We know that you like learning the topics like 'Rainforests', and you really enjoy the visits and the clubs for activities like sport and the choir. You are good at taking on responsibility, for example when you join the school council. Your teachers teach you well, giving you useful targets and showing you how you can improve your work. You told us how much you like a lot of the lessons. Just occasionally, teachers do not give you enough opportunity to work by yourselves or in groups, which would give you more practice in working things out for yourselves. Occasionally, the work is rather easy for those of you who are particularly clever. Your headteacher leads the school well and all the staff work hard to ensure you are well looked after and do well in school.

In order to make your good school even better, we have asked the school to:

- make sure that teachers in the Nursery give enough guidance to help children there to make even more progress
- make sure that teachers give you plenty of opportunities to learn on your own and give you work that is not too easy, so you can always learn at your best.

All of you can help achieve this if you continue to work as hard as we saw you doing.

Yours sincerely
John Laver
Lead inspector

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