

Thameside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123083
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	343837
Inspection dates	14–15 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Judith Goodchild

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	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Farmer
Headteacher	Sally'Anne Crowther
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. During the inspection, 12 lessons taught by 8 teachers and two shorter sessions were observed. Pupils' books were scrutinised and the school's pupil assessment data were analysed. Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, members of the governing body, the headteacher and senior staff. Inspectors also had discussions with the chair of the task group, who is a representative of the local authority. Inspectors scrutinised key strategic documents including those relating to safeguarding, governing body meetings and task group minutes. Inspection questionnaires were completed by 19 parents and carers. The inspectors also looked at questionnaires completed by staff and by pupils in Years 3 to 6 and took their views into account.

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

To what extent has pupils' progress improved and their attainment risen?

Is the school able to demonstrate a sustainable capacity for improvement?

Information about the school

Thameside is a smaller-than-average primary school. A new Reception class was opened in September 2010. Apart from Years 3 and 6, pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. The school was removed from special measures in July 2009 and given a notice to improve. The majority of pupils are White British. About 28% of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is above average. Though the number of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, the school has almost twice the average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs and/or disabilities. The majority of these are for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A privately run pre-school is based on the school site. It did not form part of this inspection.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 in 2010 was significantly below that expected and progress based on their starting points in Year 1 was inadequate. In Year 6 in 2010, based on data provided by the school, pupils' attainment and progress were broadly in line with national expectations. This was an improvement on 2009.

There is, however, a lack of challenge in lessons for more-able pupils and this is reflected in attainment and progress which is lower than it should be given their abilities. Pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and other potentially vulnerable groups, make better progress than their peers in Years 1 to 6 due to a range of effective interventions. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make satisfactory progress and the majority start Year 1 with abilities in line with those expected for their age.

A small number of well-taught lessons help some pupils make better progress, but teaching is typically inadequate because it is not of a high enough standard to ensure that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Too much reliance is placed on interventions in Year 6 to raise pupils' attainment and progress. Current assessment information, based on what pupils know and understand, is not used systematically to plan lessons. As a consequence, work is not well matched to pupils' age and ability and does not provide challenge, particularly for the more-able.

The school provides a welcoming environment where pupils' artwork is celebrated and displayed. Pupils feel safe and are happy to approach staff if they have any concerns. Their behaviour is satisfactory. Pupils have some impact on improving the school community through the school council but opportunities for them to accept other responsibilities are too limited. Attendance levels are average; the school has been successful in reducing the number of persistent absentees and punctuality has improved. The investigation-based curriculum is popular with pupils and has been successful in engaging their interest. The care and support for pupils and their families whose circumstances have made them vulnerable are satisfactory and supported well through effective partnerships with external support agencies. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. Since the last inspection links with parents have improved and are good.

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The school's self-evaluation of its work is over-optimistic and affects the capacity of the school to target improvements effectively to raise pupils' attainment and progress. Leadership roles lack good definition and staff are unclear about their responsibilities and accountabilities. Not all have the necessary management skills to enable them to carry out their monitoring roles effectively. The lack of secure and accurate information about the progress pupils make means that the school's leaders and managers, and the local authority, do not have a firm base for their knowledge of the quality of pupils' learning. Since the last inspection the governing body has worked hard to improve its skills and expertise and is now in a better position to monitor the work of the school. However, lack of accurate information inhibits governors' effectiveness in bringing about much needed improvements. The school's current capacity to improve is inadequate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate progress throughout the school, including for more-able pupils, this academic year by:
 - increasing the proportion of good teaching throughout the school
 - ensuring that assessment information is used consistently well by teachers to plan lessons at the appropriate level for pupils' ages and abilities.
- Develop the effectiveness of the school's leaders this academic year by:
 - ensuring all staff with leadership roles have the skills to carry them out and fully understand their accountabilities
 - ensuring that whole-school assessment information is accurate and used more rigorously to track the progress of all groups of pupils from their starting points and to set challenging targets
 - using monitoring of the quality of lessons more effectively to pinpoint accurately improvements required in teaching and learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Pupils' attitudes to learning are good when stimulated by good teaching and at these times pupils become keen and enthusiastic learners. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, for example, use of a digital camera to record results brought the task alive resulting in pupils' very active interest and participation. Well-planned activities enabled all groups to access the task and make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of fractions. However, too many lessons fail to engage and inspire and pupils become bored and inattentive and their behaviour sometimes deteriorates. Pupils say they do not have to work hard enough in lessons. Opportunities for them to take more responsibility for their own learning are at an early stage of development. There is variable practice in target setting; some pupils say they set their own in literacy and numeracy. Application of the marking system, 'tickled pink and green to grow', is similarly patchy in helping pupils to improve their work.

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and talk enthusiastically about the residential trips. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of healthy lifestyles and are clear about 'good and bad' foods and their affect on health. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example, from cyber bullying. Pupils fund-raise to sponsor a

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child in Uganda and, through a 'Country Far Away' theme, have looked at global societies different from their own. However, links with the local community and opportunities to foster understanding about different groups within the United Kingdom are too limited. There are opportunities for pupils to celebrate as a community through the weekly assembly. In a Year 6 religious education lesson, pupils reflected on 'the purpose of life and why we are here', listening sensitively to views that differed from their own. However, there are weaknesses in the systematic development of pupils' basic skills across the school, so they are not well enough prepared for their future lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
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	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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

How effective is the provision?

Too many lessons are barely satisfactory or inadequately taught and this has contributed to the inadequate progress and attainment of pupils by the end of Year 2. This underachievement is carried into Years 3 to 6. A common weakness in teaching is that planning does not always address the range of age and ability in mixed-age classes. An example of this was in a mathematics lesson where activities were planned at a lower National Curriculum level than older pupils had been assessed against at the beginning of term. Too often, pupils sit on the carpet for too long at the beginning of lessons before starting practical tasks. This was at times particularly difficult for pupils identified with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties; the skilled intervention by teaching assistants, if these pupils became restless, ensured that learning for others was not

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disrupted. The quality of teachers' assessment is too variable, with conclusions that are not always an accurate reflection of what pupils understand and can do. In well-taught lessons, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and set them challenging and engaging work. In such lessons, effective questioning is used well to check pupils' understanding and eliminate any misunderstandings before moving on.

Last year a separate class was created for pupils in Year 5, now Year 6, to address gaps in learning. Evidence from current work suggests they are making good progress and, based on their Year 3 starting points, are on target to make the expected rate of progress by the end of the year. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory. The majority of interventions take place outside the class and teachers do not always themselves analyse the learning and progress of these pupils, relying too heavily on teaching assistants.

The curriculum for enquiry was introduced last year and provides more creative opportunities for all pupils to study foundation subjects. It is enriched with trips and visitors and evidence shows that these activities have produced some high quality artwork. However, curriculum planning is not monitored to ensure that literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are consistently developed and applied in different contexts. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified, but provision for them from within the school is limited, and partnerships within the local authority are not utilised to meet their needs. There is a limited range of after-school clubs.

The good links with health professionals, other agencies and pupils' families have been instrumental in bringing about the improvement in attendance and punctuality. Rewards for good attendance, for example, visits to the cinema and 'free time' are popular with pupils. The special educational needs coordinator has only just joined the school and is currently undertaking a review of the special educational needs list to assess which pupils have fallen behind in their learning, rather than having a learning difficulty. Support for pupils with a statement of special educational needs is satisfactory. Transition arrangements are well organised, particularly for vulnerable pupils. Procedures to ensure that pupils are kept safe are satisfactory.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's leaders, including the governing body, are committed to improving the attainment and progress of pupils. There has been progress against two of the key issues identified at the last inspection. Attendance and punctuality have improved and the curriculum for enquiry has brought more variety into foundation subjects. However,

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despite intensive support from the local authority, outcomes vary considerably year-on-year and there is little evidence that the actions taken to remedy inherent weaknesses have been effective. The lack of accurate assessment information seriously compromises the ability of school leaders, the governing body and the local authority to monitor the quality of learning, and then remedy weaknesses in teaching to improve pupils' progress, particularly for those who are more able.

The school's partnership with parents is good. Weekly newsletters keep them well informed about the work of the school and attendance at consultation meetings is high. Staff are easily accessible to parents whose views are sought, for example, last year in evaluating the impact of the curriculum for enquiry. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and checks on staff appointments are thorough. Staff at all levels are fully aware of their responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe. Partnerships with health professionals and other agencies are good but links with other schools to provide additional learning activities, particularly for gifted and talented pupils, are underdeveloped. The school's provision to ensure equal opportunities and tackle discrimination is inadequate because differences in outcomes for the various groups of pupils, particularly the more-able, are not being remedied. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Through curriculum topics pupils develop some understanding of others with differing backgrounds and beliefs, but a recent audit of the school's approach identified areas it needs to improve to ensure that all aspects of community cohesion are fully addressed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Nursery and Reception classes have been separated this year and a new Reception class created. Resources are being built up to meet children's needs. Both the Early Years

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Foundation Stage leader and Reception teacher are new to the school but are experienced early years practitioners. Their self-evaluation of this area of the school's provision is accurate and they are clear about the developments needed to improve children's learning experiences. Staff have already built up good working relationships. Both the Nursery and Reception accommodation allows children to move freely between outside and indoor activities. Currently, children in the Reception class do not have access to the outdoor equipment in the Nursery area. The outdoor space for the Reception class is small with little in the way of outdoor equipment such as climbing frames and large building materials and this restricts opportunities for physical development. Children are well supervised and kept safe. Children in both the Nursery and Reception classes have settled quickly into their new environment and are becoming increasingly confident and secure. Independence is fostered well and one reception child took the initiative and made a birthday card for their mother without adult intervention. There is an appropriate focus on developing speaking and listening skills both in the Nursery and Reception classes. For example, children in the Nursery were increasing their vocabulary through talking about autumn. Reception children had made 'shakers' and were encouraged to listen to the sounds they made and play along to tape-recorded music with other instruments. Children work and play well together, behave well and respond to adults' requests. Children are aware of the need to wash their hands before snack time and take responsibility for choosing fruit and opening their milk. However, opportunities are missed to develop children's understanding of healthy living and further develop children's social skills through discussion.

Children start in the Reception class with skills that are broadly in line with age-related expectations and make satisfactory progress against their early learning goals. Observations by staff record their progress and help to plan their next steps in learning. There are good links with health professionals and external agencies to support children with special education needs and/or disabilities. Satisfactory links have been made with the pre-school that shares the school site and children have the opportunity to play together. A good partnership has been established with parents who are encouraged to talk to staff if they have any concerns.

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

A small number of parents and carers completed the questionnaire. The majority have children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The wrong questionnaire had been sent out initially to parents. This had been completed by 33 parents representing most age groups and was taken into account by inspectors, but only the information from the second

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questionnaire is included in the table. All parents who commented feel their child enjoys school and are happy with their child's experience of school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thameside 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 19 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 154 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	15	79	4	21	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	74	5	26	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	15	79	4	21	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	79	4	21	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	14	74	4	21	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	68	5	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	53	8	42	0	0	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)	7	37	8	42	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	63	6	32	1	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	68	5	26	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	74	3	16	1	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	12	63	7	37	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	74	4	21	1	5	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. 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 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.



17 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thameside Primary School, Abingdon OX14 5NL

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently and for talking to us about your school and your work.

Most of you who completed the questionnaire and spoke to inspectors said that you enjoy school and feel safe. You particularly like the residential visit. A few of you expressed some concern about behaviour in class and said you are unclear about how well you are doing with your work. We found that overall behaviour in the school is satisfactory but, occasionally, when you become bored and uninterested in lessons, behaviour deteriorates.

Your school is not currently giving you a good enough education and you are not making sufficient progress in your work in all classes. The teaching you receive is not always good enough to make sure that you all make progress in your learning, particularly those of you who find the work easy. Your work is not marked in a consistent way so you do not always know how you are doing or how to improve. Some of you told us that you find the work you are given too easy at times.

We have judged that the school requires 'special measures'. This means it will be helped to improve and its progress will be checked regularly by inspectors. These are the improvements we have asked the school to make.

We have asked the teachers to make sure that their assessments of your learning are accurate and used to help you to improve from your different starting points.

We also want teachers to make sure that assessment information is used well to plan lessons and to set more challenging targets for you to achieve.

Staff with leadership responsibilities should make sure that teaching improves so that you all make better progress in your learning.

I wish you all the best in your future studies. You can help the school by all working hard and behaving well in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Judith Goodchild

Lead inspector

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