

Thomas Arnold Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101220
Local Authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	354961
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Nasim Butt

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	441
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Speak
Headteacher	Nicky Barrand
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 24 lessons taught by 15 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised the school's self-evaluation and development plan, progress tracking data, pupils' work, governing body minutes, and school policies. They analysed questionnaires completed by 25 parents and carers and those from pupils and staff.

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

- The impact of school leaders in raising attainment and accelerating progress in English and mathematics, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The extent to which teaching meets the needs of pupils of different abilities, particularly in providing challenge for the more able.
- How well teachers use assessment data and individual learning targets to help pupils make better progress in lessons and over time.
- The impact of school leaders in raising pupils' attendance and promoting their future economic well-being.

Information about the school

The school is larger than average in size. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The majority of pupils are White British, with the next largest ethnic group comprising pupils of Black African heritage. There is an above average proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. These pupils have a variety of needs, mostly relating to speech and language and specific learning difficulties. The number of pupils joining and leaving the school at other than the usual times is well above average; almost one fifth of the current Year 6 pupils joined the school at the start of the school year. The school has awards for several aspects of its work, including Healthy School status and the Activemark award for physical education and sport. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery which runs a morning and afternoon session, and two full-time Reception classes.

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

Thomas Arnold is a satisfactory school. It is a welcoming and inclusive community. The school's caring environment helps support the school's aim to prepare pupils for learning. School leaders and the governing body are fully aware that raising attainment, particularly in English, is a key priority for the school. Although pupils' attainment and progress are tracked, systems for tracking have not been rigorous enough in the past, resulting in a trend of low attainment and pockets of inadequate progress in mathematics and English. However, as a result of recently improved teaching in Years 5 and 6, coupled with a raft of effective interventions and more robust tracking, this legacy of underachievement has been sharply reversed, especially in mathematics. Pupils across the school have made accelerated progress in mathematics and English during this academic year. Attainment in mathematics is now broadly average; in English it is still low but rising rapidly. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6 is satisfactory, including that of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Overall, attainment is low and pupils make satisfactory progress, but there is secure evidence of a strongly improving trend.

Teaching is satisfactory and improving. In the best lessons, teachers actively engage pupils in learning and probe their understanding through stimulating and well-targeted questioning. As a result, pupils' progress in these lessons is good. Although the school has put in place good strategies to accelerate progress in English and mathematics, the learning needs of the more able pupils are not met well enough in lessons. In addition, assessment, including the use of targets, is sometimes not used effectively enough to meet the range of needs in the classroom. As a result, pupils do not always get the sharp and succinct feedback they need to support the next steps in their learning.

Arrangements for safeguarding are strong, with recent improvements in school security leading to pupils feeling safe. Good behaviour, coupled with positive attitudes to learning, has resulted from a concerted effort by the school to develop consistently high expectations. Working closely with parents has successfully reduced persistent absence and improved pupils' attendance, although this is still below the national average and there is scope for extending partnerships with parents further to raise attendance rates. The curriculum has been improved to provide targeted support in mathematics and English in order to accelerate progress in pupils' basic skills. The school promotes healthy lifestyles effectively. During the inspection, pupils enjoyed the re-launch of the dining hall and cashless cafeteria after a period of refurbishment.

School leaders, through effective partnership with the local authority, have provided the necessary support, training and resources to combat the legacy of underachievement. This has resulted in the rapid improvements in achievement seen recently. However, there is not enough emphasis on pupils' progress when school leaders formally evaluate teaching and the analysis of progress is not rigorous enough to ensure all groups make consistently

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good progress. Self-evaluation is satisfactory and has accurately identified key strengths and weaknesses, for example in the quality of teaching and assessment. The school's success in dramatically reversing a declining trend in mathematics and English attainment, including narrowing the gap in progress between different groups, demonstrates its satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

Up to 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By April 2012, raise attainment and further accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics and English by ensuring that:
 - the large majority of teaching is good or better
 - all teachers regularly use assessment information to ensure high expectations and sufficient challenge for all pupils in their learning, especially the more able
 - all teachers provide pupils with consistently good feedback, linked to individual learning targets, to support them in making further improvements
 - pupils are provided with more opportunities to explain their thinking in lessons and to assess their own progress.
- By April 2012, improve pupils' attendance, so that it is at least average, by broadening and deepening the engagement with parents and carers and their families.
- Improve the leadership and management of teaching by ensuring that:
 - school leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching is strongly linked to the progress made by different groups of pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Following a dip in attainment last year, outcomes in mathematics have improved so that attainment in mathematics is now broadly average by the end of Year 6. As a result of the school's strong focus on reading and writing, pupils' progress in these key areas has accelerated and it is now satisfactory, with some pupils showing good progress especially in reading. Pupils enter the school with low standards in literacy and make satisfactory progress, so that by the end of Year 6 attainment in English, although still low, has risen sharply this year. Year 6 pupils made very good progress in a mathematics lesson where they enjoyed working in different groups applying their knowledge and understanding of mode, median and mean to the solving of practical problems. Year 2 pupils really enjoyed constructing tongue twisters in a literacy lesson and checked their own progress effectively using clear success criteria. A Year 5 numeracy group of less-able pupils improved their understanding of unit fractions through visual representation when they used cones and bean bags in the school playground to work out by doing how they could be distributed equally. However, many pupils, in particular the more able, do not make the maximum progress because the work is not matched well enough to their needs. The school's tracking information and inspection evidence indicate that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional

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language, make satisfactory progress. The progress of all pupils is accelerated in Years 5 and 6. Pupils in Year 6 who joined the school at the start of the academic year have also made satisfactory progress.

Pupils interact positively in a multicultural environment and feel safe in the nurturing and supportive surroundings. Pupils' understanding of how to keep safe and stay healthy is good. There is good participation in after-school physical education clubs and activities, and pupils say they really enjoy these. The increase in the number of pupils riding a bicycle to school, coupled with the regular provision of gymnastics delivered by a specialist coach, reflects the school's Healthy School and Activemark status. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community, for example through their role as reception monitors and the school choir performing at a public arena. The school council speaks confidently about its successes and the opportunities the members have had to improve the school environment. The annual organisation of the summer fete by Year 6 pupils makes a strong contribution to pupils' skills for their future economic well-being, which are satisfactory. Pupils' behaviour and punctuality are consistently good. Their attendance, although low, is improving rapidly.

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	4
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	4
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?

Teachers' framework for lesson planning is comprehensive and there is clarity about what pupils should achieve by the end of the lesson. This is complemented by teachers' sound

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subject knowledge which enables teachers to model and explain concepts effectively. However, teachers' use of assessment information to ensure that work is precisely matched to pupils' needs is not consistent. As a result, there is insufficient challenge for more able pupils, in particular, who do not make the maximum progress in lessons. In many lessons, teachers make good use of technology to motivate pupils and sustain their attention. However, there is often too much teacher direction and few opportunities for pupils to explain their thinking and assess their own progress. Although marking is regular and provides some useful feedback, there is little evidence in pupils' books of individual targets and how these targets are used to extend learning.

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and is contributing to better outcomes for pupils. The raft of effective interventions in place is having the desired impact of improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Reflective worship in class, coupled with a sound programme for personal, social and health education, gives pupils good opportunities to reflect on their experiences. Year 6 pupils explored the concept of mixed feelings and shared their reflections on different scenarios and contexts where mixed feelings can arise. All pupils benefit from the regular provision of gymnastics delivered by a specialist coach. School leaders recognise that there are not always enough opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across all areas of the curriculum.

Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive, and there are good processes and procedures in place for the care of all pupils. Pupils with the highest level of need benefit from strong links with other agencies and a nurturing environment so that support is well tailored to their needs. The inclusion manager, who is new in post, has made a good impact in a relatively short span of time. There are effective systems and processes in place for pupils' transition to secondary school. The school's attendance systems and procedures are effective leading to sharply improved attendance recently.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Over the past two years, school leaders have focused primarily on raising attainment in English and mathematics, particularly for the majority White British pupils, many of whom were underachieving. The determined headteacher has successfully galvanised most of the school community towards raising attainment in mathematics and English and maintaining the momentum in continuing to accelerate pupils' progress. Effective plans with clear targets are driven well by senior leaders, especially those who have responsibility for raising attainment in literacy and numeracy. The school's focused and

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inclusive approach to leadership has resulted in accelerated progress in English and mathematics in a relatively short span of time.

School leaders and the governing body ensure that procedures to safeguard pupils' safety and health are good and amend procedures when necessary. The recent improvements to site security have contributed well to the pupils feeling safe. Risk assessments are thorough and used well to inform the school's decision making. The governing body is supportive of the school and has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses. Members are beginning to ask the school leaders challenging questions about pupils' achievement on a regular basis. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination adequately. Good behaviour strategies, coupled with effective support for vulnerable pupils, have resulted in more pupils becoming engaged with learning. The progress in English and mathematics of White British and Black African pupils, who together comprise the vast majority, has been accelerated and gaps in attainment are narrowing. Community cohesion is satisfactory. The school understands the composition of its community within the school and pupils from different backgrounds get on very well with each other. The link with a local special school is particularly good because pupils from this school regularly learn and engage with the pupils of Thomas Arnold. However, leaders recognise that there is scope for further engagement with other communities in the United Kingdom and abroad.

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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
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
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery with knowledge and skills that are generally below those expected for their age. Their language and social skills are often particularly low. Children settle very quickly into school because of the good induction arrangements and the positive partnership with parents and carers, who are given helpful guidance on how to

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support their children's learning and development. Good relationships between adults and children, and the particular attention given to care and welfare, enable children to make satisfactory progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Teaching is consistently satisfactory in the Nursery and it is good in the Reception classes. This, coupled with better outdoor provision in the Reception area, means that children make a slower start in their learning and development in the Nursery but progress is accelerated in Reception. By the end of Reception, many children are meeting national expectations across most areas of learning, including language and number. This indicates satisfactory, and improving, outcomes.

Although teaching is satisfactory, questioning and modelling are not always used well enough in the Nursery classes to create deeper learning experiences. There is an appropriate blend of adult-led activities and those chosen by the children. Children are developing a good awareness of healthy eating, as seen when children talked about foods that are good for strengthening bones. Assessment and record keeping are clear and the resulting information is used effectively to plan teaching and learning. Good use is made of the outdoor learning areas, although the Nursery area is less stimulating. The leader of the setting is responsive to what the performance data show about children's outcomes and has made a good impact on improving the quality of provision. As a result, outcomes have improved over the past two years and are now close to national expectations.

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

Very few parents and carers responded to the parental questionnaire. Of those who responded, and including several spoken to during the inspection, most are supportive of the school and are positive about their children's experience at the school and with what it provides them. A small minority of parents and carers raised concerns relating to unacceptable behaviour and not enough progress being made by their children. Inspectors consider that the school has improved its systems to manage behaviour and this has had a positive impact. The issue of pupils' progress is covered in the inspection report. The school has been liaising effectively with many parents to improve pupils' attendance. However, school leaders recognise that more needs to be done to enlist parents' and carers' suggestions and concerns and use these to inform its decision making.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thomas Arnold 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 25 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 441 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	40	14	56	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	52	11	44	1	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	6	24	16	68	1	4	1	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	48	9	36	4	16	6	0
The teaching is good at this school	7	28	15	60	2	8	1	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	32	14	53	3	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	5	20	16	64	3	12	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)	6	24	12	48	3	12	1	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	8	32	13	52	3	12	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	28	13	52	4	16	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	24	14	56	4	16	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	32	12	48	4	16	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	10	40	13	52	2	8	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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 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 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.

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.



24 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thomas Arnold Primary School, Dagenham RM9 6NH

Thank you for making the inspectors welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting some of you in class and at lunchtime. A special thank you to all those who shared their experiences with us about life at Thomas Arnold.

We judged your school to be satisfactory. Your attainment in mathematics by the end of Year 6 has improved so that it is now broadly average, and in English, although still low, it is rising rapidly. Most of you make satisfactory progress, although some of you are making good progress, especially in mathematics. Here are some of the strengths of your school.

- Your school is welcoming and friendly.
- The school takes good care of you so that you feel safe and well cared for.
- You make a good contribution to your school community, for example through the impressive work of the school council.
- You are making healthy choices to keep you fit.
- Your behaviour and attitudes to learning are good.

We found some areas that need improving. This is what we have asked the school to do.

- Make sure that more of the lessons are as good as the best, so that you make better and faster progress, especially in English and mathematics.
- Work even more closely with your parents to improve your attendance because it is still below the national average for primary schools.
- Make sure that school leaders look more closely at how much you learn and the progress you make in lessons.

You can help by working hard in lessons and, unless the reason is exceptional, making sure you attend school every day. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nasim Butt

Lead Inspector

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