

Thatto Heath Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104763
Local Authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	355626
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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	586
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lorraine Whittle
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Ireland
Date of previous school inspection	16 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 27 lessons taught by 17 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff, a group of parents and carers, the Chair of the Governing Body and with the local authority's admissions and placements officer. They observed the school's work, looked at samples of pupils' books and displays, analysed documentation relating to pupils' attainment and progress, improvement planning, safeguarding and pupils' behaviour. Questionnaires from 174 parents and carers were analysed and those completed by both staff and Key Stage 2 pupils.

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

- The reasons why more-able pupils appear to underachieve relatively in writing and in mathematics.
- Whether the difference in performance between pupils with different levels of special educational needs and/or disabilities, noted in 2010 national data, is a trend.
- The degree to which the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum ensures good outcomes for children.

Information about the school

Thatto Heath has many more pupils on roll than most primary schools. The vast majority are of White British heritage. There is a tiny proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. There is a much higher proportion of pupils than average who has special educational needs and/or disabilities but no pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who join the school at times other than the usual times of transfer, are much higher than usual. Both of the latter two groups have increased significantly in number over the past two years. There are seven pupils in the care of the local authority.

The school runs a breakfast and homework club. Since the last inspection, there have been very many changes in staffing both at classroom, middle management and senior leadership levels. The school has gained a raft of awards, in recognition of its promotion of basic skills, healthy lifestyle, sport, the arts, information and communication technology and staff development.

There is a children's centre that shares the same site and this provision is subject to a separate inspection and report.

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?**2****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

This is a good school that understandably takes great pride in its inclusiveness. There are several aspects of its work that are outstanding. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They feel extremely safe, make an exceptional contribution to the school and the local community and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Outstanding leadership by the headteacher, ably supported by senior and middle managers, ensures that the whole school community is committed to sustained improvement and that there is high quality care, guidance and support provided for pupils. The highly effective partnerships with a wide range of support agencies, the local authority and with other providers, contribute exceedingly well to pupils' good achievement and well-being.

The school has improved well since the last inspection. Pupils now achieve well and the proportion of pupils in Year 6 attaining at the expected Level 4 has risen by 20% in both English and mathematics. The achievement of more-able pupils has been slower to rise and the school acknowledges that its next main challenge is to improve the performance of these pupils in writing and mathematics. Good improvement in pupils' outcomes and provision has resulted from the effective actions taken to address identified weaknesses, for example in aspects of pupils' attainment and in teaching. Leaders, managers and the governing body's honest appraisal of the school's performance and the systematic way in which weaknesses have been and are being tackled, demonstrate a good capacity to sustain improvement.

The quality of teaching is good and contributes well to the good overall progress made by pupils and their obvious enjoyment in learning. Particular strengths in teaching and learning are the range of activities evident in lessons and the warmth of the relationships between adults and pupils. Whilst pupils' work is marked regularly and often helpfully, the overall use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory, partly because prior learning is not always sufficiently taken into account when lessons are planned or the next steps made sufficiently clear to pupils. This tends to impact more negatively on the achievement of more-able pupils than others. The good curriculum provides pupils with many very enriching experiences and contributes significantly to pupils' very good personal development and their enjoyment. The very high quality care, guidance and support and the excellent safeguarding procedures make the school a very secure and safe environment in which to learn. This is particularly the case for the much higher than average proportion of pupils who join the school other than at the usual times, some of whom have found it difficult to settle in other schools. The highly effective work of the pastoral team and the great success of the school's behaviour management strategies, ensure that these pupils settle quickly, and that they are increasingly able to conform to the school's high expectations of conduct.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable a higher proportion of more-able pupils to attain the higher Level 5 in Year 6 national tests in writing and in mathematics, by:
 - improving pupils' spelling and their use of grammar both when speaking and writing
 - enabling pupils to be more proficient in using and applying their mathematical knowledge and skills, especially to solve more complex problems.
- Improve the use of assessment to support learning by:
 - using more effectively the knowledge gained from assessing pupils' day-to-day attainment to plan lessons that always fully meet their needs
 - more consistently pointing out the next steps pupils need to take to improve their work and requiring them to indicate in their subsequent work how they have done this.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils achieve well and thoroughly enjoy their learning. They work happily in pairs and groups, exchanging knowledge and ideas and supporting each other's learning effectively. They are very keen to contribute during question and answer sessions, settle quickly to tasks and persevere when they find work difficult. They enjoy the challenge of working at pace, for example in a Year 5 mathematics lesson during a mental arithmetic session. Pupils demonstrate obvious delight in their own and others' success. Their diligence, ability to work in a variety of settings, their good information and communication technology (ICT) skills and their easy acceptance of constructive criticism, all provide them with a skill set that will stand them in good stead for the next step in their education and for life.

Children enter the nursery with skills that are well below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage but still enter Year 1 with below average attainment. Through Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils progress well overall and leave Year 6 with broadly average attainment. The progress made by all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. The apparent difference in progress, indicated in 2010 data, between groups of pupils with different levels of special educational needs and/or disabilities proves not to be a trend and there is clear evidence that over time these groups achieve equally well. As a result of the high quality provision and support that pupils with individual behaviour plans receive, they make good academic progress and many conform sufficiently to the school's high expectations for them. As a result, they often no longer require specific tailored provision. Those few pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who are looked after by the local authority also make good progress, achieve well and enjoy school. The more-able pupils currently relatively underachieve in writing and in mathematics. This is because their ability to reach the higher levels is hampered by some incorrect spelling and grammar and their lack of assuredness in applying their mathematical skills to solve problems. Pupils read well.

Pupils' behaviour and their contribution to the school and the wider community are outstanding. Through the school council they strongly influence decision making, for example by being closely involved in the recent appointment of a new deputy headteacher. Pupils are active in fundraising and in the local community. They act as

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reading buddies and play leaders and they are keen ambassadors for protecting the environment. Most groups are represented in taking responsibilities and the head boy and head girl proudly assume their roles. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is often exemplary, contributing well to their good learning. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles effectively, especially embracing the many opportunities to exercise. They have a very keen sense of fair play and have a good insight through first-hand experiences of the differences and similarities between their own and other cultures.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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?

The best teaching ensures that pupils learn actively and are involved in enjoyable, pacy tasks that promote very effective learning and excellent progress. In these lessons, teachers and learning support assistants act as facilitators rather than instructors. This was very well exemplified in a Year 4 ICT lesson in which pupils very enthusiastically made a podcast to create an advertisement that very effectively supported their work in English. Consistently effective features of good teaching are warm relationships, clear explanations and very good behaviour management. In lessons in which pupils only make satisfactory progress, teachers sometimes take too long to introduce tasks and do not always make the lesson objective clear enough. Although there is evidence of good practice, the overall use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory because there is inconsistency in the clarity with which marking guides pupils' future learning; there is sometimes an insufficient

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requirement for pupils to respond to teachers' guidance, and on occasion prior learning is not taken fully into account to plan lessons. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning and are often integral to the good progress made by pupils who find learning quickly or behaving well more difficult.

The curriculum offers pupils rich experiences and meets pupils' needs well. Pupils very much enjoy the themed weeks that more recently have focused on the countries of origin of pupils in the school, and that promote their spiritual, moral and cultural development extremely effectively. Pupils have a wide range of experiences and access to clubs that stimulate their interest and enhance their achievements in sport, aesthetics and citizenship. The curriculum is particularly effective in promoting pupils' personal development, but less successful in meeting the needs of the more-able pupils in writing and mathematics. Cross-curricular provision is effective, especially in promoting ICT and reading skills and in providing pupils with enjoyment.

The very well targeted support, including the very effective use of partnerships has enabled those pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable, who have found settling into other schools very difficult and those whose confidence is fragile, to make the best use of opportunities provided by the school. Because pupils and their families are well known by staff, there is full confidence in the school's ability to provide effective guidance. 'Teachers are doing a fantastic job of helping my child through communication difficulties' sums up many parents' and carers' feelings about how much the school cares. There are highly effective procedures for transition and transfer, facilitated by excellent partnerships with the on-site children's centre, between key stages and with secondary schools and other education providers. Pupils who unavoidably miss school for lengthy periods of time are helped to keep in contact with friends and up to date with school work. 'The school is exceptional in keeping up to date with reading and school work when time off for medical attention needed', is a parental comment that reflects this. Strategies to ensure improved attendance are effective. Attendance has improved steadily since the last inspection and has a high profile throughout the school and with parents and carers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and other leaders very effectively inspire the school community to share a strong sense of purpose to raise pupils' attainment and to continually improve provision. Morale is high and the staff constantly strive, with considerable success, to attain or exceed challenging targets. All aspects of the school's work are rigorously evaluated, with

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all stakeholders involved. This enables leaders and managers to devise very well focused development plans. Actions are thoroughly reviewed in order to evaluate their success. This ensures that pupils' outcomes are at least good, and that provision is effective and some cases outstanding.

Governance is good. The governing body has a sufficient range of expertise to enable it to carry out its responsibilities to support and challenge the school effectively. It is particularly successful in ensuring outstanding safeguarding. The school is at the forefront of good practice and its procedures and practices are constantly reviewed and updated. All adults who work in the school are rigorously checked and risk assessments are extremely detailed. The site is very secure and training for all staff is recent and comprehensive. The everyday focus on safe working and conduct means that pupils are acutely aware of potential dangers and they know very well how to keep safe.

The school engages with parents and carers well. They are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work. Comments such as, 'They always listen to my suggestions and deal effectively with any concerns raised', 'The newsletters are great' and 'Website is always up to date', confirm that the school listens and uses a wide range of media to communicate with parents and carers.

The school is highly inclusive and promotes equality of opportunity well. Meticulous tracking of pupils' progress, of their participation in school events and extra-curricular activities, and the scheduling of some clubs at lunchtime, all testify to the school's determination to include all. The relative underachievement in writing of more-able pupils is what prevents this aspect of its work from being outstanding. Any discrimination is tackled rigorously. The school community is harmonious and the school knows its local community and its needs well. The links with schools in the United Kingdom and those abroad that have pupils from very different backgrounds and racial heritages, mean that community cohesion is promoted well. Pupils' outstanding outcomes and the effective use of resources mean that the school provides good value for money.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
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 do well in the Early Years Foundation Stage because they are well taught, extremely well looked after and their learning is well led and managed. Having entered with well below expected skills they settle happily and quickly and make good progress in all areas of their learning. Relationships are very good, with the key worker system contributing well to children's learning and to their and their parents' and carers' sense of confidence. There is a good range of activities, particularly indoors that interests children and arouse their curiosity. The strong emphasis on promoting children's personal, social and emotional development contributes well to their good quality learning in all areas. There is effective day-to-day assessment that helps adults plan appropriately and parents and carers appreciate the learning journals that contain evidence of children's development through the key stage. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has a clear vision for improvement, rightly acknowledging the need for planning to more clearly indicate children's next steps, to improve children's early writing and number skills and to improve the outdoor environment and provision further.

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	2

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Stage

Views of parents and carers

The views expressed in the questionnaires returned, and in the meeting held with parents and carers, were overwhelmingly positive. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded feel that all aspects of the school's work are either very effective or good. A very few feel that unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with effectively. Inspectors looked carefully at this issue and found that the school has excellent strategies for managing behaviour. Inspectors judged that, given the school's context, the overall quality of behaviour is outstanding.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thatto Heath Community 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 174 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 586 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	127	73	45	26	0	0	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	135	78	36	21	0	0	3	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	108	62	58	33	4	2	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	107	61	60	34	4	2	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	121	70	49	28	2	1	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	105	60	65	37	2	1	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	104	60	63	36	2	1	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	110	63	60	34	1	1	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	112	64	55	32	1	1	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	99	57	62	36	5	3	6	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	90	52	75	43	5	3	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	109	63	58	33	3	2	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	125	72	46	26	1	1	2	1

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 31 December 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 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.



6 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thatto Heath Community Primary School, St Helen's WA9 5QX

On behalf of the inspection team may I thank you very warmly for your lovely welcome when we inspected your school recently. You go to a good school. Some things are excellent. You feel extremely safe because you are looked after so well. You also help out extremely well around the school and in the local area. Your behaviour is outstanding. You have a keen sense of right and wrong and fair play and understand very well that people from all backgrounds and cultures should be respected. You obviously enjoy the theme weeks that help you to understand lots of really interesting things. You have a good knowledge of the right things to eat and that exercise is good for you. You nearly all make good progress in your work, but the pupils who find learning easier than most do not do as well as they should in writing and mathematics. You are taught well and you enjoy learning in an active way. Your good ICT skills will help you in secondary school and when you start work. The good links that the school has with your parents and carers and the super ones with other schools and organisations, help you a lot with your learning.

The headteacher and the other adults who help to run the school do a very good job. They have made sure that the school has improved well. Part of my job is to point out things that still need to be improved and how they might be achieved. As well as helping those of you who find learning easier than most to do better in writing and mathematics, I have asked your teachers to use what they know about your learning to plan lessons more carefully. Also, I have asked them to get you to show where in your work you have followed their advice about how to improve. Those of you who find learning easier than others can help by taking more care with your spelling and grammar.

Thank you again for a very enjoyable two days. I hope you have a lovely summer holiday.

Yours sincerely

Paul Bamber

Lead inspector

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