

Thameside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109800
Local Authority	Reading
Inspection number	377986
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Claire Baldry

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	301
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Aitken
Headteacher	Helen Wallace
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons taught by 12 teachers. The inspectors also attended assemblies, observed break times and held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, pupils, and parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at plans and policies, records of assessments and tracking of pupils' progress. In addition, questionnaires completed by 106 parents and carers, 143 pupils and 13 staff were analysed.

The inspectors reviewed many aspects of the school's work. They looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of measures to raise attainment and increase progress overall, especially for key groups and more-able pupils.
- The impact of leadership and management on improving teaching and learning, including the consistent use of assessment for all age groups across the school.
- The effectiveness of strategies to improve attendance.

Information about the school

Thameside Primary School is slightly above average in size. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also above average. A small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic groups is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly more than that found nationally. The number of pupils who leave and join the school other than in their Reception Year is also above average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes. Almost half of the teaching staff were appointed within the last two years. The school has been awarded Healthy School status.

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

- Thameside Primary is a satisfactory, improving school. The headteacher, who has been in post for two and a half years at the time of the inspection, has provided a clear vision and direction, and made a substantial number of beneficial appointments to the teaching team. With increasing support from the senior leadership team and greater strategic challenge from the governing body, the school is moving forward at a quickening pace.
- Thameside provides good levels of care and safety for its pupils. Pupils are proud of the school. They feel safe and enjoy the school environment. Behaviour is good and parents and carers are positive about the school. As one parent said, 'I am very impressed by how well behaved the children are and how they are taught to respect and help each other.' Attendance has improved substantially in the past year and is broadly average. As a result, low attendance is no longer a barrier to most pupils' learning.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage in response to well-planned learning activities and meticulous attention to their personal and communication, language and literacy development. Given their starting points, through the rest of the school, progress overall is satisfactory. Improvements to the school curriculum, for example, to develop pupils as independent learners and in the way teachers use their questioning to challenge children's learning, are not yet fully developed in all classes so that progress in lessons is inconsistent. This also means that, although improving, some pupils, especially those with more ability, are not yet making the progress of which they are capable in writing and mathematics. Even so, reading is now a strength of the school with the most recent statutory assessments in reading for both Key Stage 1 and Key stage 2 showing above average levels of attainment.
- There is increasingly effective teaching and learning, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. Effective support for pupils who join the school after their Reception Year ensures that they also make good progress, thus closing any gaps in their achievement.

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- Although some developments are still quite new, accomplishments so far, especially in strengthening the Early Years Foundation Stage and re-establishing pupils' at least average attainment in Key Stage 1, demonstrate the school's 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?

- Raise attainment in writing and mathematics to above national averages at the end of Key Stage 2 by:
 - raising expectations for the more-able pupils
 - involving pupils more systematically in evaluating how well they are doing.
- Increase the amount of good or better teaching and learning, especially at Key Stage 1, by:
 - increasing the pace of lessons, making sure that questions challenge pupils' learning at the right level.
- Develop the curriculum by:
 - providing more consistent opportunities for pupils' independent learning
 - giving pupils more ways to apply their literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge across the range of subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Attainment is currently average at the end of Year 6, and assessments and observations of improving progress in lessons indicate that levels of attainment are steadily rising. However, given the legacy of significant previous underachievement in Key Stage 1 and continuing variations in the quality of learning in classes, progress over time is currently satisfactory. Most children enter their Reception Year with skills that are expected for their age. They make a positive start to their learning which results in good progress. As pupils move through Years 1 to 6, their progress is less consistent, particularly at Key Stage 1.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are enabled to work independently and make good progress through well-targeted intervention and skilled support. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who join the school after their Reception Year also achieve well for similar reasons. However, more-able pupils do not always demonstrate the higher level skills needed for them to take the initiative in setting up and evaluating their own learning, especially when the pace of a lesson slows. For example, during a Year 2 mathematics lesson when investigating the order of numbers in subtraction, pupils did not extend their learning as well as they could, because the teacher's questioning did not encourage them to think of a range of answers. In the more effective lessons

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seen, pupils showed they were able to apply their learning to different challenges. This was seen in Year 4 where pupils made perceptive links between reading and writing to discover interesting adverbs for inclusion in a newspaper article. Similarly, pupils in Year 5 were able to apply their knowledge of multiplication and division of decimals effectively to create a budgeted party menu.

Pupils behave well and play sensibly together. They enjoy the range of outdoor activities and are taking increasing roles of responsibility within the school community, for example, as peer mediators or elected members of the school council. These contribute to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which they demonstrate in their participation in assemblies and the respect which they show for each other’s cultures and beliefs. Pupils participate enthusiastically in established links with local provision for the elderly. They adopt healthy living well and can talk about the importance of diet and exercise in keeping healthy, as reflected in the school’s Healthy School award. Pupils say they feel safe in school, confident that the environment is secure and adults will deal with any problems. The pupils’ satisfactory academic achievement, good social skills and much improved and now average attendance represent sound preparation for their future economic well-being.

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	3
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	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	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

More effective use of assessment and tracking of pupils’ progress throughout the

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

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school are helping teachers to steadily improve the pace of learning. Teachers work effectively as a team and use revised planning systems with increasing success to more systematically develop the understanding of pupils of all abilities. This is especially effective in Years 5 and 6 where consistently good teaching ensures that pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and make better than expected progress. For example, in one Year 6 lesson, all learners were encouraged to work at their own level when looking for patterns in a number investigation. By the end of the lesson, the most-able mathematicians were beginning to invent formulae to make further predictions. In less successful lessons, teaching loses pace because of lengthy explanations and questions which are not sufficiently challenging. As a result, pupils, especially some with more ability, begin to lose interest, are not motivated to express their views and learning slows down.

Good deployment of support staff in lessons is a consistent strength throughout the school. Teaching assistants are skilled at talking to pupils as individuals or in groups and lift pupils’ self-esteem by enabling them to feel successful. This gives excellent support to the language development of children who speak English as an additional language. It also makes a strong contribution to the good progress and increasing independence of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pastoral support and safeguarding pupils’ welfare are consistently good features of the school. Adults are diligent in implementing agreed procedures about the welfare of pupils and this has improved attendance and behaviour.

The developing curriculum is enhanced by a variety of trips and after-school clubs, which are well attended and increase pupils’ enjoyment. During the inspection, pupils enjoyed harvesting vegetables as part of the ‘Food for Families’ initiative, and Years 5 and 6 were eagerly anticipating their forthcoming residential trip to Wales. In recent years, the school grounds and accommodation have been improved to extend learning opportunities and this is having an increasingly positive effect on pupils’ learning and development. However, some areas, such as the information and communication technology suite, are underused and reflect the inconsistent opportunities for pupils to fully develop their independent learning skills. Similarly, while some pupils have good opportunities to extend their literacy and numeracy skills across other subjects, this is not yet a consistent aspect in all classes. Reading is given a high priority across the curriculum, with ready access to an extensive range of books, and these have contributed to the rapid rise in attainment in reading.

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

The high expectations of the headteacher are driving school improvement. She has made recent key teaching appointments throughout the school and reorganised the leadership team. Leaders at all levels are held to account for pupils' learning. Staff are motivated by the leadership team's continuous focus on improvement. Some initiatives are still in their early stages, but improving outcomes are beginning to emerge. Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is now good, and there has been a much needed rise in achievement at Key Stage 1. Attainment in reading is now above national averages, and parents and carers really appreciate their greater involvement in children's learning through the introduction of target cards and well-led parent workshops. The strategic placing of the deputy headteacher as the co-ordinator of special educational needs and/or disabilities has given a high profile to the learning of pupils with such needs so that their progress is now good. As yet, other changes, for example, to develop more consistently good teaching, have not been in place long enough to fully bridge prior underachievement and to lift the progress of all pupils over time. However, some important conditions for further improvements have been firmly established. For example, imaginative use of resources to provide stimulating indoor and outdoor learning spaces, and the adoption of robust monitoring and procedures, has brought much improved behaviour and attendance so that lessons are not disrupted.

The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily, although recent initiatives and staff changes have not yet been in place long enough to ensure that all pupils, especially the more able, make equally good progress. Even so, all staff work diligently to overcome discrimination. Governance is currently satisfactory. More accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses has enabled the governing body to begin to monitor school development more effectively and work in partnership with school leaders through a combination of support and challenge. Currently, the school is well placed to move forward from the satisfactory value for money which it now provides.

Safeguarding procedures are fully in place and contribute to the positive views expressed by parents and carers and pupils about their safety in school and the range of opportunities provided for parents and carers to support their children's learning. Other partnerships with, for example, different settings and agencies also support children's well-being and currently have a satisfactory, but improving, impact on pupils' learning. The school has a good understanding of its diverse community and promotes community cohesion well. Pupils from different backgrounds get on noticeably well together with plans in place for further development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and

3

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driving improvement 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	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is much improved since the last inspection. Children now make a positive start to their education in the Reception Year. Good leadership and teaching and support from all adults ensure that they achieve well. Both language and personal development are continually targeted through effective assessment and good communication with parents and carers and pre-school settings. Outstanding care for the children’s welfare and the promotion of excellent behaviour has created a highly social and safe atmosphere in which children share toys and look after each other. The development of children’s early writing skills is another exemplary aspect. Underpinning this success is the stimulating learning environment, which provides a broad range of learning opportunities both indoors and outside. In addition to well-led sessions with adults, children are encouraged to develop through a range of thoughtfully designed play activities. For example, children were practising early writing skills by making shopping lists for the supermarket and using whiteboards to plan buildings to construct from large bricks. Occasionally, opportunities are missed for adults to maximise learning by fully engaging in activities chosen by the children.

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

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Views of parents and carers

Around 35% of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. Most expressed positive agreement with the statements. Written comments were almost all positive with particularly appreciative views expressed about pupils enjoying school, making good progress in Reception, and the quality of school leadership. There were very few negative comments. These concerned individual issues about behaviour and site safety. During this inspection, the inspectors found these to be much improved and now good features of the 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 106 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 301 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	75	71	27	25	2	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	78	74	23	22	4	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	55	52	48	45	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	55	52	40	38	7	7	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	58	55	43	41	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	55	52	47	44	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	55	45	42	2	2	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)	53	50	42	40	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	52	49	38	36	5	5	4	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	41	50	47	4	4	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	42	49	46	0	0	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	67	63	32	30	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	75	71	27	25	1	1	3	3

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.

30 September 2011

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Thameside Primary School, Reading RG4 8DB

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school, and particular thanks to those of you that took the time to speak to us. We were impressed with the way you play so well together and show respect for all members of your school community. We agree with you that your headteacher and senior staff are making your school a better place. We have described your school as satisfactory, but improving.

These are the other main things which we found.

- In the past, some of you did not do as well as you could in Years 1 and 2. This is much better now, especially in reading, but it is taking time for your teachers to make up for the learning that you missed. By the end of Year 6, most of you reach the levels that are expected for your age. We think some of you could do even better. This is why we have described your progress as satisfactory.
- You enjoy school and your attendance has really improved.
- You have lots of new teachers, who are making a difference to your lessons. There is already some good teaching and learning in your school, and this is improving.
- Adults take good care of you, and as a result, you feel safe and know how to stay healthy. If you need extra help with your learning, the adults in school make sure you are supported.

To help you to achieve better, we have asked your headteacher, governors and teachers to do these things.

- Improve your progress in writing and mathematics by expecting more from those of you who are more able, and involving you more often in evaluating how well you are doing.
- Increase the amount of good or better teaching and learning, especially for some of you in Years 1 and 2, by keeping up the pace of lessons and making sure your teachers' questions challenge you at the right level.

All of you can help by making sure that your own work is improving, and trying hard to reach your targets.

Yours sincerely
Claire Baldry
Lead Inspector

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