

# Thundersley Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	135154
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	381818
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 April 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Janice Williams

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	360
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Harrod
<b>Headteacher</b>	Emma Dawson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 September 2008
<b>School address</b>	Hart Road Thundersley Benfleet SS7 3PT
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Janice Williams	Additional Inspector
Anthony Edward Green	Additional Inspector
Ron Elam	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team observed 15 lessons, of which three were observed jointly with either the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Thirteen teachers were seen. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders and several groups of pupils. Telephone discussions took place with a small number of parents and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at data showing pupils' attainment and progress, school policies, attendance records, the minutes of meetings of the governing body, reports from the school improvement adviser, safeguarding records and pupils' work. They analysed questionnaire responses from 22 staff, 150 pupils and 125 parents and carers.

## Information about the school

This is a larger than average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British; a small proportion is from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above the national average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is below average.

Since the last inspection, there has been significant restructuring to the senior leadership team and the governing body. The current headteacher took up post in January 2011. The school has National Healthy School status and the Eco Schools (Bronze) award. In 2011, the school did not meet the current floor standard, which sets the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

On the school site, there is a privately run children's centre which is subject to a separate Ofsted 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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key 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 significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement.
- The school is not satisfactory because recent improvements in leadership and management and the quality of teaching, although increasing the rate of pupils' progress, have yet to ensure that pupils attain the standards they should at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Achievement is inadequate. Pupils' progress is improving and is currently satisfactory. However, pupils in Key Stage 2 have yet to overcome shortcomings, particularly in writing and mathematics, which result from a period in which their progress was too slow and attainment far too low. At the time of the last inspection, attainment in English and mathematics was broadly average, but since then it has declined and has only recently begun to rise as a result of the steps taken by senior leaders.
- Senior leaders have successfully improved the quality of teaching through the introduction of regular monitoring, rigorous evaluation, support and performance management. Teaching is satisfactory and the proportion of good and better teaching is increasing. Despite some evident and increasing strengths in teaching, there is not enough of a good or outstanding quality to rapidly transform pupils' progress and attainment. There are weaknesses in the marking and feedback given to pupils.
- In classrooms and around the school, pupils' behaviour and safety are good. Pupils conduct themselves extremely well. They cooperate well in class. Most pupils feel safe and supported at school. Pupils say that cases of bullying are

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few, and they are effectively handled. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Attendance has risen to above average.

- The headteacher's ambitious vision and plans for the future of the school are shared and acted upon by staff and the governing body. The impact of recent improvements is demonstrated in pupils' current satisfactory progress. However, middle leaders are not consistently holding staff to account for the pupils' progress and the quality of the feedback and guidance that is given to pupils. The curriculum is broad, balanced and generally well matched to pupils' needs. However, insufficient opportunities exist for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise achievement and accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, by:
  - fully implementing and evaluating the impact of the initiative to improve writing
  - developing greater opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.
- By April 2013, increase the proportion of good and better teaching by:
  - improving the use of assessment information to ensure that all groups of pupils are challenged by tasks that are well matched to their learning needs so that they make good or better progress
  - improving the quality of guidance to pupils about how to improve their work, so that marking regularly indicates the next steps in their learning
  - ensuring that pupils always respond to the guidance they receive.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management by:
  - developing the role of middle leaders so that they hold staff more to account for pupils' attainment and progress
  - increasing the involvement of the governing body so that its members use data to challenge and support the school and to hold leaders to account.

## **Main report**

### **Achievement of pupils**

Pupils' achievement is inadequate overall. Children enter Reception with skills at least six months behind the development expected for children of this age. They leave Reception having made good progress in most areas of learning, but satisfactory progress in their personal, social and emotional development.

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Most pupils are making the expected progress in Key Stage 1. The school's current data and inspection evidence indicate that pupils are now attaining broadly in line with the national average. Pupils' attainment in mathematics is stronger than in reading and writing. In their learning of phonics (the sounds that letters make), pupils are able to read and spell out words accurately. They have an appropriate understanding of how to work out unfamiliar words and apply these skills to their reading in other contexts. Attainment in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 is broadly average.

The impact of the slow progress made by the pupils in Key Stage 2 in the last few years shows in their low attainment. Pupils' attainment has been below average in reading and particularly lower than what is expected in writing and mathematics. Inspection evidence and the school's assessment data show that most pupils are now making satisfactory progress, although they are still making up lost ground. Their progress in reading and mathematics is now more robust than in writing. The school has introduced 'Big Write' sessions to improve pupils' writing skills. Pupils are developing different writing styles and making more extensive use of criteria for successful work. While pupils are making better use of striking vocabulary, connectives and punctuation, these improvements are not firmly established because they have very few opportunities to apply these skills in other subjects.

Increasingly effective teaching is closing gaps in achievement between different groups of learners. For example, in a Year 3 guided reading lesson, pupils' progress was good because of challenging questioning from support staff and the opportunities provided for independent work. The teacher's relentless focus on phonics and blending the sounds within words encouraged pupils to excel and be proud of their work. There are still slight variations in achievement between boys and girls. Nevertheless, as a result of a good range of strategies such as introducing topics and books that interest boys, their achievement is now better than in previous years. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress and reaching higher standards in mathematics because of intensive support and intervention programmes. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are performing better than their peers as a result of the support they receive.

The great majority of parents and carers believe that their children's needs are met, and think that their children are making good progress. The findings of this inspection show that progress is satisfactory and some underachievement remains, which is why achievement is inadequate overall.

**Quality of teaching**

Although teaching is now leading to satisfactory progress for the large majority of pupils there are still some inconsistencies in teachers' use of assessment, planning and marking that hinder more rapid progress. In addition, where teachers provide helpful feedback to the pupils, they do not always follow it up to ensure the pupils have put it to good use. Most parents and carers consider the teaching to be good.

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Inspectors found that although some teaching is good, overall it is not better than satisfactory.

Throughout the school, teaching and learning are well supported by the respectful relationships between adults and pupils. Teaching and the curriculum enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development a good deal. Teachers are knowledgeable and create a positive climate for learning. In most lessons, teachers give clear explanations of what pupils are to learn. The aims of the lesson are structured according to pupils' abilities and teachers are increasingly using the school's assessment information to plan lessons that meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils including those who are disabled and those with special educational needs have a clear understanding of the lesson's focus and how to judge that they have been successful. On occasions, the planned activities do not fully match the needs of all learners and sometimes there is a slow pace to learning. Where teachers' planning was weak, the way activities were structured failed to sustain pupils' interest. Sometimes assessments lacked rigour and, consequently, activities did not fully challenge all pupils. For example, in a literacy lesson, pupils' progress slowed because the structure of the activities was too complex for pupils to follow.

In Reception, the environment is spacious and the displays stimulate children's interest and engagement. One parent wrote, 'Reception is a wonderful part of the school. The teachers are kind, patient and caring.' In a Reception lesson, children were given a variety of activities that challenged them. Good relationships with the staff and the teacher's high expectations enabled children to demonstrate a good understanding of the concept of subtraction and their behaviour was exemplary.

**Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The vast majority of pupils behave well. Pupils' behaviour in lessons, in assembly and around the school is good. Pupils are attentive and enthusiastic about learning. They are cooperative and respectful towards each other. In the playground, pupils move around sensibly. A large majority of the responses from parents and carers were positive in this respect, although a very few expressed some dissatisfaction with the school's handling of cases of bullying. Most pupils say that they feel safe in school and are able to talk to an adult if they have any worries. Pupils understand about different forms of bullying, including what to do in cases of cyber-bullying, but said there were few instances of it. They were confident that the school sorts out any issues quickly. The annual Year 6 pupils' visit to the 'Crucial Crew Safety Experience' provides them with a good understanding of bullying, personal safety and the strategies they can use to deal with bullying scenarios.

In inspectors' observations and in discussions about typical behaviour with a group of pupils no evidence was found of poor conduct, nor did they hear any testimony which suggested that there was much bad behaviour. There have been very few racist incidents in recent years and records reveal that when bullying takes place it is well managed by the school. The school awards house points, 'golden time' and holds celebration assemblies to reinforce positive behaviour. Effective action has led

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to an improvement in attendance to above average levels, and further reduced the rate of persistent absence.

## **Leadership and management**

The newly structured senior leadership team and governing body have provided a concerted approach to improving the school and holding staff to account for the performance of pupils. The new headteacher and senior leaders have brought stability and a vision for improvement to every aspect of the school's work. The management of teaching and the performance of staff are good. Significant improvements to teaching have ensured that inadequate teaching has been eradicated and all teaching is at least satisfactory with an increasing proportion that is good. Tracking by senior leaders is more robust and the school makes more consistent use of assessment to effectively monitor the achievement of all groups of learners, including that of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. This makes a significant contribution to the promotion of equality and the school is quick to deal with any forms of discrimination.

While there are some variations in the quality of feedback to pupils, initiatives have been successful in improving pupils' current progress. This has been achieved by providing all the staff with opportunities for professional development and training. As a result, morale is very high and staff are highly committed to improving current practice. Self-evaluation is rigorous and mostly accurate though at times too generous. The effectiveness and consistency of senior leaders in bringing about improvements demonstrate satisfactory capacity to improve. The impact of middle leaders who have specific responsibilities for subjects or phases of the school is variable as they are not all involved as they should be in checking pupils' assessments and performance.

Members of the governing body attend various training courses to improve their knowledge of assessment and performance data in order to more rigorously hold the school to account and are committed to the school. They have used the knowledge gained to work closely with the leadership team and have developed a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The curriculum meets pupils' learning needs and interests and satisfactorily promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The development of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum remains weaker. Safeguarding arrangements meet all current government requirements.



## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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 April 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Thundersley Primary School, Benfleet, SS7 3PT**

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when we visited your school and particularly to those of you who took the time to tell us your views or filled in a questionnaire. These are the main things that we found out about your school.

Your behaviour is good and you are considerate towards each other. You feel safe in school and enjoy a variety of after-school clubs. The teaching and the curriculum in your school are satisfactory. The headteacher and the other leaders know what to do to continue to improve your school.

However, your school is not as good as it should be. Most of you are currently making satisfactory progress but over the last three years, groups of pupils have been underachieving. We have, therefore, given your school a 'notice to improve' and asked it to make some important improvements. Other inspectors will make more checks in the future to ensure that things are getting better. We have asked the headteacher and the governing body to make the school even better by doing these things:

- raising your achievement, especially in writing and mathematics, by making sure that all teachers expect more of you and improve their lesson planning and marking to help you make better progress in your work
- increasing the amount of good teaching and ensuring tasks set are suitably challenging for all of you
- making sure school leaders focus more on improving the feedback that you receive from teachers and that you are provided with opportunities to read and respond to the comments
- providing more opportunities for the development of your literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects so that you can improve these more quickly.

You can all help by continuing to work hard so that the school can improve even more. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely  
Janice Williams  
Lead inspector

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