

Thorpe Lea Primary School

Huntingdon Way, Egham, Surrey, TW20 8DY

Inspection dates 29–30 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Most pupils do not make fast enough progress in their time at the school.
- The quality of teaching is too variable, so that pupils in some classes make faster progress than in others.
- The new headteacher has focused on improving teaching but has not had enough time to make a full impact.
- The headteacher has drawn up ambitious plans for the school, but as yet not enough different leaders are contributing to school improvement and checking how well pupils are learning.
- Teachers do not always meet the needs of all pupils, as the work set is sometimes too easy or too difficult, resulting in pupils making uneven progress in lessons.
- Teachers sometimes keep children sitting passively on the carpet instead of letting them find things out for themselves. Lessons sometimes move too slowly, and in some cases teachers do not expect enough of pupils.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunity to apply their writing at length across a range of subjects in the curriculum.
- The governing body has not held the school to account rigorously enough in terms of pupils' achievement, although that is now changing.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is inspiring teachers with a new 'can do' spirit, as the positive responses to the staff questionnaire show.
- The headteacher has quickly put in place new systems to ensure that pupils are making progress and to check on how well they are learning.
- Pupils feel safe. They behave well in and around the school. Attendance has improved.
- The school provides good care for all pupils, especially those in danger of falling behind, so that they make progress in line with others.
- Parents and carers appreciate the courses to help their children learn, and attendance at these workshops is growing.
- Assemblies bring the whole school together and pupils show their awareness of the values of the school and demonstrate them being

polite and welcoming.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons taught by eight class teachers, across a range of subjects, most observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, looked at samples of work and attended an assembly.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body including the Chair of the Governing Body and vice-chair, a representative of the local authority and groups of pupils from Years 1 and 2, and from Years 3 to 6. Inspectors took account of the views of staff in 26 questionnaires.
- The inspection team considered the 18 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire. Inspectors spoke to several parents and carers during the course of the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents, including development plans, the self-evaluation report, monitoring files, data on pupils' attainment and progress, safeguarding information, and records relating to behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

Jameel Hassan, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Natalia Power

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thorpe Lea is an average-sized primary school. It has a Nursery and there is one class in each year from Reception to Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is line with the national average. These pupils are entitled to additional support derived from funding called the pupil premium.
- Around one in five pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages.
- A lower proportion of pupils than is typical speak English as an additional language, and few of these are at an early stage of learning English.
- An average proportion of pupils are on the special needs register, both at school action and school action plus, including those with statements of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is no alternative provision.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to help pupils make faster progress in English and mathematics, improve the quality of teaching, so that it is consistently good or better, by making sure that:
 - work set accurately matches the abilities of all pupils and is neither too easy nor too difficult
 - lessons move at a brisk pace
 - pupils have more chances to work independently rather than listening passively to their teachers
 - teachers expect more from the pupils, setting targets for higher levels of achievement.
- Give pupils as many chances as possible to practise and improve their writing skills across a range of different subjects.
- Ensure that all leaders and managers and the governing body are actively engaged in drawing up plans for school improvement, and that all contribute to checking how well pupils are learning and the progress that they make.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils do not make rapid enough progress from their starting points, which is why achievement requires improvement. There is too much variation between year groups in the rates of progress, reflecting unevenness in the quality of teaching.
- Taking their time at the school as a whole, few pupils make more than expected progress. This reflects a lack of ambition in some of the teaching about how well the pupils could do if more was expected of them. The headteacher has put in place a system for giving pupils challenging targets to work for, for example, to improve their spelling, but it is too early for this to have made a full impact on their progress.
- Pupils are helped to develop a firm foundation in their reading skills because of an effective programme to teach pupils in Years 1 and 2 sounds and letters in groups selected by ability rather than age. As a result, pupils' reading skills are secure by the time they leave school.
- The school works effectively to support pupils with a range of special educational needs and those who are disabled, and so over time they generally perform in line with their counterparts nationally. Pupils who speak English as an additional language perform as well as their national counterparts because their language needs are identified quickly and careful support is provided for them.
- The extra funding for pupils known to be eligible for free schools meals, the pupil premium, is spent well, for example on small intervention groups for reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, these pupils perform as well as their national counterparts over time.
- Children enter the Nursery with language and number skills generally in line with those expected for their age. The adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage create an environment that is supportive, and children quickly settle in and learn the new routines.
- Pupils' results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are usually average or a little below. Groups of pupils usually do at least as well as their counterparts in the country as a whole. However, this does not represent good progress for the majority of pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Over time teaching has not been good enough to promote good achievement. Inspection findings confirm the new leadership's view that teaching has to improve to accelerate pupils' progress. Higher expectations are beginning to result in improved progress, although there is still more work to be done.
- Teachers have had training on systems for checking pupils' progress and attainment. As a result of this, pupils throughout the school have been given targets for improvement, and can clearly explain what they have to do to achieve them. The targets are applied consistently, but there has not been time for these systems to make a full impact on pupils' overall achievement.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, staff encourage the children to develop their speaking and listening skills, interacting well with children both in the indoor and outdoor play areas. However, there are too few opportunities to develop the children's writing skills.
- Where teachers tailor work accurately to pupils' individual capabilities, they make good progress. For example, during a Year 6 English lesson pupils were divided into reading groups which successfully matched their abilities. The teacher continually checked that each group was suitably challenged, and, as a result of this careful planning, the pupils made good progress in their learning. However, this is not always the case, and when pupils receive work that is so easy that they lose interest, or so difficult that can be daunting, progress slows.
- Some teachers plan a good range of approaches to interest pupils in their learning, but there is still too much whole-class teaching taking place where children sit on the carpet for too long

without enough opportunity to tackle ideas and problems for themselves, and this slows their learning.

- In almost all lessons, relationships are good. Learning is most effective where the pace is brisk and the challenge well matched to meet the pupils' needs. This was evident where a Year 5 writing lesson was linked to a real-life incident. This resulted in a high level of engagement and enthusiasm, and some amazing sentences and language were written by the pupils themselves through their points of view or letters of complaint.
- Support staff make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Inspectors saw effective small-group teaching taking place, especially for those with special educational needs and those in the first stages of learning English, which resulted in pupils who are in danger of falling behind making improved progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Discussions with pupils show they are enthusiastic about learning and motivated to do well. Disruption in lessons is uncommon and, even in lessons where the teaching does not fully engage the pupils, their behaviour remains good.
- Pupils are polite and courteous to staff and their peers. Older pupils enjoy the many opportunities they have to take care of the younger ones. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are confident and are willing to share and take turns during their play, allowing others to be part of their games and activities.
- Pupils across the school told inspectors that they understand the meaning of bullying and that it can take different forms such as internet bullying or name-calling. A few pupils reported that there were occasional incidences of pupils being unkind to one another, but that they were dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Parents and carers reported in discussion with inspectors and through the online questionnaire, Parent View, that they feel that their child is safe and happy at school.
- The school ensures that pupils know how to keep safe from the earliest years onwards. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes know how to keep warm on cold days and independently wash their hands before snack time. Pupils have a good understanding of risk through the curriculum. There are opportunities for pupils to listen to visitors such as the community policemen about road, fire and e-safety.
- Attendance is improving, particularly for those pupils who were persistent in their absence. This is because of new effective initiatives set up by the headteacher to improve the attendance of this minority, such as parent workshops and a breakfast club to bring about closer ties between home and school.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because neither teaching nor achievement are yet good.
- Over the past few years the school has had significant changes in leadership. A new inspiring headteacher was appointed in September. With the support of the local authority, she has raised the aspirations of governors, leaders, teachers and pupils. She has started to bring about much needed improvements. Recent improvements in attendance and in the quality of teaching demonstrate her capacity to drive the school forward.
- Since taking up her post, the headteacher has observed all teachers on several occasions and has given them valuable advice on how to improve the quality of pupils' learning. Teachers have responded very positively to this. However, the contribution of other leaders and managers, many of whom are new to post, is still too limited.

- School self-evaluation is accurate. The headteacher has ambitious plans to improve the school.
 - Under the new leadership the vast majority of parents and carers feel that the school is well led and are particularly pleased that the headteacher is available at the school gate before and after school.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted strongly through religious education, collective worship and a range of musical and dramatic activities which involve the school in the local community.
 - Within the curriculum there is a sound focus on the key skills in English and mathematics which prepares the pupils adequately for their next stage of learning. There are opportunities for exciting activities, trips and visits to places of interest, which enrich the curriculum and are designed to raise pupils' aspirations. Pupils particularly enjoy performing in plays and using their speaking skills. Pupils are encouraged to develop their questioning skills through taking part in scientific investigations with their classmates.
 - Pupils enjoy writing but there are too few opportunities for them to write at length across the curriculum or for a specific purpose, whether it be in historical, geographical or scientific contexts, and this restricts their progress.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors are now taking a more active role than was the case in the past and now know what is happening in the school. They are fully behind the newly appointed headteacher, providing her with challenge by checking how well she is doing and giving her clear targets for improvement. Governors are aware of the requirements of the performance management of staff, but given that pupils' achievement is not good, there is not a close match at present between outcomes and how well teachers are paid. With support from the local authority, governors have recently taken part in professional development training, helping them to understand systems for checking the progress made by pupils, for example by analysing data. They recognise that in the past they have not held the school sufficiently to account and have not asked enough searching questions about why pupils did not make faster progress. They now are fully aware of their responsibility to ensure equal opportunity and to tackle discrimination, for example by making sure the pupil premium is used effectively for those pupils it is intended for. Governors make sure that safeguarding procedures, including safe recruitment, are effective.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	125072
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	402308

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	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Davis
Headteacher	Leslie Semper
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 November 2009
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