

# Thomas Arnold Primary School

Rowdowns Road, Dagenham, RM9 6NH

**Inspection dates** 30–31 January 2013

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement over time is not yet good, despite recent rapid progress across the school in most areas.
- Teaching is improving but has not had time to result in consistently good achievement.
- Pupils do not always progress quickly enough because they spend too long listening to teachers talk.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are not making progress in line with others in their classes of the same age.
- Pupils are not always given specific guidance on how to improve their work.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers have taken decisive action so that rapid improvements have been made in most areas of the school. Governors in partnership with the local authority support and challenge the school to ensure that there is a strong capacity to sustain these improvements.
- The teaching in some classes is good and in some is outstanding. As a result, progress has accelerated.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress in all areas of learning, often from low starting points.
- Pupils behave well. They have positive attitudes towards learning. They enjoy school and feel safe, and their attendance has improved.
- Parents are very positive about the school, particularly about the support their children receive, and the changes made since the appointment of the headteacher in April 2012.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 29 lessons or part-lessons taught by 18 teachers and coaches.
- Lesson observations were shared with senior leaders. Short visits were made to observe the quality of pupil engagement and teaching in smaller groups.
- Work in pupils' books was analysed with a senior leader.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, evaluations of the school by outside consultants, minutes of meetings of the governing body and the monitoring board, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors met with different groups of pupils, interviewed a number of staff members, and spoke to parents. They also spoke to members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The views of parents were sought at the start and end of the school day, and through the school's surveys. Inspectors considered the 46 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered written comments from 22 staff.

## Inspection team

Brian Netto, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gillian Coffey	Additional Inspector
Howard Dodd	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a larger than average primary school.
- Pupils come from a wide range of different minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest ethnic group are from White British backgrounds. The other large group are from Black African backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, is well above average. Numbers have increased significantly in the last year.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The number of pupils who join and leave the school at other than the usual times is well above average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- One pupil uses alternative provision off the school site.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.
- Since the last inspection, there have been considerable changes to the staff. All senior leaders and those responsible for different year groups are new to the school. Most have been appointed since April 2012.

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

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, by ensuring that all teachers:
  - plan lessons so that they spend less time talking in order that pupils are fully engaged in the learning
  - assess pupils' progress more often to reshape activities so that learning is accelerated, especially for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs
  - improve the consistency in the quality of feedback and marking so pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve
  - have access to the best practice in teaching so that this leads to further improvements.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Standards achieved by pupils over time have been too variable. At the end of Year 6 in 2012, pupils had not made enough progress in English and mathematics. Current information shows that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not achieve as well as other pupils in their classes.
- Pupils' progress is now accelerating. Improvements in teaching and planned activities which have addressed previous underachievement have led to pupils in all year groups making good progress. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are making rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below those typical for their age. They make quick progress as a result of a variety of stimulating learning opportunities in different environments, inside and outdoors. This helps them to sustain concentration on activities for long periods.
- The pupil premium fund is spent on a number of different interventions and as a result, the pupils concerned make good progress. For example, some pupils have made rapid progress in their reading through a well-targeted computer program which helps them better understand different texts. Funds enable them to attend the breakfast club and after-school clubs. This helps to raise their self-esteem, and contributes to attainment gaps closing rapidly. In 2012, the average points score (which is a method of measuring pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6) for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was around that for all pupils nationally in both English and mathematics.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils from White British and Black African backgrounds all make at least good progress.
- Pupils read widely and often. They make effective use of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) to help them with their reading, and many enjoy talking about their favourite authors. As one pupil pointed out, 'The more books you read, the more you have the world in your hands.' Progress in reading is accelerating as a result of the expanded library, the use of targeted interventions and partnerships with parents, so pupils read regularly at home.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching. Sometimes pupils are inactive as the teacher spends too long talking. Lack of attention to the pupils' learning sometimes means that mistakes go uncorrected and the pace slows.
- While the quality of teaching requires improvement overall, there is some good and outstanding practice within the school.
- Marking and feedback are variable between classes and across subjects. Sometimes pupils are not given sufficient guidance on their next steps in learning, and on how to improve their work.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs benefit from small group work, and as a result some make good progress. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to check their learning, identify mistakes and change the activity to consolidate their new skills and this restricts their progress.
- Where teaching is good, pupils are clear what is expected of them. They are encouraged to use and apply new language. In a mathematics lesson, more able pupils were able to use their knowledge of different types of angles to explore objects and designs around the classroom. As a result, their understanding of key vocabulary was enhanced. Year 6 pupils made rapid progress in basic calculation skills as a result of having clear learning objectives, regular feedback from the teacher and opportunities to reflect on their own learning.
- Pupils enjoy the mixed-age approach of all literacy sessions as, at its best, it includes a range of engaging activities which are pitched at the right level. A well-paced lesson helped Year 3 and 4

pupils make good progress in comparing two different versions of the Robin Hood story. Success criteria helped the pupils understand what was expected of them and regular opportunities to talk about their learning kept them on track in meeting those expectations.

- Classrooms have improved resources to promote better learning. Year 6 made rapid progress in using persuasive language as the teacher made effective use of the learning wall to remind the pupils of what they had done before. Pupils used the various resources to help them plan their writing and extend their vocabulary.
- Similarly, pupils in Year 4 made good progress in developing a database on dinosaurs because the topic engaged them. Good subject knowledge and skilful questioning helped to deepen their understanding. Year 4 developed good computer keyboard skills in setting up a database as a result of effective explanations from the teacher, regular checking of learning and well-targeted questioning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. They enjoy learning when it engages their interest. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Parents support the fact that behaviour has improved. They appreciate initiatives such as the breakfast and after-school club, as well as nurture groups where individuals are given support if they experience difficulties. These provide warm and caring environments which contribute well to a harmonious community.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour well, and pupils respond positively to 'staying on green' (part of the school's traffic light system for encouraging good behaviour). They enjoy the many rewards given for their good learning.
- Pupils are aware of different types of bullying. They say that bullying is rare and that the school deals seriously and quickly to stop things getting worse. Pupils say they are safe, and are taught about how to keep themselves safe. They understand how to safely use the internet, and how to avoid cyber bullying.
- Pupils make an effective contribution to the daily life of the school. They share high praise for the new headteacher; as one said, 'I think the headteacher is the best because he made very good improvements to the school.' They appreciate the changes made to the outside areas. Different zones in the playground with different equipment enable the pupils to play collaboratively. They show considerable care and respect for each other.
- School council members take on a range of responsibilities and are articulate ambassadors who are proud of their school. All pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in the improved attendance.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- Inspirational leadership from the headteacher and deputy headteacher have changed the direction of the school since they took up their roles during the last year. They provide excellent role models for the staff. The rapid closing of gaps in attainment is testament to the school's firm commitment to equality of opportunity and to removing barriers to learning. The headteacher's vision has helped to raise expectations and ambition for the school.
- Changes to the leadership team, as well as to leaders of different year groups, have ensured that there is a cohesive team with a shared vision. Robust monitoring of teaching and the effective use of data on how well the pupils are doing have provided the impetus for change.
- Rigorous management of the performance of teachers and well-targeted training opportunities ensure that best practice is being shared. As a result, teaching overall is improving.
- Under the direction of the leadership team, the school has enhanced the outdoor and indoor areas to provide pupils with a much more attractive and stimulating learning environment. The good curriculum has planned topics that make creative links between subjects to help engage the pupils, and make learning relevant to their interests. Pupils experience a wide range of cultural events and visits, and this contributes strongly to their spiritual, moral and social

development.

- Relationships with parents have improved considerably since the arrival of the headteacher. Parents say that communication is better, and the newly formed parent voice group is helping to bring fresh perspectives to help the school improve.
- Local authority support has helped the school develop an accurate understanding of its strengths and needs. This has led to a sharp focus on how teaching impacts on pupils' learning.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is highly effective. Following the decline in the standards pupils achieved, it formed a monitoring board in partnership with the local authority. Together with the leadership team, it has been instrumental in raising standards and tackling areas of weakness. The governors draw on their vast experience to support and challenge the school in equal measures. They oversee the management of staff performance and the appointments to key roles in the school. High quality training and support from the local authority ensures that they use their acute understanding of how well the school is doing to reverse the legacy of underachievement. They ensure that statutory duties are met, and that finances are used to good effect. They ensure that the pupil premium funding is used effectively and has a positive impact on some pupils' achievement and well-being.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101220
<b>Local authority</b>	Barking and Dagenham
<b>Inspection number</b>	404751

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	473
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dan Cracknell
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Halliwell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 March 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 82704588
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