

Thorpedene Primary School

Delaware Road, Shoeburyness, Southend-on-Sea, SS3 9NP

Inspection dates 1–2 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Since the school opened, pupils' progress has risen rapidly. From starting points that are often well below the levels expected for their age, especially in reading and writing, pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- The high proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and those entitled to the pupil premium, make good progress due to the quality of help and guidance they receive.
- The school promotes pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well. This has had a very positive impact on the amalgamation and the creation of a clear, shared vision and ethos for the new school.
- Pupils feel safe in school, they behave well and have positive attitudes to learning and good relationships with adults.
- Teaching often has a good pace and teachers' good questioning ensures pupils are fully involved. Many of the teaching assistants offer high-quality support for pupils.
- The headteacher has provided strong, very effective leadership since the school's amalgamation. This has had a very positive impact on teaching and achievement.
- The governing body managed the amalgamation very efficiently and has a clear grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards in how pupils link letters and sounds (phonics) remain below those expected and some pupils have not reached the required levels.
- Pupils' spelling skills are not well-developed or accurate enough. Opportunities are missed to reinforce the good use of literacy skills when pupils are working in other subjects.
- The policy for marking and explaining to pupils how they can improve their work is implemented inconsistently.
- Teachers do not always make sure pupils understand the task they are given or check on their learning during the lesson.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 24 lessons and parts of lessons. Many of these were observed jointly with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or senior teacher.
- Meetings and discussions took place with the headteacher, governors, pupils, staff, and a representative of the local authority.
- Samples of pupils' work were looked at carefully. Some pupils read books with the inspectors.
- The inspectors analysed and took account of the 95 responses to the online survey (Parent View).
- In addition, 53 staff questionnaires were considered.
- The inspectors looked at key inspection documents, including performance data produced by the school, procedures for safeguarding, self-evaluation work, reports to the governing body and the school improvement plan.

Inspection team

Geof Timms, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Isobel Randall

Additional Inspector

Karen Feeney

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thorpedene Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school. It was formed from the amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools and at the time of the inspection had been open for 19 months.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. There are few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well-above average.
- The governing body, on behalf of the local authority, manages specially resourced provision for pupils with social and emotional needs. This nurture resource base makes short-term provision for pupils from four to 10 years old and provides for up to 16 pupils at any one time. Currently, 16 pupils attend, usually for a period of four half days a week. On the other half of the day, and on the fifth day, they return to their 'home' school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics.
- The school governors manage a before- and after-school club.
- A pre-school setting shares the school site but this is inspected and reported on separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in English by:
 - helping pupils make more rapid progress in learning phonics, especially for those who are yet to reach the expected levels
 - improving the accuracy of pupils' spelling
 - making sure pupils use their literacy skills and teachers have high enough expectations for the way pupils write in subjects other than literacy.
- Make more of the teaching outstanding by:
 - improving the consistency of the way pupils' work is marked and feedback is provided so pupils are more aware of exactly what they need to do to improve
 - explaining tasks and activities more carefully to pupils and checking their understanding of what is expected.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children typically start in the Reception classes with levels of knowledge and understanding well below the levels expected nationally for their age, especially in their early reading and writing skills. They make good progress and the gap between their levels and those typically found nationally has narrowed.
- The school's results in the 2012 Year 1 reading check were below average. The school reacted quickly by changes to resources and further training for staff on the teaching of phonics. The current pupils in the Reception class and Year 1 have rapidly improving skills but gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding throughout the school remain.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 are consistently broadly average and this represents good progress from their starting points. The current Year 2 pupils are making progress that is better than that expected, especially in reading, and are on track to repeat the significantly above average standards found in 2011. Many more of the pupils are reaching the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 were significantly below average in English and mathematics. This was partly a legacy of underachievement from before the amalgamation. Currently the school's data show that in Years 3 to 6, progress is better than that expected in reading, writing and mathematics. More pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach the higher levels in English and mathematics, and a significant group are on track to reach Level 6 in mathematics which is the level expected of a typical 14-year-old.
- Although often good, progress in writing is hindered by some pupils having poor spelling skills. Teachers do not always take opportunities to improve literacy skills when working in other subjects. For example, they do not have high enough expectations of the quality of pupils' writing in science or topic work.
- Good examples of the use of speaking and listening skills to help develop pupils' vocabulary are evident. In one good lesson in Year 2, children took the role of the artist Degas in a 'hot-seating' exercise and were asked questions which extended their use of description.
- The 2012 national test results show that pupils known to be eligible for free school meals attained standards that were about half a term behind the other pupils. However, this gap has narrowed significantly. This is a result of the additional support these pupils receive, funded by the pupil premium. The progress these pupils made in Year 6 last year was better than that of the rest of the group. Currently they are making more rapid progress than their peers in writing putting them about a term ahead. They are making good progress in mathematics although in reading it remains below the others.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they are very well supported. There are no marked differences in the achievement of different groups, including the very small number from a minority ethnic background. Where specialist support is appropriate the school uses alternative provision well, especially to improve pupils' speaking skills.
- Pupils in the nurture base make good progress in developing their social and emotional skills, alongside often making good academic progress, due to the staff's caring provision and

consistent teaching.

The quality of teaching is good

- The good quality of teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning. The school has made good use of further training in, for example, phonics and creative writing skills, and this has led to more rapid progress. This is supported by the clever links made between subject areas, such as those between science, design and technology and geography in a good Year 3 lesson on habitats.
- Teaching assistants often provide very effective support to teachers and pupils, particularly when working with disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. A number have been trained well to teach phonics, and do this effectively with small groups of pupils. In addition, one very able group of Year 6 mathematicians was being well taught some complex skills by a teaching assistant to help prepare them for the national tests.
- Teachers often plan activities that are supported by a stimulating range of resources to ensure that pupils are interested and enjoy their work. However, there are times when the tasks are not explained well enough for pupils to understand exactly what is expected of them. Opportunities are sometimes missed to check on pupils' understanding during the lesson.
- Recent changes to marking and the way teachers provide feedback to pupils on their work have had a good impact in some classes but the implementation of the policy is inconsistent. For example, pupils do not always respond to suggestions and comments by teachers, such as following up spelling corrections. However, pupils have a good understanding of the levels they are on and their targets, especially in literacy.
- In the Reception classes, children's progress in learning basic skills is supported through well-chosen resources and good opportunities for children to choose learning activities for themselves. Effective use is made of the outdoor areas to provide opportunities, many of which are intended to appeal to boys' learning.
- Pupils in the nurture base are well taught. Adults model how to do activities very effectively so that pupils can see the positive benefits of positive behaviour.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Teachers manage pupils well, and establish strong and positive relationships with children when they start in Reception. This supports children's attitudes to school and learning. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning in lessons. In Year 5, for example, pupils listened to each other with interest as they made suggestions for creating more complex and descriptive sentences.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school has improved and is good. Where issues have arisen in the past they have been appropriately dealt with and the very large majority of parents and carers say the school manages behaviour well. Pupils are polite and considerate to others, including visitors. A good system of rewards and sanctions ensures that any issues that may arise are quickly dealt with in a positive way. These were developed with the support of parents and carers through the parent council. Even so, a small proportion of the pupils exhibit behaviour which occasionally disrupts others' learning.

- Attendance is broadly average when compared with similar schools. The learning mentors provide very strong support for a number of families to help boost their attendance and punctuality.
- The before- and after-school clubs are well organised and run. Breakfast is provided for a number of pupils and this prepares them well for their learning. Relationships are strong and pupils appeared happy taking part in a range of activities including using the school's computers.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school, and this is supported by the views of most parents and carers. Pupils say that there is no significant bullying, but are confident that if any did occur it would be dealt with well by the staff. They are very knowledgeable about different types of bullying especially regarding new technology. Pupils trust the adults and would share any concerns or worries with them.
- The school makes sure that pupils know about road safety, railway safety and how to use computers safely.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has led the school very effectively through the amalgamation. The detailed strategic plan and development planning provide the school with a clear set of aims for further improvement and all staff are very positive about the school's vision of 'Achieving, Caring and Respecting with Confidence.' Staff are clear about their roles and work well together as a team. Responsibilities are divided appropriately, given the large size of the school. The work of senior leaders shows that the school has a strong capacity to continue improving.
- The headteacher and his senior leaders monitor teaching and learning effectively by observing lessons, and checking pupils' work and teachers' planning. Leaders track the progress made by pupils in the school in detail and regular meetings regarding pupils' progress are held so that any underachievement can be quickly identified and tackled.
- Teachers' performance is checked carefully to identify strengths and weaknesses. Focused training in areas such as writing and phonics has ensured that more of the teaching is at least good. The challenging targets set for teachers are based appropriately on raising standards and the priorities in the school improvement plan, as well as individual professional development.
- The local authority has supported the school very effectively through the amalgamation. Appropriate training for staff and the governing body has been provided. Exemplary aspects of the school's work are now being used to support other schools in the authority with, for example, work on the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- The funding available through the pupil premium is used effectively to help pupils known to be eligible for free school meals to take a full part in school life, and receive, where appropriate, specific resources and adult time. The progress made by these pupils is closely monitored by the headteacher and the data clearly indicate that gaps in attainment are narrowing.
- Other groups such as boys, girls or those at an early stage of learning English are also closely monitored to ensure equality of opportunity. The staff in the nurture base manage the resource well. The success of their work was observed when a child from the base took a very positive part in a Year 2 phonics lesson.

■ Some very effective and imaginative links between subjects bring learning to life. For example, excellent use of homework was used to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of parliament buildings around the world. This is just a small part of the outstanding way the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The headteacher and staff have created an ethos in which pupils are immersed in a very wide range of interesting and uplifting experiences, such as the recent visit from a group of Japanese visitors.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has worked hard since the amalgamation to secure the continuous improvement of the school and the raising of standards. It is good at supporting and challenging the school and does this effectively. Frequent visits to the school help give governors a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses and pupils' achievement. A good structure of committees ensures that governors' work is efficiently carried out. Governors have a high profile in school through attending a wide range of events. They have a clear picture of teaching quality, and understand how targets are set for teachers and how the school would deal with any underperformance. Governors ensure that salary increases are linked to the progress made by pupils, teaching quality and responsibilities. They have made good decisions over the spending of the pupil premium, especially through the development of extra support for vulnerable pupils. They check the impact on pupils' progress carefully to ensure best use of this funding. The governing body makes sure that all national requirements, including those for safeguarding, are met.

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	115265
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	400242

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	496
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pam Dewey
Headteacher	Nick Booth
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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