

Thomas Eaton Community Primary School

Church Street, Wimblington, March, PE15 0QS

Inspection dates 21–22 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Some pupils, including in Year 6, did not make sufficient gains in their learning last year, due to the extended absence of their teachers.
- The quality of teaching, while improving, has not promoted good progress for all groups of pupils over time.
- Teachers do not always plan work that is matched at the right level for pupils' abilities, especially the more able.
- The quality of marking varies, with some that is outstanding but other examples that do not help pupils to improve their work.
- Standards fell by the end of Key Stage 2 last year and were below average.
- Teachers do not always adopt best practice going on in the school to make teaching more consistently good.
- Leaders and managers did not focus enough on improving teaching quality last year because they were preoccupied with staff absence and a series of tragic events.
- Some of the changes introduced by school leaders are relatively recent. While helping to improve pupils' progress they have not had long enough to have a full impact on the standards pupils attain.

The school has the following strengths

- Achievement in the year groups currently in the school has risen and pupils' current work, as seen during the inspection, is in line with the national average because pupils are making better progress.
- Pupils are keen to come to school because teachers plan interesting lessons and activities for them.
- Pupils' behaviour and their desire to learn is strong. Many staff, pupils and parents mentioned 'kindness' as a feature of the school. Pupils say they feel safe.
- School leaders, with the support of governors, have accurately identified what needs to improve and are going about tackling this more systematically.

Information about this inspection

- Nine lessons taught by seven teachers were observed, together with a number of short parts of lessons and other activities. A session in the pre-school was also observed, as well as groups led by teaching assistants. Some observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Discussions were held with pupils, parents, teaching and other staff, school leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors took account of the 37 responses to the online survey Parent View and of the 17 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspectors observed the school at work and considered a range of documentation. This included data on pupils' progress and attainment, school improvement planning and the school's procedures to enable it to gain an accurate view of its performance. In addition, the inspectors looked at minutes of governing body meetings, documentation relating to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

St.John Burkett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jacqueline Pentlow

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thomas Eaton is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average and those who speak English as an additional language is very low.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is high. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also high.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is average. This is additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school has its own pre-school which is situated within the main school building.
- Several teachers had significant periods of absence in the last two years.
- The school was struck by a series of unexpected tragic events last year, which affected the whole school community.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better over time by:
 - making sure that work is always matched precisely to the varying abilities and skills of pupils, especially the more able
 - bringing all marking up to the level of the best so that pupils are clear about how to improve their work
 - developing the knowledge, skills and understanding of all groups of pupils, especially where gaps have appeared following staff absence.
- Strengthen the capacity of leaders, managers and governors to accelerate improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement by making sure that:
 - enough checks are made on the quality of teaching to tackle remaining weaknesses
 - the best practice shown by teachers is extended across all classes.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because last year pupils' attainment and progress in Y6 was below average due to teacher absence and some consequent weaker teaching.
- The school's data and other findings from this inspection show that the progress made by other pupils has been at least in line with and sometimes above that expected.
- Children join the Reception class with skills and knowledge below that which is typical, including in communication, literacy and mathematics. However, the good progress they make enables them to catch up these skills so they are closer to the national average when they enter Year 1.
- Since 2011 pupils have made very good progress across Key Stage 1. Attainment continues to rise due to more consistently good and outstanding teaching, and by the end of Year 2 is above average. By the end of Year 2, all pupils achieve the expected standard in the phonics reading check, as those who did not meet the standard first time around have caught up.
- Progress is currently improving across Key Stage 2. More pupils are reaching standards at or above national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics, as shown in the school's current data.
- Pupils of all abilities make the progress expected in reading in all year groups. They have a good and interesting supply of books to choose from and are given time in classes to read independently and to their teachers.
- The progress of most groups of pupils, including those speaking English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, is similar to that of other pupils. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress similar to their peers. Until recently, the achievement of this group of pupils was below that expected but has improved due to the closer match teachers now make between the work planned and the needs of each pupil.
- Pupils known to be eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium make progress that is close to and sometimes above their peers. In 2013, on average, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in Y6 were more than a year behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. In other year groups this is not the case as the gap is narrower. This is due to the very good use the school is making of the funding available to closely match pupils' work to their individual needs and to make sure additional support helps them to achieve well.
- Pupils are well supported through the use of the primary school sport funding. For example, the funding has been spent on providing transport to additional activities, the support of teaching assistants where required, and clubs which have encouraged greater participation. A link made with the secondary school has led to a district sports event.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because pupils leaving the school last year achieved well below the levels expected. This was due to the long-term illness of staff and inconsistent cover. Teacher absences in other classes led to progress below that expected by the school for some pupils.

- In some classes teachers' plans are not followed well enough. In some lessons, more-able pupils are required to complete similar work to other pupils. Consequently, pupils of differing abilities, especially some of the more-able pupils, do not make as much progress as they could.
- An increasing proportion of teaching is good or better. No teaching is inadequate. The school's analysis of teaching shows that this is an improvement on previous years. As teaching improves, increasing numbers of pupils are making good progress.
- The teaching of reading has developed through the use of helpful, whole-school strategies which include the provision of books which pupils find interesting, and the opportunity to read independently within their classrooms. Although the teaching of phonics is good in some classes, it is not yet effective enough across the school for all pupils to be able to apply their skills consistently in their reading and writing.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and often present topics to pupils in an engaging way. Pupils are keen to take part in learning because in nearly all lessons teachers make the lessons interesting and challenge them to learn more. One pupil said 'Teachers are understanding and helpful so I learned a lot in one day.'
- The best teaching uses questioning well, encouraging pupils to think and reflect on what they are learning. In one class, pupils were acting in different roles, such as that of a parent, when discussing and listening to others when exploring questions such as 'Should a child be allowed out after 7pm?'
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables children to make good progress. In the Reception class, there is a very close match of planning to the needs of the individual children. Skills in literacy, communication and mathematics are developed strongly through well thought-out activities and because the teachers and other adults work very closely together.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported in class because teachers and other adults plan carefully to meet their diverse learning needs. Teaching assistants provide strong support for pupils' learning. More than one parent commented to inspectors on the strength of this area of the school's provision.
- Teachers are conscientious in their marking. The quality of marking in some classes is outstanding and pupils are given very good advice. However, this varies between classes and subjects. Marking is strongest in writing.
- The school shares and develops teachers' best teaching skills through visits to other classrooms and the sharing of ideas. This is improving the quality of teaching, particularly as teachers are keen to learn. However, the sharing of practice is not yet having as much impact as it could because some teachers are not yet using enough of the ideas demonstrated by their colleagues.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well, are keen to learn in every class and also behave well around the school. They are polite and courteous, and the positive relationships they have with their teachers and teaching assistants mean that they want to work hard for them. Their attitudes mean that they progress well in most lessons because they want to do their best and to learn as much as they can.
- Pupils work well with each other and with adults. They value the school' system of rewards, such

as 'Golden Time' and the Y6 privilege area. The reward pupils say they appreciate the most is being told 'well done'.

- Pupils enjoy school. Several parents talked about how their children were keen to go to school every day. They have good opportunities to contribute to the school, such as through the school council or through taking on roles such as 'school friends'.
- Some parents responding to Parent View did not agree that pupils were well-behaved or that the school dealt well with bullying. Inspectors found no current evidence to support this, and when asked, all pupils said they felt safe, behaviour was good, any bullying was rare and the school's systems to deal with issues were effective. Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying, and the school is active in teaching about this through its personal and social education programme.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported well to be fully integrated across all areas of the school. The school modifies arrangements to enable all pupils to play an equal part in the life of the school.
- Behaviour and safety are not yet outstanding because sometimes pupils lose interest when the work is too easy for them and this prevents them from achieving well.
- Attendance at the school, which was low, has risen in the past year and is now above average. This is because measures put into place by the school to reduce absence have been effective.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the headteacher and other school leaders were unable to carry out all of their duties efficiently between January and July. They were dealing with the consequences of tragic events that overwhelmed the whole school community. In addition, the headteacher and deputy headteacher were involved in covering classes of absent colleagues, which reduced their capacity to check the work of the school. As a result, pupils leaving the school last year achieved below the levels expected.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have accurately identified areas requiring improvement and are systematically addressing each one. Consequently teaching and achievement are improving although there are still some inconsistencies. Leaders have realistic but ambitious aspirations for the school.
- The school's leadership team has developed in strength through recent appointments and additional training and development. This year the schools' subject leaders for English and mathematics have a strong and accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their subjects and are taking measures to make sure that achievement improves.
- Robust systems for measuring the performance of staff have been carried out. As a consequence the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils in most year groups are improving.
- The school's curriculum has a focus on English and on mathematics, and also offers a wide range of subjects for pupils to study. These subjects are supplemented by many imaginative activities beyond the normal timetable. On one of the days inspectors visited a drumming workshop was taking place, and on the other a 'Skipathon' was in action.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example,

the school is a lead school for a programme which teaches pupils about social interaction, and there is an encouragement for visitors to the school and visits out to develop pupils' understanding of life in a democratic modern Britain.

- The school has received strong support from the local authority in the past. This reduced when pupils began to make good progress across the school. The school purchased some services from the local authority to support their work in the past year.
- The school has strong links with other local schools, and has recently focused on developing and sharing good practice in improving pupils' achievement. A number of other links, including with local businesses, means that the school interacts well with the local community.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors provide challenge to the headteacher based on the good quality of information she provides for them. They undertake their roles conscientiously and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are determined to see achievement rise for pupils who have had their learning disrupted through teacher absences, and expect this year's Year 6 pupils to leave the school having achieved at much higher rates than the year group leaving the school last year.
- Governors have a good understanding of financial matters. Although the school has a deficit, this is being well managed and governors have a clear understanding of the reasons for this and how it will be quickly reduced.
- They make sure that teachers' pay and promotion are linked to the contribution made to raising achievement and standards. They have taken robust action to tackle underperformance, based on this information. However, they have also built good relationships and engaged in professional dialogue with staff.
- Governors scrutinise in detail provision for the pupil premium and ensure that eligible pupils benefit from the funding.

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	110648
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	425353

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	156
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pauline Crawford
Headteacher	Pam Jones
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2008
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