

Thameside Primary School

Harley Road, Caversham, Reading. RG4 8DB

Inspection dates 20–21 November 2013

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 a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement by the end of Key Stage 2 has not been consistent, particularly in mathematics.
- Teachers do not always have sufficiently high expectations and, as a result, pupils do not always make good progress, especially in mathematics. The pace of learning in mathematics lessons is not consistently brisk.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills to solve mathematical problems.
- Marking in mathematics does not always offer pupils enough feedback about how they can improve.
- Target setting in mathematics does not sufficiently indicate to pupils the next steps in their learning.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage does not always ensure that learning is purposeful or that children's understanding of their tasks is regularly checked.
- The actions of school leaders have not, until recently, had a strong enough impact on improving the quality of mathematics teaching and pupils' achievement in mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- School leaders demonstrate capacity for improvement; self-evaluation is accurate and planning is detailed and of robust quality.
- Attainment in writing is above average, and pupils make good progress.
- The school has a very positive, inclusive ethos and a strong team spirit. Staff are very proud of the school and almost all parents would recommend it to others.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive; pupils behave well and feel safe in school.
- The school's curriculum promotes positive behaviour, and does much to support pupils' physical well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Governors have a good understanding of their role. They are supportive of school leaders and are confident to hold them to account.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 20 lessons of which seven were joint observations with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. Inspectors also heard a sample of pupils in Years 2 and 6 read.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the school’s staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other members, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors analysed the 71 responses that were recorded on the online survey (Parent View) and spoke with small numbers of parents accompanying their children to school. A written communication was also received from one family.
- Inspectors also took account of the 35 responses to the questionnaire completed by school staff.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a range of documents, including the school’s own self-evaluation and development planning, data on pupils’ current attainment and progress, planning documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding, the pupil premium and the curriculum.

Inspection team

Ben Jordan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Chris Grove

Additional Inspector

Carol Worthington

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thameside Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school, and numbers on roll have increased over the last three years.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (which provides additional funding to support children in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils from service families) is above the national average. There are currently no pupils in local authority care.
- The school meets the current government floor standards (which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress).
- A new deputy headteacher took up the post in June 2013, and has taken on the leadership of mathematics and provision for special educational needs.
- A new leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage was appointed from September 2013.
- The school currently holds the Eco Schools (Silver) and the Healthy Schools awards, and is a Rights Respecting School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in mathematics, so that pupils' progress overall at least matches their good progress in writing, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers set consistently high expectations for pupils' achievement in lessons
 - making sure that teachers improve the extent of challenge through a better match of tasks to the different groups of pupils, including the most able, so that they can apply their skills in a wider context
 - ensuring greater consistency in the pace of pupils' learning in lessons
 - improving the feedback from marking about how to make improvements, and the use of target setting to enhance pupils' understanding of the next steps in their learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - making sure that teachers consistently make clear the purpose of learning so that children always understand what they are expected to achieve
 - ensuring that teachers focus on improving children's learning by checking more regularly on their understanding of set tasks.
- Increase the impact of school leaders in accelerating achievement in mathematics by:
 - focusing on reaching greater consistency in teaching
 - ensuring that teachers provide better opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to solve problems.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement in recent years by the end of Key Stage 2 has been inconsistent in mathematics, and requires improvement. Results in 2011 and 2013 were well below average in mathematics, but were broadly average in 2012.
- By contrast, pupils' performance in writing has improved strongly over the last two years.
- Pupils do not acquire knowledge and understanding in mathematics sufficiently quickly and securely. Furthermore, they do not have enough opportunities to apply their skills in mathematics to solve problems. In writing, however, pupils make much better progress and reach above average attainment.
- In recent years, pupils have reached broadly average attainment by the end of Year 2. However, their attainment in reading has been above average for three years.
- When children first enter the school their knowledge and skills are broadly as expected for their age. They achieved well by the end of the Reception Year in 2013, notably in their self-confidence and self-awareness and speaking skills, because of good teaching.
- The attainment of pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support was below that of others in 2012. In 2013, the gaps were eliminated in reading and writing. In mathematics, the gap narrowed very considerably and was equivalent to about one term.
- The pupil premium funding has been used to good effect to provide additional adult support for these pupils, led by the deputy headteacher. The school has employed a qualified speech and language specialist and has subsidised educational visits.
- The school's ability to promote equality of opportunity, foster good relationships and tackle discrimination at all levels is a strength. As a result, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to that of others.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it has not led to consistently good progress by pupils in the last two years, particularly in mathematics.
- Teachers do not always have sufficiently high expectations for pupils and, as a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding are not always deepened and pupils do not always make the progress in mathematics of which they are capable. The tasks set for pupils are not always challenging enough in mathematics, particularly for the most able.
- Where expectations are high, pupils make good progress. This was particularly evident in a Year 3 literacy lesson which focused upon the use of adjectives. All groups of pupils were challenged because the teacher had high expectations and made very effective use of time.
- Where teaching is less than good, learning is sometimes negatively affected as a result of a lack of pace.
- As a result of inconsistency in current teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are often unclear about what they are expected to learn, and teachers do not always regularly check their understanding, particularly in phonics and mathematics work.
- In literacy, pupils' work is regularly marked with evidence of encouraging comments and praise, and there is effective use of targets to indicate what pupils could do to improve the quality of their work. Pupils are also involved in using teachers' comments to make further improvements. In mathematics, however, marking does not indicate well enough what pupils need to do in order to improve. Furthermore, target setting does not point pupils sufficiently to the next steps in their learning.
- Where teaching is good, there is a very positive climate for learning in lessons. Pupils are engaged and interested, and the appropriately targeted support by teaching assistants makes a

good contribution to their learning. This was particularly noticeable in the Reception classes where children, many of whom come from diverse backgrounds, soon settle into school life because of the care and guidance of support staff.

- In keeping with the school's inclusive ethos, the work of the deputy headteacher using a Sensory Circuits programme (designed to increase pupils' physical coordination and confidence) is particularly impressive in ensuring very good provision for those with special educational needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' attitudes towards their learning in a variety of situations, particularly in literacy sessions, are positive. Pupils respond quickly to instructions and work effectively as individuals, in groups and as a class. Pupils are always courteous and show good manners.
- There is an extremely positive ethos in and around the school. Pupils conduct themselves well at different times of the day, including playtimes and lunchtimes, and behaviour is well managed where it is very occasionally necessary to do so. Pupils themselves judge that behaviour is consistently good.
- Nearly every parent who completed the online survey agreed that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved.
- In the surveys, almost every parent, and all members of staff, agreed that children are safe in school. In particular, pupils benefit from the Year 6 peer mediator arrangements at playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Pupils have a good awareness of the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying. They say that there is little bullying, and are confident in staff, particularly the headteacher, to address any problems that occasionally arise. Almost all parents and all members of staff who took part in their respective surveys agreed that the school deals effectively with bullying. There have been few exclusions in recent years.
- Attendance has improved over time and is currently broadly average.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The leadership and management of the school require improvement because action to improve achievement in mathematics has not yet had sufficient impact, although the school has been markedly more successful in the case of writing.
- Despite this, the senior and middle leaders have a clear and realistic view of the school. Furthermore, there is clear evidence of very supportive working relationships with governors, other staff, and parents. The school has a strong team spirit; all those who completed the staff questionnaire agreed on their pride as members of the school. This was exemplified by one respondent, who commented, 'I am proud to be part of the Thameside Primary community – it is a great school.' One parent also wrote, 'I cannot praise Thameside and the headteacher enough. She is so approachable whilst keeping authority over the children but in a positive and caring way.'
- Leaders have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas needing improvement. This is underpinned by the effective use of current assessment information. Leaders have focused upon raising standards in teaching, and this has been clearly seen with the improved achievement in writing. They recognise that there is still a need to address inconsistencies in teaching in order to raise achievement in mathematics.
- The local authority has an accurate view of the school's recent performance. It has brought to the leadership's attention the need for improvements in mathematics in order to secure the same good progress which has been achieved in writing.
- The school's thorough approach to all aspects of child protection and safeguarding ensures that statutory requirements are met.

- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. The 'enrichment' afternoons, where pupils in Years 1 and 2 and also in Years 3 to 6 are taught in mixed-age groups, provide good opportunities for all pupils to apply their skills across subjects. This is particularly the case with the development of 'strategy games' and the wide range of sports. The Eco School and Healthy Schools awards indicate the value that the school accords to green issues and to healthy lifestyles. The strong commitment to equality and inclusion is seen in the accreditation as a Rights Respecting School. Thoughtful assemblies also support pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school is making effective use of the primary sport funding. The impact of employing specialist coaches can be seen by the increased participation rates of all pupils, and by the extent of staff development, such as in dance. The school has made effective links with a local secondary school and has clear plans to enhance the opportunities for pupils to take part in sports competitions. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer for pupils. The importance of exercise and diet is also discussed with pupils.
- The capacity to secure further improvement is shown by evidence of accurate self-evaluation, robust improvement planning and the good provision and achievement in writing.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body demonstrates ambition for the school and communicates high expectations. Governors are directly involved in the school's self-evaluation. They are fully aware of school's strengths, such as its inclusive ethos and the effective provision for pupils with special educational needs. They have a good understanding of how well pupils are achieving and are also aware of the need for better progress in mathematics and for greater consistency in the quality of mathematics teaching. They take seriously their responsibility for the headteacher's performance management and assure themselves about the effective performance management of other staff. Governors are confident to challenge leaders at all levels and to tackle underperformance when required to do so. They ensure the efficient management of financial resources, and this leads to the effective deployment of staff. Governors know how pupil premium funding is spent and the extent of its impact in closing gaps in attainment for this group of pupils. Governors have ensured that training, for instance in analysing the use of national data to gauge the school's performance, and regular opportunities to visit lessons, have effectively enhanced their capacity to hold the school to account. Their effective stewardship indicates that an external review of this aspect of leadership and governance is not required.

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	109800
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	426415

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	340
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Sarah Aitken
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Wallace
Date of previous school inspection	29–30 September 2011
Telephone number	0118 937 5551
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