

Thomas A Becket Middle School

Glebeside Avenue, Worthing, West Sussex, BN14 7PR

Inspection dates 30–31 January 2014

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | 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 who are disabled or who have special educational needs, particularly those at school action plus, have not made consistently good progress.
- Pupils supported by pupil premium funding have not made as rapid progress as the others.
- Standards for all pupils are not as high as they should be by the end of Year 6.
- Teaching requires improvement.
- Teachers do not always plan for the full range of pupils' needs, nor do they have high enough expectations for the progress of all groups.
- Teachers' marking is not consistently focused on providing pupils with clear guidance as to how to move their learning on.
- Leadership and management require improvement. School leaders have not, until recently, held staff sufficiently to account for the progress pupils make or acted quickly enough to address underachievement in certain pupil groups.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are enthusiastic about school and show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are safe and behave well.
- Progress is consistently better for all groups of pupils in Year 7 than elsewhere, although it is improving in other year groups. Standards are rising at the end of Year 7 and are above average in mathematics.
- Pupils across the school benefit significantly from some skilled specialist teaching, particularly in physical education, music and science.
- The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The curriculum is rich and motivates pupils well. Extra-curricular provision is exceptional in its range and quality.
- Leaders, including governors, are now more focused on addressing recent dips in pupils' achievement and have implemented a range of initiatives to ensure that teaching and pupils' progress are improving.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons, six of which were seen together with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, three Chairs of Governing Body committees and another governor, the school’s senior and subject leaders, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 54 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 113 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a range of school documents, including records of the school’s checks on the quality of teaching, the school improvement plan and records relating to behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and the tracking of pupils’ progress. They also looked closely at pupils’ written work from the current school year, and listened to pupils reading.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| George Logan, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Fiona Robinson | Additional Inspector |
| Velia Hartland | Additional Inspector |
| Penny Orme | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- Thomas A Becket Middle School is a much larger-than-average primary (middle) school.
- There are currently seven classes in each of Years 4 and 5, and six classes in each of Years 6 and 7.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British 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 above average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and those with a parent in the armed services) is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school offers a daily after-school club. This is managed and inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, particularly in Years 4 to 6, so that pupils' progress is more consistently good and standards are higher by the end of Year 6, by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high enough expectations of what all groups of pupils can do, and plan carefully to meet the needs of the full range of pupils within their classes
 - teachers monitor closely the learning and progress of all groups of pupils
 - marking is consistently effective in driving rapid improvement in pupils' performance
 - pupils follow the advice they are given when teachers mark their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - monitoring carefully the impact of recent initiatives to improve achievement
 - ensuring that pupil premium funding is used more effectively to narrow the gaps in learning across the school
 - consistently holding staff more rigorously to account for the progress pupils make
 - responding promptly when potential underachievement by pupils is identified.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The progress of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, particularly those at school action plus, is inconsistent. Although they make better progress in Year 7, these pupils do not make sufficiently rapid progress in Years 4 to 6. Their attainment by the end of Year 6, for example, is below that of similar pupils nationally.
- Although adequate over time, the progress of pupils supported by pupil premium funding has also been inconsistent. In 2013, in both Year 6 and Year 7, these pupils were the equivalent of almost one year behind their classmates, particularly in reading and writing.
- Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6, currently broadly average, has not fully kept pace with improvements nationally. The school recognises the need to raise standards further by the end of Year 6. Currently, there is evidence of a rising trend, with more pupils in Year 6 working both at Level 5 and at Level 6, particularly in mathematics. This includes pupils who are supported by the pupil premium, as well as disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. School data indicate that attainment is also rising in Year 7 and is currently above the expected level in mathematics.
- Pupils leave Year 2 with attainment levels slightly above those expected. Measured against the school's assessment of pupils' attainment when entering Year 4, pupils make at least adequate progress by the end of Year 7, despite some inconsistencies. Progress in Year 7 itself is generally good, especially in mathematics. This indicates that the school is making good use of the additional Year 7 catch-up funding provided by the government for those pupils who have not reached the expected level in English or mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The most able pupils tend to make more rapid progress than those who enter with lower prior attainment, because teachers provide them with sufficiently challenging activities.
- A range of actions, such as organising mathematics teaching in Years 6 and 7 in line with pupils' prior attainment, making staff more accountable for pupils' progress and the effective deployment of specialist teachers, are leading to better progress. Current Year 6 and Year 7 pupils have made more progress within the current year, and from their point of entry, than has been typical of recent years.
- Where pupils enter Year 4 with insufficient knowledge of phonics (the linking of sounds and letters), individual support is provided to boost their reading skills.
- Achievement in a range of subjects in Year 7, including science, art and physical education, is good, as a result of effective and enthusiastic specialist teaching.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has not, over time, focused sufficiently on the needs of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, or on those supported by pupil premium funding. As a result, these pupils have not always made sufficient progress.
- In some lessons, including some mathematics sets, teachers' planning does not provide for the full range of pupils' abilities. This potentially restricts pupils, both at the higher and lower ends of the ability range, from learning more rapidly, especially in Years 4 to 6. Teachers occasionally accept written work, particularly from younger pupils, which is not of a high enough standard.
- Despite having thorough systems for tracking pupils' progress, including those for whom the school receives pupil premium funding and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, the school was initially slow to respond to gaps in their learning.
- Relationships are consistently positive and pupils are keen to do their best. However, inconsistencies in progress over time indicate that teachers' expectations are not always as high as those observed.
- The school has established good systems for checking and improving pupils' progress. However,

the implementation of the school's marking policy is inconsistent, so that pupils do not always get enough guidance as to how they could improve their work. Pupils' response to marking is often too brief, so that the impact is limited.

- When teaching is at its best, the pace of learning is brisk. In a very successful Year 4 numeracy session, pupils were solving word problems using a range of strategies. The teacher referred clearly to the targets displayed, so that every child knew what they had to do to move on. She explicitly focused on neat presentation and systematic working. As a result, pupils were highly motivated and worked hard to reach the standard expected.
- Good and outstanding teaching was observed during the inspection. The deployment of committed specialist teachers, particularly in Years 6 and 7, ensures that pupils benefit from high level expertise and this contributes strongly to the generally effective learning of older pupils.
- The teaching of reading is effective. There is good provision for pupils to make up lost ground, supported well through home learning, so that pupils read confidently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good. Their attitudes to learning are consistently positive. They are attentive in lessons and have a love for learning. However, pupils' commitment is not always matched by a sufficiently high level of challenge in the teaching. Consequently, the impact of their good attitudes on learning is not as great as it could be.
- Poor behaviour is rare, with few recent exclusions. Behaviour management systems are effective and ensure consistency of response to any incidents. Learning mentors support pupils who find it difficult to cope. Few of those parents and carers who gave their views indicated any concerns about behaviour.
- Pupils contribute extensively to the school community. Year 7 pupils work as sports leaders across this school and as club leaders in the linked first school, while others act as music leaders. Older pupils work as volunteer mentors, supporting reading with Year 4 pupils.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Consequently, pupils feel safe and know that adults will resolve any difficulties.
- Pupils have a good appreciation of a range of risks. Year 6 pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in various circumstances, and are thus well prepared for secondary school.
- Bullying is rare. Pupils understand that bullying may take many forms, but are confident that these will be addressed rigorously by the school.
- Attendance is above average. Most pupils arrive at school punctually.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Despite the strengths of the school, and the richness of the opportunities provided for pupils, school leaders took too long to tackle inconsistencies in the progress of particular groups of pupils. More recent changes aimed at accelerating progress have not yet had time to improve pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher is a dedicated professional who is skilled at developing teamwork and positive relationships in this cohesive school community. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are now good. Senior leaders are increasingly focused on the difference teaching makes to achievement. Their evaluation of learning during the inspection was accurate.
- Senior leaders track the progress of groups and individuals increasingly thoroughly and recognise where the gaps in learning are. Teachers are now required to provide for the full range of pupils. Senior leaders have introduced more targeted interventions to ensure pupils catch up, so demonstrating that the school has the capacity to improve.
- Subject and year group leaders are highly committed. They are realistic about where improvement is needed. They produce comprehensive improvement plans, support their colleagues effectively and demonstrate an increasing impact on achievement.

- The school's view of itself is broadly realistic, although, until recently, not enough account was taken of weaknesses in achievement.
- Effective performance management systems ensure a close link between teachers' performance and pay progression. School leaders now require extensive evidence of the impact of teachers' work, so that only the most effective teachers qualify for higher pay levels.
- Use of the primary sports funding is carefully planned. The school has a sustainable plan to improve the quality of sports coaching and pupils' health through the development of staff coaching skills. The initiatives supplement an already extensive range of sporting opportunities, which is leading to increased participation in after-school sport and higher levels of performance.
- The curriculum is rich, both in the breadth and quality of specialist provision and in the extensive extra-curricular provision. Interventions to support better achievement in English and mathematics have yet to impact significantly on outcomes.
- Recent support from the local authority has been limited, given the school had previously been judged outstanding.
- Provision to promote pupils' social and moral development is good. Community links are extensive and partnerships with other schools, including a transition project with the main feeder school, are actively developed. Links with parents and carers are very positive.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are exceptionally proud of their school, particularly in the breadth of the opportunities provided. They recognise that they have been slow in challenging leaders over pupils' achievement. Governors willingly undertake training to improve their skills and understanding. They have a realistic view of the school's strengths, based on their good understanding of data. They are determined that the pace of improvement will be sustained. They compare the school's performance with national data and are fully involved in school self-evaluation. They are increasingly confident in challenging school leaders in relation to pupils' performance. Governors ensure that the school promotes equality of opportunity and good relationships and tackles any potential discrimination. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching. They ensure that pay and promotion are closely linked to teachers' effectiveness. Governors have evaluated the impact of past decisions about the use of pupil premium funding to close gaps in pupils' achievement and have readjusted provision accordingly. They ensure, along with senior leaders, that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

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

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| Unique reference number | 125955 |
| Local authority | West Sussex |
| Inspection number | 441058 |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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| Type of school | Middle deemed primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 8–12 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 787 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Lance Craddock |
| Headteacher | John Gadd |
| Date of previous school inspection | 17 January 2011 |
| Telephone number | 01903 202268 |
| Fax number | 01903 215041 |
| Email address | office@thomasbecketmiddle.w-sussex.sch.uk |

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