

Thomas's Battersea

28–40 Battersea High Street, London, SW11 3JB

Inspection dates

20–22 May 2014

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

1

Achievement of pupils

Outstanding

1

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

1

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Outstanding

1

Leadership and management

Outstanding

1

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding school because

- The inspiring headteacher has, together with his leadership team, established a very clear vision for the school, which is shared by all of the school community.
- Pupils make rapid and sustained progress in their learning. In mathematics and English, pupils' attainment at the end of Years 6 and 8 is much higher than that expected for their age.
- The quality of teaching in all key stages over time is outstanding. Teachers have very high expectations and plan interesting lessons that engage the pupils' imaginations and enhance their love of learning, drawing on an exceptionally diverse and interesting curriculum.
- The outstanding leadership and management have had a strong impact on sustaining the outstanding levels of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. In all age groups pupils are respectful of each other, enjoy school life, are motivated to learn and above all follow the most important school rule: 'Be kind'.
- The promotion of pupils' welfare, health and safety is excellent. The school has created a nurturing and safe learning climate where all pupils can thrive.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspectors observed 35 lessons or parts of lessons, all accompanied by the senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the school's leaders, teaching staff and pupils. A range of documentation was examined, including policies, assessment records, curriculum and teachers' plans. The inspectors heard pupils read and looked at pupils' written and other work. They attended an assembly and observed pupils at break times and lunchtimes.
- The views expressed by 50 members of staff through survey questionnaires were considered.
- There were 168 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire. The inspectors spoke to many parents and carers in person and received emails from those who wished to communicate directly with the inspectors.

Inspection team

Jill Bainton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

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Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thomas's Battersea is a selective co-educational preparatory school located in the London Borough of Wandsworth. It is part of Thomas's London Day Schools and is one of four schools and two kindergartens owned by the proprietors. The school was opened in 1977 and moved to its current premises in 1990. The extended Grade II listed property is registered for 550 pupils from Reception to Year 8, taught in classes of no more than 21 pupils. There are currently 532 full-time pupils. Pupils are taught in three departments. The lower school has pupils from Reception to Year 2, the middle school pupils from Year 3 to Year 5, and the upper school pupils from Year 6 to Year 8.
- Of the 205 pupils identified as having English as an additional language, most are bilingual. There are 59 children attending full time in the three Reception classes and all receive public funding under the Nursery Scheme. A number of pupils have moderate learning difficulties but none have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school uses off-site provision for physical education.
- This is a Christian school open to pupils of all faiths. It aims to 'create an ethos of kindness and understanding in which pupils' strengths are identified and developed whilst their weaknesses are identified and supported'. Within a framework of 'enjoyment, learning and achievement', it seeks to offer a broad curriculum so as to 'prepare pupils not only for their senior schools but also for the life that lies beyond them'. The most important school rule is: 'Be kind'. The school was last inspected under a light touch inspection in December 2008 when it met all the regulations.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain pupils' high levels of achievement by:
 - continuing the well-planned cycle of monitoring teaching and learning to ensure that all teaching is of the highest quality
 - further developing the use of data on pupils' achievement to inform teaching
 - ensuring that the marking of pupils' work is consistently of high quality, and always clearly shows pupils how they can improve their work.

Inspection judgements

Achievement of pupils

Outstanding

- The school has been extremely successful in sustaining pupils' high levels of achievement since the last inspection. All groups of pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, continually make rapid and sustained progress in their reading, writing and mathematical skills while at the school. Pupils achieve well above national expectations by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils join the school with average or above average standards. Teachers ensure that pupils continue to achieve and improve on their standards as the teaching appeals to pupils' interests and imagination. The school tracks pupils very carefully to monitor progress and to identify any disparities between groups. The school makes effective use of these data but has identified that this could now be further developed. The school is continually trying to improve the accuracy of its assessment and if any trends are identified it takes action to address needs through staff training and support.
- Standards in English are excellent. The school's well-stocked, attractive reading areas and strong emphasis on reading develop pupils' pleasure in reading. They read widely and with enjoyment. The younger pupils have a very good knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) and older pupils are highly articulate and passionate readers. Evidence from pupils' work and in lessons shows that pupils take pride in their written work.
- Mathematical achievement is exceptionally high. Pupils are given challenging work and achieve excellent results. Pupils are very successful and engage enthusiastically in mathematics both in school activities and out of school challenges. Those pupils who find mathematics more difficult are very well supported through small-group work using practical methods to fully engage and enthuse them, so that their learning can be applied and made meaningful. Through this additional targeted support they attain national expectations or above by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make equally outstanding progress in all areas of learning. The very well-planned play activities are purposeful and all available opportunities are taken to accelerate the young children's learning using the very well-equipped indoor and outdoor areas.
- The most able pupils are making rapid progress. This is reflected in the very high levels they achieve through the very effective teaching, which engages and focuses them through challenging and dynamic work. The school identifies pupils with high academic potential who are then very effectively supported within lessons. In addition, a wide range of activities is available to specifically extend and challenge these pupils. Those pupils with identified additional needs are very well supported through the highly effective individual and small-group provision taught by the specialised staff. Pupils who join with English as an additional language make rapid progress in acquiring and using spoken and written English. Pupils who speak French as their first language are taught in small groups by a native French teacher; this ensures that their written skills are in line with their spoken French.
- At the end of their time at the school pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education with all gaining places at selective schools of their choice, including many with scholarships. Pupils leave at 11 or 13 years of age having gained enormously in both their academic prowess and in their personal development as a result of the very rich educational experience provided by Thomas's Battersea.

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

- The quality of teaching in all key stages over time is outstanding. This has a direct impact on the high quality of pupils' learning and achievement, especially in English, reading and mathematics and in a range of other subjects.

- Teachers plan stimulating and enjoyable lessons. The learning tasks are always well matched to pupils' starting points so that they all make rapid progress. Pupils learn very well as a result of enthusiastic, well-judged and specialist teaching. Staff are continually striving to improve and recently identified writing as an area for improvement. They have successfully raised standards. For example, in Years 5 and 6 English lessons, pupils were able to demonstrate very secure technical subject knowledge as a result of challenging tasks to further enhance their writing.
- Teachers expect much of the pupils, in tune with the very positive climate that encourages such good learning in the school. Pupils respond very positively, are excited by much of the learning and as one commented, 'There is so much to do... life is never dull at Thomas's.' Teachers are conscientious and create extremely positive relationships which help the pupils enjoy and take an active role in their learning, applying their knowledge very well.
- The more able pupils are effectively challenged and as a result develop a very high level of academic skills. Any pupils who need extra help to catch up are supported very effectively.
- There is an excellent balance of activities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. These are both led by the staff and initiated by the children. For example, during the carousel activities on three afternoons each week the children can self-select from a very wide range of activities which cover all the required areas of learning.
- Staff are very well qualified and experienced for the posts they hold. Specialist teaching takes place from Reception upwards. The teaching assistants are well directed by staff, have a high level of subject knowledge and support the pupils very well.
- Marking of the pupils' work is well done, with some outstanding practice seen where guidance improved greatly the quality of pupils' work, giving them very clear pointers on how to improve. Occasionally, marking is not of such high quality and therefore does not have the same impact on pupils' progress. Homework is used very well to extend and support learning.
- Assessment is thorough and rigorous. The pupils are given targets, with which they are very familiar. They constantly refer to these targets, for example, when drafting and redrafting their work with notable impact on the quality of their writing. Pupils are very clear about what they need to do to improve their work and through discussion with inspectors many made comments on how helpful their teachers were and how lessons helped them to learn in a fun way.
- The curriculum has been further developed since the last inspection. It is very well documented and under continual scrutiny with staff making positive changes to enhance the pupils' experience. This combination of high staff expectation matched to the relevant and interesting curriculum has a very strong impact on pupils' achievement. These combined activities have a very positive impact on the pupils and contribute to their excellent academic achievement and personal development.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Outstanding

- The school's core values, promoted consistently by the headteacher and all his staff, are at the heart of the excellent relationships that exist throughout the school. 'Be kind' is the key characteristic that all work to achieve. This and other aspects, such as respect, confidence, humility and being 'givers not takers', result in the pupils being polite, courteous and extremely well mannered.
- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is outstanding. The behaviour policy and systems have been recently rewritten, involving the older pupils in the process. The focus is on emphasising praise rather than imposing sanctions. The school has recently set up a new programme to promote discussion about feelings as part of its personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme. This has helped the pupils to better understand

and apply the school's values.

- The older pupils enjoy taking responsibility and take it very seriously, for example, as head boy and head girl and prefects. Pupils take part in many charitable fund raising and community activities.
- Pupils comment on how much they enjoy school life and how safe they feel. Playtimes are supervised by staff in a gentle but firm manner. Staff achieve an excellent balance, controlling pupils' over exuberance while providing the freedom for them to let off steam during lively play.
- The dining hall at lunchtime is a very civilised place to eat and chatter to friends while eating excellent food. One pupil, when asked what he liked about the school, replied enthusiastically, 'the lunch'. The high proportion of curriculum time in which all pupils engage in games and sport each week further promotes their healthy lifestyles.
- Pupils are adamant that there is no bullying at the school. They have an excellent understanding of cyber and prejudice-based bullying and know they have a wide range of adults to turn to if they are worried. The ABC, the pupils own Anti-Bullying Committee, provides a group of trained older pupils to be a listening ear and to give support if pupils prefer peer support, initially, before communicating with adults.
- Pupils enjoy school very much and this is reflected in their high attendance. During the inspection the school annual house, 'Big Sing' took place in the local church. This was a hugely enjoyable and successful occasion for all the pupils, staff and parents and carers. Pupils are highly articulate and pupils of all ages very much enjoyed engaging the inspectors in conversation. They are very enthusiastic about their school, making comments such as: 'Its amazing'; 'We have lots of fun'; and 'I do not want to miss anything so I want to come to school every day.' The pupils' feeling of being entirely safe stems from the school's attention to detail in their risk assessments and the efforts to minimise risks to the pupils. The school is incredibly orderly.
- Parents' and carers' questionnaire responses are extremely positive about how happy their children are, how well they are looked after, and about their positive behaviour. Staff comments are equally positive. Every parent, carer and member of staff responding to questionnaires stated that pupils are safe in school.
- The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and enables pupils to thrive in a very supportive, caring and nurturing learning environment. Pupils are receptive to new ideas, have a well-developed knowledge of their own and other cultures and racial harmony is effectively promoted.
- Pupils take great pride in their school, look after it extremely well and are confident in their abilities and social skills. They show very high levels of personal development, achieved through the concerted efforts of staff from Reception to Year 8 during assemblies, personal, social, health and citizenship education sessions, and through social interaction in lessons and at play. This was demonstrated very well when reception-age children presented an extraordinarily effective assembly on the need to protect planet earth. They achieved this through songs and the story of a penguin family losing its habitat as the ice melted around them.
- Leaders ensure that when controversial and political issues are considered, steps have been taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views.

Leadership and management

Outstanding

- The leadership and management, under the very experienced headteacher, are outstanding. The headteacher works very closely with the senior staff and shares his ambitions for excellence. The whole school staff, under the very well-structured and knowledgeable senior leadership team, work very well together. The school has heads of lower, middle and upper school and has recently appointed deputy headteachers for academic and pastoral care.
- Leaders are very passionate about driving the school forward and set very high expectations

for themselves and the pupils. They have maintained the ethos of Thomas's Battersea as a school in which very high-quality teaching and achievement are central to the success of the school, but above all the pupils' personal development is paramount and all pupils are highly valued as individuals and helped to achieve their full potential. Parents and carers demonstrated through their responses to the questionnaire, discussions with inspectors and emails that they are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and its ethos. Parents and carers made comments such as: 'Thomas Battersea is a safe, secure, inspiring, creative and extremely well-organised school'; 'My son absolutely loves it'; and 'This a truly happy school.'

- Senior leaders have developed very effective arrangements for the review of teaching, learning and pupils' progress. The management of staff performance is very thorough and has led to high-quality practice across the school. Staff are provided with extensive training and development opportunities, which are linked to the school's priorities. There is a very supportive and open culture within the school. All staff in their response to the questionnaire state unanimously that they are proud to work at the school. The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness is robust and accurate and this contributes very well to the school improvement plan.
- The leadership has achieved excellence in teaching, the curriculum and pupils' achievement; it has been robust in its attention to maintaining and striving to improve on the high standards achieved at the last inspection. The headteacher and staff provide high-quality role models and demonstrate excellent dedication, commitment and a consistent capacity for continued development.
- The well-documented and dynamic curriculum promotes in pupils an eagerness to learn. As a result they make sustained and rapid progress both academically and in creative and sporting endeavours. The curriculum very effectively promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils through a very rich and varied range of well-planned activities. This is greatly enhanced by the very wide range of extra-curricular activities, which include clubs, visits off site, residential activities and visitors to the school.
- The school safeguarding systems are maintained to a very high standard. There is very good attention to detail and to the implementation of all the regulations, including the statutory requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage. All staff have been checked for their suitability to work with children and the information is accurately recorded on the required single central record of staff appointments.
- The premises and accommodation are very well maintained and plans are in place for continual improvement and renewal. All the required information for parents and carers is provided, including a suitable complaints policy.
- The proprietors have ensured that all the regulations for independent schools and statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements for the Early Year Foundation Stage are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	100530
Inspection number	443486
DfE registration number	212/6401

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Day preparatory school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	532
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Tobyn, Ben, David and Joanna Thomas
Headteacher	Ben Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2008
Annual fees (day pupils)	£11,508 – £16,878
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