

# Thomas Arnold Primary School

Rowdowns Road, Dagenham, RM9 6NH

**Inspection dates** 15–16 July 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Highly effective leadership has been the key to the school's rapid improvements during the last two years.
- Children in Nursery and Reception make good progress in all areas of learning.
- In Years 1 to 6, all groups of pupils, including those supported by additional funding, are making good progress.
- Many pupils are making outstanding progress in mathematics.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 continues to rise and is now broadly average in reading and above average in mathematics.
- Teaching is securely good and there is evidence of outstanding practice.
- Pupils show an enthusiasm for learning and participate well in the activities provided.
- The school has a very positive and welcoming atmosphere and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. At times, pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are exemplary.
- Attendance has risen to above average levels.
- Procedures to ensure pupils are safe are effective. Pupils say that they feel safe and are very well looked after by teachers and staff.
- The headteacher and senior leaders show considerable ambition and determination in raising pupils' achievement and in improving teaching.
- Senior leaders are very well supported by middle leaders and staff in the drive to improve the school.
- Governors show a very clear understanding of the school's performance and provide a highly effective blend of challenge and support.
- The school has gained the confidence of its parents and carers. Parents and carers are very pleased with the care and education provided.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Pupils' attainment and progress in writing trail behind those in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils' handwriting, presentation and spelling are not consistently good.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to apply writing skills in different subjects and topics.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons. Some of these were seen jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Considerable time was spent analysing pupils' work and the information on pupils' attainment and progress.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, a representative from the local authority, governors and pupils.
- The inspectors took account of 48 responses to the online survey. Brief discussions were held with parents and carers in the playground at the start of the day.
- Questionnaires from 37 members of staff were analysed.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents including school policies, safeguarding procedures and the school's development planning.

## Inspection team

Derek Watts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Angela Podmore

Additional Inspector

David Wolfson

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average-sized primary school.
- About half of the pupils are White British. Other pupils are from a wide range of ethnic heritages with Black African being the next largest group.
- Nearly half of the pupil population speak English as an additional language but very few are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A well above average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school part-way through the year is much higher than average.
- The headteacher took up his post in April 2012.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching so more pupils make rapid progress, particularly in writing, by:
  - ensuring pupils' handwriting, presentation and spelling are consistently good
  - increasing opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces in different subjects and topics.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- The achievement of all pupils, regardless of ability or background, has been improved considerably since the last inspection and is now good. Two years ago, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 was well below average in reading, writing and mathematics and their progress was inadequate. The improvements identified in the previous inspection report have been maintained and firmly built upon.
- Leaders have taken decisive and rigorous action to raise pupils' achievement and to improve teaching. All groups of pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language, are now making good progress.
- Recent national test results, the school's internal assessments, learning in lessons and the work seen paint a positive picture. They show that attainment in the current Year 6 is above average in mathematics and broadly average in reading. Many pupils are making outstanding progress in mathematics.
- Standards in writing are lower than those in reading and mathematics and the leadership team has rightly identified writing as the most pressing area for improvement.
- Children enter the Nursery with knowledge and skills at below the levels typical for their age. They make good progress in Nursery and Reception because of good teaching and the interesting activities provided.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to reading and make good progress. Results in the Year 1 phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) check in 2013 and 2014 indicate that an above average proportion of pupils reach the expected standards. Older pupils are acquiring more advanced reading skills such as deduction and inference.
- Pupils' achievement in writing, although good overall, trails behind that of reading and mathematics. Pupils' grammar and punctuation are improving but there is variation in handwriting, presentation and spelling. There are a variety of good examples of pupils applying their writing skills and producing extended pieces in different subjects and topics. However, this is not consistent in all classes. Pupils' writing and attention to presentation and spelling in different subjects tend not to be as good as they are in English.
- The school has been particularly successful in raising pupils' achievement in mathematics. Pupils apply their knowledge, understanding and skills well to solve mathematical problems. For example, pupils in a Year 2 class made exceptional progress. They identified complex patterns and number sequences. They used all four operations to solve a range of challenging problems.
- Pupils supported by additional funding in Year 6 in 2013 attained slightly higher standards than the others in reading, writing and mathematics. Good teaching and effective use of the funding to provide extra support help to ensure that eligible pupils across the school achieve at least as well as the others.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well. They receive effective guidance from teaching assistants and the work set is well suited to their needs.
- Pupils who join the school part-way through the year settle quickly and make good progress. Their ability and needs are swiftly assessed and work is set at the correct level for them.
- The most able pupils are challenged and extended, particularly in mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels is increasing.
- Pupils are developing healthy lifestyles and physical fitness well through the school's physical education programme and the wide range of additional sports activities provided.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Leaders have placed considerable emphasis on improving teaching. The improved teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- Teachers expect pupils to do their best and the pupils respond well to these high expectations.

Teaching effectively engages pupils and promotes good learning for different groups of pupils. The pupils told inspectors, 'Teachers find ways of making things interesting.'

- Clear explanations and instructions help to ensure that pupils know and understand what they are to learn. Questioning is used skilfully to challenge pupils' thinking, explore their ideas and to check their understanding of new learning.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are promoted well in all year groups. The teaching of reading skills, including phonics, has been strengthened. The successful implementation of different approaches to reading has had a positive impact on pupils' progress in this area.
- The teaching of calculation skills is strong and pupils are provided with challenging opportunities to apply their numeracy skills and solve problems.
- The teaching of handwriting and spelling is less effective, because there are not yet consistent approaches throughout school. Teachers are providing too few opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills and write extended pieces in subjects other than English.
- Checking of pupils' attainment and progress is accurate and thorough. Teachers use this information well to plan their teaching and to set suitably challenging work for different groups of pupils. As a result, pupils, whatever their background or ability, are focused on their learning and their interest is sustained. They make good gains in acquiring knowledge, deepening their understanding and in acquiring skills.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is effective. Teaching assistants are well deployed and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for those who need additional help with literacy and numeracy.
- The marking of pupils' work has been strengthened. Teachers provide encouragement and praise for good work. Constructive comments guide the next stages of pupils' learning.
- Pupils know how well they are doing because of teachers' clear and informative feedback. They also know what they need to do to improve their performance.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Children in Nursery and Reception quickly settle into school life and enjoy their learning. They develop strong relationships with adults and other children. These positive qualities contribute well to their good learning.
- The behaviour of pupils is good throughout the school. The school's detailed records show that behaviour is typically good over time. Pupils learn well together and participate with enthusiasm in the activities provided. Positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour contribute effectively to pupils' good progress. In some lessons, pupils' attitudes, their relationships with others and their behaviour are exemplary. Just occasionally, some pupils can be less well focused in lessons.
- Leaders and staff have created a very positive and welcoming atmosphere where pupils can learn and thrive. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. As a result, pupils are courteous, friendly and show consideration and respect for others. From their studies, they have gained a good knowledge and understanding of different cultures and faiths.
- Pupils are keen to take on additional responsibilities such as serving on the school council or being a prefect or sports leader.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils report that they feel safe at school and very well cared for by all the staff in the school. 'Teachers take good care of us' was the view of pupils.
- Discussions with pupils show that they have a clear understanding of bullying and its different forms, including name calling, physical abuse and cyber bullying. Pupils informed the inspectors that bullying did not happen in the school. They said, 'If there was any, it would be sorted out straight away'.
- Leaders and the attendance officer have been effective in raising attendance. Attendance is now above average.

**The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The leadership by the headteacher and senior leaders has been the key to the school's rapid improvements. They set high expectations of pupils and staff in the drive to raise pupils' achievement.
  - This dynamic and inspirational senior leadership team has successfully conveyed its vision and high aspirations for the school to all those involved.
  - Teamwork among the staff is very strong. There is a powerful professional culture of continuous improvement. The expertise and talents of staff are fully utilised. Good practice is effectively shared and all staff strive to ensure that pupils do as well as they can.
  - The leadership and management of English, mathematics and the Early Years Foundation Stage are very well developed. These middle leaders make valuable contributions to checking pupils' progress, developing teaching and improving their areas of responsibility.
  - Through systematic and thorough review, leaders, staff and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and improvement areas. Findings of school self-review are used well to plan action to bring about improvements.
  - The school's drive to improve teaching has been relentless. The quality of teaching is carefully checked by senior and subject leaders. Positive and decisive action has been taken when teaching has been less than good. There are thorough procedures for the appraisal of teachers. The process successfully identifies teachers' training needs. Targets set to improve teachers' skills and performance are closely linked to pupils' progress and to the school's improvement priorities.
  - The school provides a good range of subjects and interesting topics for pupils to study. Learning opportunities provided in reading and mathematics have been improved. Leaders have well-thought-out plans to improve pupils' achievement in writing. An interesting range of additional activities, such as clubs and educational visits, further enriches pupils' learning.
  - The school is a harmonious community and staff strive to ensure that all pupils have equal chances to do well as they can. There are no signs of discrimination within the school and all pupils have full access to the learning activities provided.
  - The primary school sports grant has been used successfully to extend pupils' sporting opportunities. External specialist sports coaches provide good teaching. Pupils' participation in sports competitions and tournaments has increased. During the inspection, pupils thoroughly enjoyed well-organised activities during sports week.
  - The additional funding is used very effectively to provide eligible pupils with required support. The action taken is working very well and these pupils are achieving at least as well as the others.
  - The local authority has a clear overview of the school's performance and provides good support. The link adviser has been regularly involved in reviewing teaching and learning, and provides valuable reports for leaders and the governing body. Successful local headteachers have also been effectively used in reviewing the school's progress, particularly the quality of teaching, and to verify the school leaders' judgements.
  - The school has established very strong partnerships with parents and carers. Discussions with parents and carers and the responses to Parent View indicate that parents and carers are very pleased with the care and education provided for their children. Parents and carers are particularly impressed with the leadership and management of the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governance is outstanding. Governors have an extremely clear overview of the school's effectiveness, particularly pupils' attainment and progress. They gave the inspectors a detailed account of the school's journey of improvement. They cited the quality of leadership as the major factor contributing to the school's change of fortune. Governors receive accurate information about the quality of teaching. They fully understand requirements relating to the

appraisal of staff performance and the importance of promotion and salary increases reflecting the progress that pupils' make. Governors ensure that additional funding is wisely spent and check the impact of spending on pupils' progress. Governors have attended useful courses and training to help enhance their effectiveness. They ensure that all safeguarding procedures meet requirements. Governors provide considerable support and appropriate challenge in order to hold the school to account.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101220
<b>Local authority</b>	Barking and Dagenham
<b>Inspection number</b>	442108

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	482
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dan Cracknell
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Halliwell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	January 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8270 4588
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