

Thames Primary Academy

Severn Road, Blackpool, Lancashire, FY4 1EE

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well throughout the academy from their different starting points.
- Children get a very good start to their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Teaching is good across the academy. Staff know pupils well and usually have high expectations of what they can achieve.
- Pupils supported through the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported, make good progress and achieve well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They enjoy coming to the academy and are keen to learn. They say that they feel safe and are well looked after in the academy.
- Academy leaders, including governors, have a clear and accurate view of how well the academy is performing and where it can do better. They have worked well together to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- Parents are very supportive of the academy.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. Occasionally pupils are not given work that is hard enough to challenge them to make the best possible progress, including the most-able pupils
- Achievement in writing is not as strong as in reading and mathematics.
- Sometimes pupils are not given enough guidance about what they need to do to improve their work, and staff do not always check that pupils follow this advice when it is given.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 30 lessons, or part-lessons. Two lessons were observed jointly with the senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with academy leaders and with three governors, including the Acting Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors also met a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met three groups of pupils and also spoke informally to other pupils in lessons and during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors looked at the work pupils were doing in lessons and in their books over time. They listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 5 read and talked to them about their enjoyment of reading.
- Inspectors observed the work of the academy and examined a number of documents concerning pupils' current achievement and progress, development plans and information about teachers' performance. They also looked at records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding arrangements. Minutes of governing body meetings were also considered.
- Inspectors took account of 16 responses to the on-line (Parent View) questionnaire and 55 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Robert Birtwell, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Elaine Maloney	Additional Inspector
Christine Howard	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is much larger than the average-sized primary academy.
- Pupils are taught in 16 classes from the Reception Year to Year 6.
- A very large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.
- Almost two thirds of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority). This is well-above-average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported at 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 who join or leave the academy at other than the usual times is above average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The academy also runs a nursery on the site. This is inspected separately by Ofsted.
- Thames Primary Academy converted to become an academy on 1 November 2012. When its predecessor school, Thames Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching in order to raise achievement, especially in writing and for the most-able pupils, by making sure that:
 - expectations of what pupils can achieve are always high enough
 - work set is always hard enough so that pupils are consistently challenged to make the best possible progress and achieve the highest standards
 - pupils have more opportunities to write at length across different subjects
 - pupils are always given clear guidance about what they need to do to improve their work, and staff check that pupils respond to this advice.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides very purposeful and effective leadership, and is well supported by the senior leadership team, middle leaders and governors. Their actions have improved the quality of teaching and raised pupils' achievement.
- The academy's systems for checking how well pupils are doing are robust and academy leaders at all levels make good use of information about pupils' achievement and progress. They have a clear and accurate view of how well the academy is performing and where it needs to do better. Academy improvement planning is firmly focused on further improving teaching and raising pupils' achievement. For example, leaders are aware that achievement in writing is not as strong as in reading and mathematics, and there are plans in place to address this.
- Senior leaders closely monitor the quality of teaching and learning and middle leaders effectively check and evaluate pupils' performance in their areas. Any underachievement is addressed by providing pupils with extra support if they need it. As a result, all groups of pupils in the academy are making good progress. This shows the academy's successful commitment to equal opportunities for all pupils.
- Information about pupils' performance and the quality of teaching is used to check how well teachers and teaching assistants are doing and to identify where further training or support is needed. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving. This information is also used effectively when making decisions about the pay of teachers and teaching assistants.
- The curriculum is well planned, engages pupils effectively in their learning and promotes good behaviour. Each topic has a linked trip or visit and the curriculum is enriched by a good range of activities and clubs covering sport, drama and culture. These activities contribute strongly to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The academy is using the additional primary school sport funding successfully. Specialist teachers and coaches take lessons, run activities and train staff. As a result, the range of sporting activities has broadened and pupil participation in sporting activities has increased.
- Procedures for safeguarding pupils are fully in place and actively followed.
- There is very strong support for the academy shown in the parent and staff questionnaires. Parents spoken to during the inspection were very complimentary about the academy.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and learning and pupil's achievement. They have undertaken training to improve their skills and effectiveness and have a good understanding of the use and analysis of data about pupils' achievement and progress, and how these are linked to the quality of teaching. They hold the academy to account effectively by asking probing questions about how well the academy is doing and where it could do better, and by setting challenging targets linked to the headteacher's appraisal. They make sure that pupils' performance is considered when making decisions about teachers' pay. They oversee the academy's finances very effectively and have been very skilful in managing the recent refurbishment project. They have a good knowledge of how pupil premium funding is spent and the impact it is having. They ensure that the academy meets its statutory duties, including those related to safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well. They are polite and considerate and there are good relationships between pupils and adults in the academy. There is a strong and caring ethos throughout the academy.
- Pupils take pride in their work and behave well in lessons so that learning typically proceeds smoothly and without interruption.
- Academy records show that there are few instances of poor behaviour, including racist or discriminatory incidents. On the rare occasions that pupils misbehave, staff act appropriately, consistently and effectively.
- A small number of pupils sometimes present challenging behaviour, but the academy manages this well. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are supported in a caring and nurturing way, and there is evidence of improved behaviour from these pupils.
- Inspectors observed good behaviour in lessons, in assembly and around the academy. Pupils play safely and well together during break times, and behave responsibly in the hall at lunchtime.

- Pupils are proud of their academy and wear their uniforms smartly. They speak positively about their experiences and enjoy coming to the academy. As a result attendance has improved markedly and is now above average.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in the academy and are very well cared for. They know how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including on roads and when using the Internet.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of the different forms bullying can take, but say that it is very rare in the academy. They are confident that the academy would sort it out quickly, if it occurred.
- All parents who responded to the Parent View survey thought that their children are happy, safe and well looked after in the academy. Inspection evidence supports this view.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is improving and is typically good across the academy, with some that is outstanding. It enables pupils in all classes to learn well. This was confirmed by the work in pupils' books, and the academy's own records of pupils' progress and checks on the quality of teaching.
- Staff know pupils well and there are good relationships between pupils and teachers and teaching assistants. Staff typically have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and set work that motivates and engages pupils, so that they learn well. Pupils are keen to learn. They say that 'teachers try to make lessons fun and interesting' and that lessons are 'challenging, but teachers teach us well and make learning easier'. For example, in a science lesson Year 2 pupils were enthralled when they were learning about living things and observing snails.
- Questioning is used well to check and reinforce pupils' knowledge, and to deepen their understanding and extend their learning. In an English lesson Year 3 pupils were learning about adjectives and questioning was used very effectively to develop their understanding and to challenge them to improve their work. As a result, they made excellent progress.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly. Staff use praise effectively, but they do not always provide enough guidance or comments on what pupils need to do to improve their work; nor do they always check that pupils follow this guidance when it is given.
- Although teachers generally have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, they do not always make sure that the work set is challenging enough to enable pupils to learn as well as they could. Sometimes pupils, including the most able, are not given work that is hard enough to enable them to reach the highest levels and make the best possible progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to help pupils who find learning more difficult. This includes pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium, those who are disabled or have special educational needs. As a result these pupils make good progress in line with their classmates, and better in some cases.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils make good progress in reading writing and mathematics throughout the academy. From typically low starting points in the Reception year they reach standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 6.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics have been improving steadily, although in 2013 they remained well below average. The academy's most recent data show further improvement, especially in writing. This shows good progress from pupils' starting points, and inspection evidence from observing learning in lessons, analysing pupils' work in their books and talking to pupils confirms that pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 are currently making good progress.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have also improved. In 2013 they were average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who made the progress expected of them was above average in all subjects and the proportion that made more than the expected progress was above average in reading and writing, and average in mathematics. This group of pupils achieved well from their low starting point at the end of Key Stage 1.
- Inspection evidence and the academy's most recent data for Key Stage 2 show that all groups of pupils are making good progress and achieving well. Preliminary results for the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2014 show a slight fall in standards overall in writing and mathematics. This group was affected by a high proportion of pupils who joined the academy at other times than the usual ones. However, the

progress made by these pupils remains good, and the proportion making more than the expected progress improved further and is well above average.

- Pupils make good progress in reading because they are well taught and have opportunities to read regularly. They have a good knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 national phonics check has improved steadily and was above average in 2014.
- Although pupils make good progress in writing, the standards they achieve are typically lower than in reading and mathematics. There are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length in different subjects across the curriculum.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics. They have well-developed basic numeracy skills and can apply these skills well to solve problems.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium achieve well. They receive effective individual and small-group support when it is needed and make good progress. In 2013 the standard reached by Year 6 pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was around a term and a half ahead of similar pupils nationally in mathematics, and around a term ahead in reading and writing. In comparison with other pupils in the academy, it was two terms behind in writing and mathematics, and about three terms behind in reading. Academy data show that this gap is closing.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress because their needs are accurately identified and they receive good support to help them learn from skilled teachers and teaching assistants. As a result they make rapid progress and achieve at least as well as other pupils in the academy.
- The most-able pupils make good progress and achieve well overall, but they do not make as much progress as other pupils. They are increasingly being given work that stretches them and enables them to reach their potential.

The early years provision

is good

- Most children join the Reception year with skills and knowledge that are generally well below those typical for their age. They make good progress, catch up rapidly and are well prepared to enter Key Stage 1.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good. Staff have high expectations and make sure that learning is purposeful and well focused, that children are fully involved in their learning and that the indoor and outdoor learning environments are used effectively. As a result, children are suitably challenged and key skills are developed quickly.
- Children are well motivated, behave well and show good attitudes to learning in a very safe and caring environment.
- There are strong links with the nursery school. These ensure that children make a seamless transition to the Reception year.
- There is extensive and close working with outside agencies. Vulnerable pupils, including those who are disabled, have special educational needs and those for whom the school receives additional funding, are very well supported and make good progress from their starting points.
- As a result, the early years provision makes a strong contribution to children's physical and emotional health, safety and well-being, as well as to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The leadership and management of the early years are good. Leaders have an accurate view of how well children are doing based on accurate assessment. They work effectively to improve provision, including by training and developing of staff. As a result, children's achievement is rising.

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	138927
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	449253

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	429
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sean Crofts
Headteacher	Tracy Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01253 341466
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	admin@thames.blackpool.sch.uk

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