

Little Thurrock Primary School

Rectory Road, Grays, RM17 5SW

Inspection dates 25–26 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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.

- The headteacher has rapidly changed the culture of the school and raised expectations of what pupils can achieve. High expectations of the pupils' work and behaviour, and that they should be active participants in their learning, are now the norm.
- Teaching is good and improving as teachers have responded well to the headteacher's guidance and the training she has provided.
- The pupils' progress has increased since the last inspection and their attainment is now above average and rising.
- Children enjoy learning in Reception. They are taught well and make good progress in all areas of their learning. This gives them a secure foundation for Key Stage 1.
- Pupils make good progress in their understanding of letters and sounds. They apply their skills with ease to support their early reading and writing.
- The pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. They persevere whether they are learning as a whole class, working in groups or as individuals.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They conduct themselves very well at all times, helping to create an orderly and harmonious atmosphere around the school.
- Pupils greatly enjoy school. They are confident and report they feel safe because there is always someone to turn to if they are worried.
- Every effort is made to make pupils aware of the wider world and ready for life in multicultural Britain. Pupils are reflective about their own values while showing tolerance for different faiths and beliefs.
- Governors provide considerable challenge and support for the headteacher. The review of their work undertaken following the last inspection has led to their greater involvement in, and understanding of, the school and its performance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not as consistently effective at Key Stage 1 as at Key Stage 2. The more-able readers at Key Stage 1 are not challenged sufficiently at times and pupils do not always have enough opportunity to develop and practise their writing.
- Teachers' marking and other feedback does not give as precise guidance for pupils at Key Stage 1 on how to improve their work as at Key Stage 2.
- Not all subject and year group leaders are using their skills and expertise to drive forward improvements in their areas of responsibility.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons, six of which were visited with either the headteacher or deputy headteachers, and looked at work in pupils’ books from this current academic year.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors and two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 81 responses to Ofsted’s online parent questionnaire, Parent View, and held informal discussions with parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors also took account of the 159 responses to the most recent parent questionnaire undertaken by the school last term.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents, including the school’s own information on pupils’ current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors also took account of the 35 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Evelyn Holdsworth

Additional Inspector

Gerard Batty

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much larger than most primary schools. A building programme is in its final stages as the school expands to three forms of entry.
- The proportion of pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds is average and rising.
- The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is below average and rising.
- A below average proportion of the pupils are disadvantaged and so eligible for additional funding, known as the pupil premium. This is additional government funding which, in this school, supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- A 52-place Nursery will open in April 2015 which children will attend part time. Children in the early years attend the three Reception classes full time.
- The headteacher took up the post in October 2013 following the previous inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club for pupils. It also hosts a privately-run after-school club which is inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Bring greater consistency to teaching, particularly at Key Stage, 1 by providing:
 - greater challenge for more-able readers
 - more opportunities for pupils to write at length, including in subjects other than English
 - marking and verbal feedback that makes clear to pupils where action is needed to improve their work.
- Ensure that all subject and year group leaders use their expertise to support the headteacher in driving forward improvements in their areas of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders work well as a team. By incisive self-evaluation, they identify quickly what works well in the school and where improvements are needed. Priorities are tackled rigorously by well-planned actions with the aim that staff should pull together to improve their practice and raise the pupils' achievement. Leaders focus relentlessly on improving teaching by checking quality and providing training to meet the challenging targets they set teachers. Salary progression depends on a teacher meeting these targets.
- The headteacher implemented a new curriculum and staff designed the broad range of topics to be exciting and to engage the pupils more in their learning. Topics start with a question such as 'Wish you were here?' about invaders and settlers and culminate in a presentation such as a newspaper report about their impending arrival. Planning promotes the pupils' creativity, including in their writing. The school also uses the primary physical education and sport premium well to extend the range of clubs available and increase pupils' participation rates in sporting activities.
- Values of democracy, the rule of law, liberty and respect and tolerance for others are woven into the curriculum. Pupils are prepared well to offer reasoned views about moral and ethical issues and to appreciate the world around them and their place in it. Assemblies and homework pose philosophical questions. These encourage pupils to think about matters such as the universal right to education through a discussion about how Malala Yousafzai, the Nobel prize-winning schoolgirl shot by the Taleban, has championed this cause.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well. All teachers are now being held accountable for the progress of all pupils in their classes, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. This is an improvement since the school's last inspection. The pupil premium is spent effectively and increasing its impact, as current pupils have benefited for longer from the additional staff it has funded.
- The local authority has worked closely to support the school since its last inspection and checked carefully its progress. It has directly helped the school to develop teaching in mathematics to meet changes to the National Curriculum. Further advice has led to adaptations and improvements to Reception teaching.
- Training has developed the expertise and skills of subject and year group leaders. They understand the roles they are to undertake. However, not all are active in using their skills to drive forward the quality of teaching and holding staff to account for the achievement of pupils in their areas of responsibility.
- Procedures for safeguarding all pupils are secure. Policies are rigorously implemented and adapted as requirements change. All staff are very vigilant in ensuring pupils are kept safe. They know vulnerable pupils and work closely with their families through the family support worker and other agencies to help them.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - By changing the way they operate, governors have established a much greater understanding of the school. This includes knowing what assessment data is saying about pupils' achievement. Regular focused visits to school and linking individual governors to priorities for action enable them to gain first-hand information about the school's performance. They use this to ask searching questions of school leaders. Governors are aware how the headteacher has improved teaching through training and how targets she sets link closely to salary progression. They know teaching is now leading to pupils making good progress but that it is not always consistently good at Key Stage 1. Governors carefully check the impact of spending decisions. They know the pupil premium is enabling disadvantaged pupils to make improved progress and close gaps in attainment with other pupils both in each year group and nationally.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The ethos of high expectations generated by leaders is seen through the pupils' conduct. Pupils respond quickly to requests made of them by staff which means there are constructive relationships and a productive culture of learning in all classes. The pupils' pride in themselves, their achievements and the school shine through. Parents and carers are happy with behaviour and how the school deals with any problems.
- Pupils keep trying even when work is difficult, often talking problems through with others and adopting different approaches until successful. These attitudes pervade classrooms and support the pupils' good progress in most lessons. Very little time, if any, is lost due to low-level disruption, although a very small number of pupils in some classes can lose concentration and disturb others. Pupils take on responsibilities such as representing their classes on the school council very sensibly.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school actively promotes safe practices including teaching pupils how to act if they feel unsafe. Teachers are active in helping pupils deal with the threat of cyber bullying. This includes e-safety training days and directing families to where they can gain further information and support. This means pupils understand how to keep themselves and one another safe through their responsible attitudes and awareness of potential risks.
- Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying but they say instances are rare and dealt with quickly by the school. Their parents generally agree. Pupils show great respect for others and as one girl very eloquently said, 'We embrace people for their differences'.
- The well-run and popular breakfast club is supporting the improved punctuality and attendance of several pupils. Pupils enjoy school as shown by their prompt arrival at the start of the day and above average attendance.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils say that their teachers' expectations of them have risen and how challenging and enjoyable teaching has become, particularly in mathematics. Pupils explore ideas by working together in discussion or on group activities. Classrooms are full of purposeful and well-managed learning, particularly at Key Stage 2. Teachers' questioning has become more probing so that pupils have to think hard, provide detailed responses and justify their answers.
- Lesson planning takes into account all groups of pupils including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and the most able. Teachers challenge all groups of pupils by providing tasks that make them think. This creates an environment where disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs can flourish and make similarly good progress as the others.
- Mathematics teaching focuses on deepening the pupils' understanding as well as helping them to master new skills. This extends the learning of most-able pupils well. Teachers provide tasks that develop the pupils' reasoning by applying their skills to practical activities, solving problems and investigations.
- Teachers and support staff follow the programme to teach phonics (sounds that letters make) closely, but do not always push the most-able readers at Key Stage 1 enough. This has been identified by the school and more interesting and challenging books are being purchased to enhance those currently available.
- Pupils are given plenty of opportunity to plan, develop and extend their writing at Key Stage 2 through the subjects they study... This is not seen as consistently at Key Stage 1 where pupils are not given enough opportunity to master their craft. This slows their progress.
- Pupils fully understand how the marking policy works and their role in it. Pupils are given clear instructions on how to improve, either verbally or through marking. This enables them to deepen their understanding

and eliminate errors. This is not as consistently applied at Key Stage 1 where guidance varies and pupils do not always understand how to improve their work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' progress has increased considerably since the school's last inspection and is now good in reading, writing and mathematics. This is particularly the case at Key Stage 2. As a result, attainment is above average and rising. Pupils are well prepared for secondary school.
- The most-able pupils also make good progress in each subject. All of those who had reached Level 3 at Key Stage 1 in each of reading, writing and mathematics reached at least Level 5 by the end of Key Stage 2. Teachers are aware of the most-able pupils in their classes and provide additional challenges so that a significant number are working beyond Level 5 this year.
- Year 6 test results rose in 2014 and were above average in mathematics and writing. Results were average in reading. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to reach similar levels in mathematics and writing but to exceed 2014 levels in reading.
- Children make good and increasing progress in Reception from their starting points in all areas of their learning. Their attainment is rising and was average by the time the 2014 cohort entered Year 1.
- Results for Year 1 pupils in the phonics screening check rose considerably in 2014 and were above average. Almost all Year 2 pupils who retook the check managed to pass. Pupils in Year 1 are currently on track to match these results if not exceed them.
- Disadvantaged pupils make equally as good progress as others in each year group. The gap in Year 6 test results with others in the cohort widened in 2014 to about one year behind in mathematics and writing, but closed to six months in reading. Their results lagged behind other pupils nationally by around two terms in each subject. Attainment gaps are closing this year in all subjects.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has improved and is also now good. This is because teachers carefully assess pupils' individual needs and tailor lessons and additional programmes to meet them.

The early years provision is good

- Achievement in the early years has improved since the last inspection because of the action taken by the headteacher to bring practice in line with the rest of the school. Children achieve well as teaching has improved and is consistently good. The majority are prepared well for learning in Year 1.
- Teachers focus sharply on meeting children's needs through regular and accurate assessment of each child's progress. They teach early reading skills well and there is a tight link with developing the children's writing. Classrooms have well-planned and inviting activities with learning outside complementing that indoors.
- Children enjoy their learning particularly when exploring ideas either on their own or with others. They learn to respect each other, and topics such as the Chinese New Year help them to appreciate and value different cultures. Children enjoy learning about the world around them in a secure and happy environment. They choose resources and collaborate well. However, not all are as focused during sessions led by adults in whole class or large groups. A small number can lose concentration and fidget.
- Effective leadership of the early years has raised staff expectations of what the children can achieve. Leaders also ensure children have similar experiences across the three classes, evaluate the quality of provision and take action where weaknesses are identified. Boys lagged considerably behind girls in the 2014 cohort, but action taken, such as making activities more engaging for boys, is closing this gap.

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	114839
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	441995

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	584
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Charlie Armstrong
Headteacher	Jaki Cole
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2013
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