

Thomson House School

27 Sheen Lane, London, SW14 8HY

Inspection dates 23–24 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Early years provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- In two years leaders and governors have quickly established an outstanding school with high ambition and a strong sense of common purpose.
- The trustees' vision and core values of curiosity, kindness and courage are thoroughly embedded into the work of the school.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers have very high expectations, and enable children to achieve exceptionally well in all areas.
- Children are encouraged to be curious, because the curriculum motivates them to do so. The curriculum has a remarkable range of experiences that enrich and challenge children's learning and knowledge from the outset.
- School leaders and governors are never complacent about children's achievement. All children make outstanding progress from their different starting points.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is significantly above what is expected for pupils' age in Reception and Year 1.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff assess children frequently and accurately so that learning continually challenges their interests and abilities.
- Children's behaviour and attitudes are outstanding. They work and play together very well. They actively engage in projects at home, locally and further afield to show responsibility and to develop a sense of community spirit.
- Leaders and governors ensure robust arrangements operate throughout the school to keep children safe.
- The governing body are totally committed to ensuring the school is as good as it can be. They successfully use their own strategic and professional skills to drive the school's improvement with great passion and energy.
- Parents are effusive in their praise of the school's work, both academically and because of the care their children receive to help them become confident individuals.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching jointly with the headteacher, in the Reception and Year 1 classes. She also made short visits to lessons. The inspector observed children during playtime and lunchtime.
- During the inspection, pupils were involved in a whole-school project week learning about their local area. Classes were 'off timetable.' Pupils' learning focused on art, design, gardening and off-site environmental studies.
- During visits to classrooms, the inspector reviewed children's work and spoke with them about their learning. She scrutinised children's books in a range of subjects and she heard a group of children read.
- The inspector held discussions with the leadership team, representatives of the assistant staff team, members of the governing body, groups of children and the headteacher. She also spoke to an external school improvement consultant.
- School documents and records were scrutinised, including information about the quality of teaching, children's progress, behaviour and attendance, checks on staff suitability, school improvement planning and governors' records.
- The inspector spoke informally with parents at the beginning of the school day. She took into account the 85 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 17 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Ann Debono, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This free school opened in September 2013 as part of Stamp Education Trust.
- The school vacated its first location, Vernon Road, in April 2015 to move to a permanent site on Sheen Lane. The former site will be refurbished in readiness for the first upper school classes in 2017.
- Thomson House School is a much smaller than average school. Currently, in its second year, there are 104 children in two Reception classes and two Year 1 classes.
- All pupils attend full time.
- The school's planned expansion will occur year-on-year until it reaches a capacity of 364 pupils in 2019.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs is below average.
- Pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds, the largest of which is White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium funding is well below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and looked-after children.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sharpen the school strategic plan so that the steps leaders will take to improve the school are monitored and evaluated more precisely by leaders and governors.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leaders, governors and staff are united in their ambitions to secure an outstanding school. Within the space of two years, they have done so.
- The trustees' vision and core values of curiosity, kindness and courage are woven into the heart of the school. The headteacher and governing body ensure these values are modelled by all staff on a daily basis. Their success is encapsulated by exceptionally high achievement of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics alongside the innovative ways they are guided to take personal responsibility for themselves and others.
- The headteacher is unequivocal in her expectations for excellent behaviour and achievement. She ensured high standards were maintained despite a lack of outdoor space in previous temporary accommodation and the recent move of the entire school to its new location two months ago.
- Since her appointment one year ago her leadership instils confidence in parents who respect that she keeps her word and is highly visible each day. Parents are unanimously positive about the school. A comment typifies this view, 'It has a lovely spirit, and my child has made phenomenal progress in one year; I don't know how they do it!' Almost all parents would recommend the school.
- The school's work to ensure equality of opportunity is excellent. Leaders scrutinise performance information and closely track pupils who are not achieving as highly as their peers. Specific support or enrichment programmes enable all pupils regardless of ability or need to excel. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Primary sports funding allows pupils to receive specialist coaching in a wide range of sports and physical activity such as tennis, yoga and swimming.
- Pupil premium funding is spent effectively on targeted literacy and numeracy programmes. These are successful because there is no difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school. The funding also subsidises paid activities so all pupils have access to additional enrichment opportunities such as visits and clubs.
- Leaders and governors carry out rigorous checks on the school's work to ensure that performance targets are met. The strategic plan is detailed and matches the long-term targets for improvement as the school expands. It is not precise enough in defining governors' or leaders' monitoring and evaluation activity to ensure that the school is on track to meet its targets at key points throughout the year.
- Middle leaders provide strong support for the headteacher. New to these leadership roles, they check standards effectively, assess the quality of teaching and drive through new ideas to improve the curriculum further. They manage their roles and responsibilities confidently. Their action plans have directed their work well to date; however they lack precision and clear milestones to measure success. Leaders are well placed to mentor and monitor new staff as the school continues to grow, thus securing strong capacity for the future.
- The school follows the National Curriculum and it meets Early Years Foundation Stage requirements. Staff enhance the curriculum for pupils with innovative experiences. Pupils develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through many meaningful events. They learn Italian and philosophy, and research life in China, for example. The school prepares pupils effectively for life in modern Britain. A special element is the 'Richmond Award Scheme' devised by the trustees. Pupils nominate activities at home, in the locality and further afield to demonstrate citizenship and responsibility to receive a bronze, silver or gold award.
- Safeguarding arrangements and all staff recruitment checks to ensure their suitability to work with children are robust and meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance of the school is outstanding. Governors' vision, together with their genuine commitment to implement the core values, is pivotal to the school's success so far.
 - In a short time governors have evolved their skills from operational to strategic; as a result their visits to school are far more focused and purposeful, linked closely to the school's priorities and the understanding of data and the quality of teaching. They take tough decisions when the need arises and have managed a change of senior leaders in key positions. They expect excellence for every child in school regardless of background or ability.
 - Governors oversee the finances for the trust carefully. They insist on value for money when negotiating new premises and similarly expect to see demonstrable outcomes as a result of investment in new curriculum programmes. They understand how additional funding is used to develop sports skills and participation. They scrutinise the impact of pupil premium funding on pupils' achievement and access to

enrichment activities such as music instrumental tuition. Governors hold school leaders strongly to account to sustain excellent standards through managing their performance.

- Processes for safe recruitment and the vetting of staff are robust. Safeguarding meets requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils understand the school's core values and they are proud of how kind they are to each other. They say there is no bullying. Adults provide strong support and care which promotes pupils' self-confidence. Pupils were very willing to tell the inspector about their work and their learning.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to school. They say it is 'really good' and that they are helped to improve their work because adults give them good ideas. They told the inspector about many different interesting things they do such as yoga, drama and gardening.
- Pupils' conduct is exceptionally good. They know the school rules and the importance of keeping them. They know if they are silly they have to see the headteacher, but equally they are very keen to be awarded special points for good behaviour and effort so that they can take part in 'Golden Time'.
- In lessons, pupils are expected to work together equitably, and they do. They co-operate exceptionally well in shared reading or creative activities. They collaborate very well, helping each other, using the new smart table to score highly when practising letter sounds and new words. They take responsibility for others by assessing each other's work sensitively.
- At playtime pupils play together well and there are a wide range of resources and games from which they choose. On the second day of inspection for example, some pupils made chalk pictures on the ground, others sat and chatted quietly in rocker-seats or on cushions while others chose to run around safely to release their energy. Pupils also choose to attend lunchtime classes from the exciting range available such as, drama, choir, music and Zumba.
- Leaders use a wide range of strategies to promote excellent attendance and punctuality. This is significantly above average consistently. Additionally, careful checks are made to ensure that vulnerable children are safe when they are not in school. Leaders do not authorise holidays in term time.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils have clear awareness of how to be safe in school and at home because school leaders take this responsibility very seriously.
- During safety week, pupils received scooter lessons; they learned about water safety and police visited to give advice about responding to dangerous situations. Road safety features prominently. The school is located next to a busy level crossing. It is testament to the work of governors that they have liaised extensively with Network Rail to ensure that pupils stay safe using it. Risk assessments are rigorous. Parents are unanimous about how safe and secure the school is for their children.
- Pupils understand e-safety. In discussions with the inspector they recounted an assembly story about the dangers and consequences of contacting unknown people online and the reasons for reporting to an adult.
- A further example of the school's intention to keep children safe is the appointment of a member of staff as the school's 'CSE Champion' (child sexual exploitation). This role enhances the school's implementation of the government's statutory guidance, *Keeping Children Safe in Education Guidance*.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Adults take pride in the quality of their excellent teaching. They are reflective practitioners with very high expectations, enabling pupils to achieve exceptionally well in all areas. They are very open to professional feedback from colleagues, leaders and external consultants to refine their skills in the classroom.
- Adults receive targeted professional development so they feel confident with new initiatives to improve teaching and learning. Teachers put to use recent training about high quality texts to assist pupils in analysing story lines and characterisation. In numeracy, pupils handle new resources that allow them to explore place value, addition and subtraction in practical ways. The impact of such developments is evident in the excellent outcomes and progress for all pupils, regardless of their abilities. It is exemplified by the following comment from a member of staff, 'I am well supported and encouraged and pushed, in the nicest way, to be the best I can be!'
- The inspector sampled pupils' books in English, mathematics and other curriculum subjects. This scrutiny

confirms the outstanding progress pupils make because of consistently excellent teaching over time. For example, in September one child used light pencil shapes on paper to represent her ideas. At the end of the year she could write a simple story with legible handwriting. In mathematics at the start of the year a pupil could add two numbers to make 10; by July he could correctly solve simple division.

- The curriculum is taught very effectively and planned to include many exciting experiences. In science, for example, pupils excitedly told the inspector about how a balloon melted after it had been filled with water and frozen. 'The water changes, it was very drippy and cold and it took longer than we thought to melt'
- A specialist teaching assistant provides exemplary literacy support. She accurately assesses individual needs and personalises a selection of resources and games, many tailor-made, to motivate pupils to feel confident, be successful and quickly learn their letter sounds, blends and number bonds.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children enter the Reception classes with knowledge and skill levels that are frequently above those typical for their age. All children make excellent progress from their respective starting points. The proportion of children who reached and who exceeded a good level of development at the end of the Reception in 2014 and in 2015 was significantly above average in all areas of learning.
- Pupils continue to make outstanding progress in Year 1. The school's achievement information indicates that 60% of pupils are on track to exceed expectations in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of the year. The proportion predicted to meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics (letters and the sounds they make) check is also on track to be significantly above the national average.
- A minority of pupils speak English as an additional language. They receive high-quality small-group work to learn and practise the required vocabulary for their classwork. They make rapid progress in this setting and quickly develop fluency in English so that they can participate fully in lessons.
- The provision for disadvantaged pupils is equally strong. They also benefit from highly effective targeted support in reading, writing and mathematics. Information about pupils' progress indicates that there is little difference in the achievement of these pupils and that of others; indeed, sometimes they surpass their classmates in reading and writing.
- The most-able pupils are identified early and their achievement is closely tracked by leaders and governors. They receive additional challenges in their learning which motivates them to sustain good concentration. They also make excellent progress.
- The school has pupils with a range of different special educational needs. Specialist advice and support feature prominently for these pupils to ensure they are included confidently in all learning opportunities. Consequently, they make strong progress from their different starting points and they meet their own personal targets for improvement.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Children in Reception classes achieve exceptionally highly. In 2014 the number of children meeting and exceeding expectations was well above the national average in all areas; however boys' attainment, particularly in reading and writing, compared less favourably with girls'.
- This year, as a result of outstanding leadership and purposeful teaching, 80% of children reached a good level of development compared with 61% nationally, the gap between boys' and girls' attainment has narrowed considerably. In 2015 a higher proportion of children are exceeding national averages in literacy and in their knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Teaching is outstanding. The classrooms are well organised and stimulating activities strongly engage children and sustain their interest. Staff promote imaginative role play through an indoor temporary camp. Every curriculum area is available for children to explore by themselves or guided by an adult. Attractive displays of children's work set the standard, for example, of their explorations of number patterns and investigations using numbers up to 100.
- Adults organise learning to stimulate children's curiosity. They make excellent use of exciting resources to promote discussion. Additionally the restricted outdoor area is used innovatively to stimulate children's exploration and enquiry. During the inspection, children weaved with natural materials, they joined bamboo canes to make life-size tents and designed their own gardens using objects gathered from a local walk. Learning of this calibre is the reason why children continue to achieve so highly.
- Children's behaviour and attitudes are outstanding, because the provision is so exciting and well matched

to their needs and interests. They become engrossed in their learning; working together very well and sharing their ideas and thoughts amicably. They feel secure and they are kept safe because adults maintain clear systems to manage daily routines and regular trips off site.

- Leaders introduced a new online assessment system which involves parents and staff contributing together to children's learning records. This information, together with ongoing evaluations of children's work and attitudes, is used to plan precise next steps in children's learning. As a consequence of this excellent provision, children are exceptionally well prepared with the skills they need for Year 1.

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	139549
Local authority	Richmond upon Thames
Inspection number	450078
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matteo Rossetti
Headteacher	Amanda Letch
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	020 3608 2080
Email address	amanda.letch@thomsonhouseschool.org

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