

# Thomas A Becket Junior School

Glebeside Avenue, Worthing, West Sussex BN14 7PR

## Inspection dates

29–30 June 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | Requires improvement |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Requires improvement |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | Good                 |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | Requires improvement |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, when the school was judged to require improvement, leaders' actions to drive improvements have not been as rapid or systematic as they need to be to get the school to good.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils in all year groups are making expected progress and working at the standard appropriate for their age.
- Leaders and governors have taken too much account of how Year 6 pupils are doing. They have not considered progress in other year groups, where attainment is more variable, when evaluating the effectiveness of the school. Consequently they have judged the school too positively.
- The governing body does not hold senior leaders rigorously to account, so, in some areas, improvements have not been as rapid as they could.
- Leaders' checks on teaching are too infrequent to drive improvement of weaker teachers.
- Senior leaders do not always have high enough expectations of some middle leaders and teachers, nor do they hold them fully to account, because some of the targets they are set are not sufficiently challenging.
- Leaders do not use the information they have on pupils' progress and attainment to target particular groups and classes to catch up.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good as some teachers' subject knowledge is not strong enough. Some teachers set work which is too easy or repeat activities which pupils have already carried out.
- In Years 3 to 5, not enough pupils make expected progress and reach the appropriate levels for their age in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils across the school do not do as well as they should in writing. Although this is improving, it is not yet where it needs to be.
- Not enough pupils reach the higher levels because expectations of what can be achieved are too low.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite, courteous and respectful of adults and each other.
- Pupils are valued as individuals and all at the school want the best for them. Pupils recognise and appreciate adults' work to care for them and keep them safe.
- The curriculum provides a broad range of opportunities and utilises the local area well to support learning and make it interesting.
- Pupils have opportunities to participate in a wide range of well-taught extra-curricular activities. This is reflected in pupils' high-quality performances at sporting and musical events.

## Full report

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

- Improve teaching and achievement further so that pupils catch up to at least expected levels by ensuring that:
  - teachers plan and deliver lessons which use lesson time well to challenge pupils with differing ability levels
  - teachers develop good subject knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics so that they can help pupils acquire the necessary skills and understanding
  - teachers in Years 3 to 5 have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - teachers develop pupils' writing skills further, making it clear exactly what needs to be done to improve, so that pupils reach the expected levels
  - a greater proportion of most-able pupils reach the higher levels, so that the school is at least in line with national figures.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - leaders at all levels are held to account for the full scope of their roles, so that the school improves more rapidly
  - leaders have high expectations of what can be achieved by pupils, and target pupils who have fallen behind to catch up quickly
  - leaders set appropriate targets for teachers which link carefully to pupils' progress and attainment, and encourage teachers to support pupils to reach the expected standards
  - leaders take account of the progress and achievement of all pupils and groups of pupils when evaluating the effectiveness of the school, so that they are more accurate in their judgements
  - leaders' monitoring of teaching and achievement is more rigorous and leads to more rapid improvement
  - leadership of writing results in improved attainment across the school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders' actions to drive improvements have not ensured that pupils across the school are working at the expected levels for their age. Although leaders have brought about improvements in many areas, and managed the school through a significant period of change, many pupils have not caught up to where they should be. Leaders' self-evaluations are too generous as they have taken too much account of the improved progress and attainment in Year 6 and not enough of pupils' achievements in Years 3 to 5.
- The headteacher's vision for the school is supported by other leaders and staff. All work well together to ensure that pupils are well cared for and receive a wide range of high-quality opportunities. Relationships at all levels are positive, so pupils and parents appreciate being part of the school community.
- Leaders' expectations are not as high as they need to be. This is reflected in their expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. It is also reflected in the targets that staff are set. Although the targets relate to the progress pupils make, they are sometimes set too low. Middle leaders' targets do not challenge them to improve in their areas of responsibility, so they are not held fully to account for their roles.
- Leaders' checks on pupils' progress and actions to improve their achievement have made a difference in Year 6 but not in other year groups. In some Year 3 and 4 classes, pupils who joined the school in September 2015 are making expected progress and are working at the expected level. However, this is not the case for all Year 3 and 4 classes. In Year 5, where pupils have been at the school for two years, not enough has been done to improve pupils' progress and attainment, so too many pupils are working at levels which are below the expected standard. In all classes, too few pupils are reaching the higher levels.
- Leadership of the teaching of writing has not brought about enough improvement. Writing is now taught more systematically and there are signs of improvement. However, when checking progress, leaders have considered a sample of books from each class, but they have not carefully reviewed the progress of all pupils. Although some books show good progress from the beginning of the year to now, many do not.
- Leaders' work to improve the accuracy of assessment has been effective. The systems are clear and well embedded, so leaders and teachers know exactly what progress pupils have made. However, leaders and teachers have not used this information well to identify which pupils need to make more rapid progress to catch up.
- Leaders' checks on teaching have not ensured that teaching is good across the school. Although leaders collect a wide range of evidence to support their judgements, the checks are not as frequent as they need to be to help all teachers improve. Where teaching is weaker, leaders' actions have not done enough to help them become effective.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well. Lessons and assemblies enable children to explore their feelings and those of others. They learn about Christianity and other faiths through visits to places of worships and visitors to the school. Pupils develop their moral awareness and citizenship through conservation projects, recycling and cross-curricular topics. In one year group, pupils wrote to the Prime Minister to raise their concerns about tax avoidance.
- The pupil premium grant (government funding to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals) is used effectively to provide a range of personal and educational opportunities, including access to educational visits, additional learning support and learning mentors. As a result, many of these pupils are beginning to catch up with their peers in school. However, there is more to do to close the gap with peers nationally.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of British values. They have many opportunities to experience democracy and there is a culture of respect and tolerance embedded within the school, through assemblies, lessons and modelling.
- The headteacher and two assistant headteachers have effectively managed the change from a middle school to a junior school. The necessary curriculum and teaching changes were made well, so it is not apparent that the transition took place this academic year.
- Sport is a strength of the school. Pupils are rightly proud of their many sporting achievements. The sports funding is used well to provide a wide range of opportunities for all pupils. For example, the sports coach works effectively with teachers to improve and develop their skills in a range of areas.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders utilise opportunities provided by the locality well, so that pupils develop skills in history and geography, while learning about their local area. Leaders maximise the learning spaces which are typically only available for secondary pupils, such as using the science laboratory for conducting experiments and the home economics room for cooking.

- The local authority has provided a great deal of support, including training for monitoring and assessment and brokering further advice. Advisers have checked that the school is making progress and recognised the areas in which the school is improving. However, they also have been too positive when evaluating the effectiveness of the school.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors have not held leaders rigorously to account for pupils' achievement. They have focused too much on the progress made by Year 6 pupils and not enough on the rest of the school. Consequently, they have an overly positive picture of how well the school is doing and the school has not improved rapidly enough.
  - Governors carry out a range of activities to help them to know how well the school is doing. At times, their activities are more representative of leadership checks on teaching and learning than that of governors. They ask useful questions to challenge leaders. However, on occasions, when they are told their expectations are too demanding, they accept this too readily.
  - Governors check staff performance targets and review recommendations regarding pay, but they have not challenged enough when senior leaders' expectations are too low.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All statutory requirements for safeguarding are met to a high standard. The school takes seriously its responsibility to keep pupils safe and processes to support vulnerable pupils are good. Appropriate checks of staff are carried out and detailed records are kept. The designated lead for safeguarding works closely with staff to ensure that concerns and issues are reported and followed up. All at the school have a good understanding of the school's processes for recording and reporting concerns; they know their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** requires improvement

- Some teachers do not plan and deliver lessons that meet pupils' needs well enough. There are occasions when teachers' subject knowledge in reading, writing or mathematics is not as strong as it needs to be. Consequently, although sensible learning objectives are planned, the teaching and activities do not always enable pupils to develop the identified skills or knowledge.
- Many of the activities have a practical element and are fun to do, reflecting teachers' efforts to make learning enjoyable and interesting. However, in some classes, although pupils undertake work at different levels, some of the tasks keep pupils busy but do not challenge them, such as repeating activities they have done in previous lessons or carrying out tasks which are too easy. This means pupils in some classes do not make as much progress as they should.
- Effective questioning has been a focus for development. Following training and feedback, some teachers use effective questioning to develop learning and challenge individuals. They use well-planned questions and give time to consider answers, enabling pupils to deepen their thinking. This focus on reasoning is helping many pupils to become confident in articulating their ideas.
- Pupils who join the school part way through the school year are well supported to settle quickly and become involved in school life. Their individual needs and circumstances are taken into account and parents recognise and appreciate this.
- Teaching assistants provide useful support for groups of pupils. They are clear about what the teacher has planned and use skilful questioning to develop pupils' thinking.
- Teaching in other subjects is variable depending on the effectiveness of the teacher. Where teaching is stronger, teachers ensure that they have good subject knowledge and plan interesting lessons which motivate pupils to work hard and do well. However, in classes where teaching is weaker, the same issues remain. Subject knowledge is not as thorough as it needs to be and, although the activities appear to be interesting, they are not always at the right level to support learning. Where there are specialist teachers, for example in sports and music lessons, pupils achieve well.
- Teaching of writing is not yet good. Although writing skills are taught more systematically, teachers do not consistently identify what more pupils need to learn and plan specific lessons to ensure that they develop all the writing skills they need.
- Teaching of reading is not as effective as it needs to be. Teachers develop a love of reading across the school and this is reflected in pupils' enthusiasm to pick up a book, even at breaktimes in the playground. However, weaker readers do not routinely use their phonics skills to decode unfamiliar words and this is not encouraged by some teachers. Consequently, some pupils do not progress as quickly as they should.
- Teaching of mathematics is improving. The good use of practical equipment and well-planned sequences of lessons are helping pupils to make more progress in many classes. Where mathematics teaching is not

quite as strong, deeper subject knowledge is required so that teachers explain concepts in a more user-friendly way to support pupils' understanding.

- Much of the teaching for pupils who have special educational needs is effective and improvements are continuing to be made. These pupils receive carefully planned support on their own or in small groups to help them to reach the expected standards. As a result, in many classes, these pupils are making more progress than expected and beginning to catch up with their peers.
- Teaching of most able pupils is not as effective as it needs to be. Teachers do not routinely consider what these pupils should achieve or plan lessons which help them to reach their potential.
- Teaching of disadvantaged pupils is now helping many of these pupils to catch up with their peers. However, there are still gaps between them and other pupils nationally.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. All pupils are supported well to develop confidence. Staff take particular care to ensure that vulnerable pupils are supported to develop their self-esteem and this is effective in helping them to have a go in different situations.
- Through the use of circle time and role-play scenarios, pupils say they feel equipped to deal with real-life issues. They know who to talk to if they are upset and know that the adults in school care for them.
- Pupils take pride in their school and their appearance; the end-of-year sweatshirt is a treasured possession. However, the same pride is not always reflected in pupils' work.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and understand the importance of eating well and doing exercise.
- Learning mentors are effective in supporting pupils who are identified by school or home as requiring support. They support effective communication between home and school, so that issues are often pre-empted.
- Pupils are safe and feel safe. They are taught how to stay safe when using the internet. Pupils who are selected to be digital leaders help to ensure the equipment is looked after and pupils know how to be safe online.
- Parents and pupils recognise the school's good work to prepare pupils for the challenges of secondary school. However, they are not as well prepared as they need to be because not all are working at the expected level.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are respectful of each other and of adults. This ensures that the school is a harmonious community where pupils work and play together well. Pupils enjoy breaktimes and lunchtimes. They respond quickly and calmly when the final lunchtime whistle is blown. The play areas are well monitored and contain a good range of activities for all pupils.
- Pupils are polite and courteous. They speak confidently to adults and peers and collaborate well when working in pairs and small groups.
- Pupils move between lessons quickly and efficiently and settle to learning without direction.
- Governors, staff, parents and pupils rightly agree that behaviour is good. Incidents of bullying are rare and are managed well. Pupils' concerns are dealt with swiftly.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the attendance figure, which is above the national average.
- Most pupils demonstrate positive behaviour for learning, wanting to work hard and challenge themselves to do their best. Occasionally, when activities are too simple and children are bored, they become distracted.

## **Outcomes for pupils require improvement**

- Current pupils' achievement is improving but it is not yet where it needs to be. Too many pupils in Years 3 to 5 are not yet working at the expected levels.
- Progress in Year 6 is better than in the other year groups. This is because much work has been put into helping these pupils to make more rapid progress and catch up to where they should be. The percentage of pupils who are on track to reach the expected levels in reading and mathematics is likely to be in line

with the national average. However, in writing, only two thirds of pupils are working at the expected level.

- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium have benefited from effective teaching and support so they have made more progress than expected. In some classes there is no longer a gap between these pupils and their peers. However, they have not yet caught up with other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs are receiving better support and have made progress from their starting points, but with variable success in catching up to where they should be.
- In physical education and music, pupils do well and many make good progress, due to the specialist coaching and the effective teaching in these areas. Pupils also make good progress in other subjects, such as science and cooking, reflecting the unique opportunities provided by the school facilities and good curriculum design.
- Not enough pupils are writing at the expected standards in all year groups. The work to improve teaching of writing has brought about accelerated progress for some pupils but this is not consistently the case. Work in some pupils' books demonstrates good progress but teachers have focused too much on the books that show this, rather than considering evidence of progress for all pupils. This has contributed to the overly positive picture of how well the school is doing.
- In reading, achievement has improved and more children are reading at the expected standard. However, in Year 3 and Year 5 many pupils are still not reading at the expected level and in Year 4, although the picture is more positive, two fifths have not reached the appropriate level for their age.
- Outcomes in mathematics are very similar to reading in most classes, with some pupils achieving in line with other pupils nationally, but some not. There are signs that this is improving but it is not happening as fast as it needs to.
- In all subjects, more able pupils do not do as well as they should. The proportion who are on track to reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics this year is below the national figure, with no pupils likely to achieve higher levels in writing.

## School details

|                                |             |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 125955      |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | West Sussex |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 10009195    |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Junior   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 7–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 777  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Mary Teakle  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | John Gadd  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01903 202 268  |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.thomasabecketjunior.org.uk">www.thomasabecketjunior.org.uk</a>       |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | <a href="mailto:office@thomasabecketjunior.org.uk">office@thomasabecketjunior.org.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 30–31 January 2014   |

## Information about this school

- Thomas A Becket Junior School is a much larger than average-sized junior school.
- The school converted from a middle school to a junior school in September 2015, following a local authority restructuring programme. The school gained a Year 3 cohort and lost one in Year 7. The school is in the process of decreasing from eight classes in each year to six.
- There are six classes in Year 3 and Year 4 and eight classes in Year 5 and Year 6.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The school has a very stable population and attendance is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is average, although the percentage of pupils with an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 27 lessons, most of which were undertaken with senior leaders. They also carried out short visits to lessons.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons and looked at books with team leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with school staff including the headteacher, senior leaders and other leaders. They met with five governors. They also met with the two newly qualified teachers.
- Inspectors met with a representative from the local authority and held a telephone conversation with an assessment adviser.
- Inspectors spoke formally to two groups of pupils and informally to many. They met with the chair of the school council.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation, including the school self-evaluation and development plan, reports from year leaders on monitoring, governors' minutes, reports from the headteacher, information on pupils' progress and attainment and records of behaviour and attendance. Inspectors scrutinised records concerning safeguarding, including a detailed case study.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views through the 133 responses to Parent View, as well as two letters and informal discussions with parents. Staff views were also considered through the 80 completed staff surveys.

## Inspection team

|                                |                  |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Suzanne Cawson, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Rosemary Addison               | Ofsted Inspector |
| Janet Tomkins                  | Ofsted Inspector |
| Lynda Welham                   | Ofsted Inspector |



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