

Thomas Gamuel Primary School

Colchester Road, Walthamstow, London E17 8LG

Inspection dates

13–14 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors have led the school effectively since it opened in 2014. As a result, standards have improved rapidly in a short time. Parents have noticed these improvements. Pupils appreciate the skills of their teachers.
- Governors use information skilfully to ask searching questions of school leaders. They have a thorough, accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness.
- The most able pupils make good progress overall. Teachers set work which interests and challenges those ready to deepen and apply their skills and knowledge.
- The leadership team has ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Leaders provide robust challenge and effective training for teachers. Their arrangements for the monitoring and management of teachers' performance hold them closely to account.
- The curriculum prepares pupils well to take their place in British society. It helps pupils to understand the importance of inclusion and equality. It enables pupils to develop positive habits for learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school.
- Senior leaders and governors have ensured that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has been spent effectively. As a result, they make good progress from their various starting points.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Pupils understand and apply the school's values.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders and governors keep up to date with current guidance.
- The early years teaching team prepares children well for their move into key stage 1. The children make good progress, whatever their starting point on arrival.
- Pupils acquire basic reading skills well. This includes pupils who speak English as an additional language. However, some pupils do not make such rapid progress when developing more advanced reading skills and broadening their vocabulary.
- Senior leaders recognise that work set in some subjects does not help pupils to acquire skills as well as it widens their knowledge. Pupils are occasionally held up in their learning because they do not know how to use computers securely.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop the effectiveness of teachers in enabling pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, to build on their basic reading skills and broaden their vocabulary.
- Ensure that pupils have the necessary skills to use all resources effectively across a wide range of subjects, including computer technology.
- Ensure that the curriculum provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their skills as well as their knowledge in a wide range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders and governors realised that standards of teaching were not good enough when the school opened. They have since made rapid improvements. Leaders identify appropriate training, hold teachers to account for its impact and have eradicated the weakest teaching. As a result, standards have improved and outcomes for pupils are now good.
- The current headteacher was appointed in April 2015. She has built on improvements and strengthened the leadership team. The team's plans for improvement identify suitable priorities and back them up with extensive, regular monitoring arrangements. As a result, teachers understand exactly what is expected of them. Parents and pupils have noticed the improvements brought about by these actions.
- Senior and middle leaders decide how to make further improvements to the quality of teaching skilfully. For example, the leader for mathematics realised that teachers needed further guidance and training to help them support the most able pupils. As a result, these pupils are making better progress from their higher starting points in the current school year. Members of staff appreciate the work of leaders to extend their professional development. All staff who responded to the survey during the inspection agreed that the school had improved as a result. Senior leaders are aware that further training and revisions to policy are required to enhance the teaching of more advanced reading skills. This has been appropriately identified in their plans for improvement.
- Senior leaders also ensure that rigorous procedures are in place to manage teachers' performance. Teachers' progress towards agreed objectives is kept under close review throughout the year. Governors receive helpful information on which to base pay awards as a result.
- Governors, leaders and teachers work coherently to ensure that information about pupils' progress is used well. Leaders keep a close eye on pupils who appear to be at risk of falling behind in their learning. The leader responsible for inclusion uses her comprehensive knowledge of individual pupils to ensure they receive the right support. Resources, including additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are used well so that pupils' needs are met. Leaders review the impact of additional support very frequently. As a result, they quickly notice when this is not as effective as they had hoped and make the necessary adjustments.
- Senior leaders and governors have ensured that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has been spent effectively. Differences between their rate of progress and other pupils have diminished as a result. The primary sports premium funding is spent appropriately on broadening the range of sports on offer. Pupils can now enjoy fencing and golf as well as more established sports.
- The school provides a good curriculum which covers a broad and balanced range of subjects and themes. It enables pupils to develop confidence when expressing their views, even when the subject matter is sensitive. This helps them to understand British values and take an informed part in democratic processes. However, in some subjects the balance of coverage is weighted too much towards acquisition of knowledge, rather than development of skills.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school. It enables pupils to develop resilience in overcoming barriers to learning. It allows pupils to consider moral issues in depth. For example, pupils in Year 6 consider cruelty to animals in war during part of a topic about the first world war.

Governance of the school

- The governors and parental advisory board have played a pivotal role in supporting leaders as they strive for improvement.
- Governors evaluate the school from a position of deep understanding. They are not afraid to challenge leaders to provide more detailed information, or ask for it to be presented in a different way. This allows them to pose effective questions so that leaders are thoroughly challenged and well supported.
- Governors understand how well additional funding is being spent. The information that governors receive from the management of teachers' performance enables them to make effective decisions about teachers' pay.
- Governors understand their safeguarding duties. They make extensive checks on provision and keep up to date with guidance by attending frequent briefings provided by a neighbouring local authority.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school works as a cohesive team to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- Senior leaders ensure that guidance is understood and implemented correctly by all members of staff. They ensure that training reflects the particular needs of the school and its community.
- Leaders understand the risks which may affect their pupils. They use this knowledge to remain vigilant to any concerns that may emerge and act swiftly, when necessary.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching has improved because of carefully considered training and rigorous monitoring. As a result, pupils are making better progress from their starting points in the current school year.
- Teachers understand the agreed policies on assessment. Those who are less experienced benefit from good support provided by leaders. As a result, pupils receive consistently helpful guidance and advice on how to improve their work. The most able pupils are provided with the challenges and investigations which stimulate their curiosity and help them deepen their learning.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers use funding and resources to challenge the most able disadvantaged pupils well. This extends to a wide range of subjects. For example, in geography pupils are challenged to consider the impact of the growth of cities on the environment.

- Teachers and support staff communicate effectively with one another. Leaders expect teachers to take responsibility for the impact of extra support provided by additional adults. Time is given at the beginning of the school day to consider assessment information before lessons start. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with effective guidance and make the same good progress as other pupils.
- In mathematics, teachers explain how pupils can tackle calculations in ways which match their ability. They expect the most able pupils to explain the reasons behind their answers. Pupils benefit from opportunities to investigate interesting problems each Friday. For example, during the inspection pupils in Year 4 were budgeting for a school party.
- Teachers help pupils understand the key features of different genres which they write in. They provide a stimulating range of reasons for writing at length. As a result, pupils' recent writing shows how they have made improvements to their work in a short space of time.
- The teaching of basic reading skills is effective. As a result, pupils quickly learn how to use phonics to pronounce unfamiliar words accurately. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are taught how to read as effectively as other pupils. However, some older pupils do not make such rapid progress in acquiring a broader vocabulary or understanding more challenging texts.
- Teachers use a wide range of resources to support learning and match these well to the abilities of pupils. However, on occasion limitations in pupils' skills in using computers restrict their progress in reading and writing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils understand the school's core values. They can explain how these values help them contribute to their community. Parents are mainly positive about pupils' personal development and welfare.
- Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop and understand the features of a healthy lifestyle.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. They can explain how to use the internet safely. They have positive opinions about the work of the school to minimise discrimination, which they voice with conviction.
- Pupils say that they feel safe from discriminatory behaviour, including bullying, in school. Records provided by school leaders indicate that such behaviour is rare, and thoroughly investigated when it does occur.
- School leaders have been effective in identifying and providing suitable opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. Teachers of older pupils have high expectations for their attitudes to learning. This is preparing them well for the next stage of their education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils know how to adapt their behaviour appropriately to make the most of different parts of the school day. During lessons, disruption or lapses in concentration from pupils is very rare.
- The school's expectations of good manners are clearly displayed. However, some pupils do not always live up to these. For example, some pupils do not remember to say 'please' or 'thank you' to those who help them in the dining hall.
- Pupils thrive on the high expectations of adults for their commitment to learning. Books are well looked after and full of work which shows that pupils want to try their best. They respond positively to the guidance that teachers provide.
- Pupils' attendance has recently improved further, and is currently in line with that of similar schools. Leaders have successfully improved the attendance of most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- When the school converted to an academy in 2014, a large proportion of pupils were working below the levels of attainment expected for their age. Many of these pupils have caught up since then as a result of the improvements in teaching. The progress of pupils across subjects and throughout the school is typically good. Outcomes by the end of key stage 2 are now broadly similar to the national picture.
- A larger proportion of pupils than is seen nationally reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. In 2016, all disadvantaged pupils reached this standard. Outcomes at the end of key stage 1 exceed national averages.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress and reach similar standards to others. The difference between rates of progress of disadvantaged pupils and those of others nationally from a whole range of starting points is diminishing. In 2015, these differences were a concern in some subjects and for some groups, including the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- The proportion of most-able pupils working at greater depth and at the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics is increasing in the current school year. This is due to further improvements to teaching. Leaders are rightly placing a priority on further improvements to outcomes in reading for the most able readers and pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to others from their starting points. Their needs are accurately and promptly identified. The leader for inclusion insists that teachers ensure that additional support and resources lead to good progress for these pupils.
- Pupils make rapid progress in their personal development and attitudes to learning. Those who are new to the school quickly learn to live up to the high expectations promoted by all members of staff.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics and writing work seen on inspection is consistently good. This is because pupils understand the advice that teachers provide to help them improve their work and know they are expected to act on it.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders have ensured that improvements to the early years provision have been sustained since the school opened. As a result, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has increased each year. It is now in line with the national average and children leave the setting well prepared for Year 1.
- The proportion of children exceeding a good level of development is increasing. Leaders' plans are suitably focused on improving this proportion even further in the current year.
- Children become familiar with the organisation of the early years quickly on arrival, whatever their level of development. They benefit from clear guidance and a wide range of activities aimed at helping them to look after one another and behave well.
- Leaders ensure that parents are encouraged to get involved with learning. For example, parents and children who speak English as an additional language are invited into school to share books in both English and their first language.
- The early years leader keeps a close eye on the quality of teaching to make sure it remains at least good. She determines her own priorities for improvement which are then integrated into the plans of senior leaders.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are given appropriate support promptly. This enables them to make the same good progress as other children.
- Teachers use effective spoken and written language to develop children's learning. Their assessment records are used skilfully to decide on activities which match children's needs closely, both indoors and outside. Activities intended to extend the learning of the most able children are well considered and appealing.
- The safeguarding arrangements in the early years are effective. Records show that the process of identifying and acting on any concerns is rapid and effective.

School details

Unique reference number	140405
Local authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	10019644

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	457
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Merrick
Headteacher	Danielle Obanye
Telephone number	020 85207031
Website	www.thomasgamuel.net
Email address	school@thomasgamuel.net
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Thomas Gamuel Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- There are two Reception classes in the early years which children attend full time. The two Nursery classes admit children on a part-time basis.
- Pupils come from a wide variety of ethnic heritages. Most pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion who do so is, therefore, much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who are entitled to additional disadvantaged funding is higher than the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out observations in 22 lessons or parts of lessons. The majority of these were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and middle leaders responsible for particular aspects of school provision. A meeting was held with members of the academy trust board and parental advisory body.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally and during a meeting. They heard pupils of different abilities read.
- Inspectors met informally with parents and considered the 52 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire together with the 17 written responses received during the inspection.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work and leaders' records of pupils' progress. They also examined documents related to safeguarding and school improvement.

Inspection team

Andrew Wright, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Carolyn Fox	Ofsted Inspector
David Daniels	Ofsted Inspector

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