

Thomas Bullock Church of England Primary Academy

Pound Green, Shipdham, Thetford, Norfolk IP25 7LF

Inspection dates

13–14 September 2017

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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Although improving, pupils' achievement varies and is not yet good across the school.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the combined standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 in 2017 was lower than the national average.
- Middle leaders have not secured improvements across the curriculum. Curriculum planning is not finalised for this current academic year.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable, particularly in key stage 1.
- Some adults do not provide precise enough feedback to help pupils improve. Pupils do not know how to edit and redraft their work as well as they should.
- Younger pupils do not form their letters well enough. This often goes unchecked by the adults supporting them.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the higher standard in reading was lower than nationally at both key stages 1 and 2. The teaching of reading has been slow to improve.
- Adults do not insist that pupils apply their knowledge of phonics well enough in other lessons to help with spelling.
- Leaders do not evaluate the impact of their work systematically enough against the progress that pupils make, particularly the most able pupils.
- Adults do not adapt learning activities well enough to enable groups of pupils to excel.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are proud of their school. They are polite and well mannered. Pupils' behaviour is good.
- The governing body is effective. Governors have the expertise to provide skilled support and challenge to school leaders. There is clear capacity to improve.
- Pupils achieve well in the Year 1 phonics screening check and results are consistently above the national average.
- Pupils are safe and well cared for. They attend well and want to learn.
- There is a strong sense of community. Adults work well together to create a welcoming place in which pupils can learn.
- Children start their education well in early years. Most make at least typical progress from their starting points in a warm and friendly environment.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement by:
 - increasing the proportion of pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, who work at greater depth in all key stages, starting in early years in reading, writing and mathematics
 - ensuring that pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6 is consistently in line with or above national averages.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that handwriting and letter formation are accurately taught in early years and key stage 1
 - providing pupils with precise feedback on how to improve, edit and redraft their work
 - ensuring that pupils apply their knowledge of sounds when reading and writing
 - adapting the learning activities to ensure that groups of pupils are challenged and stimulated to persevere and excel.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - systematically evaluating the achievement of all groups of pupils, including those who are most-able
 - middle leaders improving the quality of provision in their subject areas so all groups of pupils make the progress of which they are capable
 - regularly updating the website so it is accurate and compliant
 - ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently strong across all key stages.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Thomas Bullock School became part of the Diocese of Norwich Education Academy Trust in November 2014. The headteacher and deputy headteacher remain the same as in the predecessor school. The number of pupils has grown over time and the school is now a one-form entry school serving the local villages. Leaders have a clear understanding of their community and are proud of their involvement in the locality. They have capacity to improve the school further.
- Over the last academic year, staffing has been more disrupted than previously. Long-term absence and staff turnover have resulted in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment varying too greatly. The strong achievement of 2016 was not sustained and pupils did not achieve as well as they should in 2017, particularly those who were most able.
- School leaders do not sufficiently consider the progress that pupils make from their individual starting points. They focus on pupils demonstrating a set of age-related achievement statements as part of the curriculum in each year. They do not, therefore, have a clear enough picture of whether pupils are making the best possible progress they should. As a result, the most able pupils are not provided with enough activities that help them think and reason quickly enough so they can excel. No pupil reached greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics combined in either key stage 1 or key stage 2 in 2017.
- Many middle leaders are new to their position and their impact is too early to assess. The curriculum provision for subjects other than English and mathematics is not yet finalised for this current academic year. Leaders have not ensured that curriculum information for each year group is published on the website. In their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, a number of parents commented that they do not know what their children are learning.
- Information from the school's leaders demonstrates that it is unclear how pupils are progressing in the wider curriculum. Pupils' workbooks in subjects such as geography show that pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 are completing worksheets with the same standard of difficulty and expectation, irrespective of age or ability. In other subjects, such as computing and physical education, there is more evidence of how pupils progress.
- Leaders have an established system for monitoring their own effectiveness. They gather a wealth of information regarding pupils' achievement in English and mathematics. However, they do not systematically evaluate or use the information swiftly enough to accelerate the progress pupils make.
- Leaders have correctly identified their areas for improvement through their approach to research and their knowledge of what works well in other schools. However, the implementation of their improvement strategies is often slow. For example, improvements to the teaching of reading have not yet been put in place across the school, even though the trials proved successful.

- Staff receive performance management targets each year in line with expectations of the profession and the teachers' standards. However, the targets lack precision over raising pupils' achievement or contributing to the school development plan.
- The multi-academy trust provides a wide range of professional development for leaders across the trust. This year, it has firm plans to extend training courses for middle leadership, so that this key leadership group benefits from sharing good practice.
- Staff who responded to their online questionnaire were overwhelmingly supportive of school leaders and all staff stated that they enjoy working at the school. Similarly, nearly all parents who responded to Parent View stated that their children were happy.
- The planning and rationale for using additional funds such as pupil premium have improved over time. Leaders have adapted how they allocate the money based on the effectiveness of the provision. Disadvantaged pupils achieve well over time and often reach age-related expectations for their year. However, none reached the higher standard by the end of key stage 2. Documents produced by leaders show that they do not routinely expect disadvantaged pupils to achieve the higher standard.
- Leadership for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is new this academic year. Nonetheless, leaders ensure that the care and support offered to pupils who have very specific needs are well managed. Pupils who have additional medical needs are very well catered for. Additional funds are increasingly well spent and focused on meeting needs more precisely.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is improving. Pupils benefit from additional trips to add interest in, and experience of subjects across the curriculum. The focus on learning about different countries at the start of the year helps pupils develop their cultural understanding. However, although school leaders promote school values and a strong ethos in their daily times of collective worship, it is less clear how pupils are helped and supported to demonstrate the school's values within all classrooms.
- Pupils receive their entitlement to sports education each week. Leaders use the additional funding effectively to ensure that pupils participate in a range of sporting events to increase pupils' skills.
- The breakfast club is well attended and pupils are prepared well for the start of their school day. A few parents who responded to the online questionnaire commented that they would appreciate more activities after school for their children to enjoy and develop their interests further.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provide clear strategic direction. Recent additional appointments to the governing body have boosted its capacity for rapid improvement.
- Governors visit the school regularly to check on the information they are provided with by school leaders. The chair and vice-chair of the governing body have the relevant expertise to hold the headteacher to account for the standard of education provided.
- Governors have clear roles and responsibilities as part of the multi-academy trust and

ensure that the school follows correct processes and procedures. The trust has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's performance. It provides effective challenge and support.

- Minutes of meetings demonstrate that governors ask questions of school leaders to hold them to account for the achievement of pupils. They discuss with pupils the quality of learning and what can be improved further.
- Governors have not ensured that the website is kept up to date. They have not made sure that the required curriculum information is published, nor up-to-date policies on charging and remissions and how often they will review the impact of pupil premium funding on the progress these pupils make.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders, governors and representatives from the multi-academy trust have ensured that the school is a safe and secure place for pupils and staff.
- Safeguarding arrangements are in place. Staff are appropriately trained, in line with current national expectations. Records are well kept and staff are knowledgeable about raising concerns they may have about the welfare of a child. In the staff questionnaire, all staff stated that pupils are safe and well cared for.
- Pupils can explain how adults help them to stay safe when using online information and social media. Even the youngest pupils asked had clear strategies for dealing with any concerns they may have.
- Governors are appropriately trained in their safeguarding duties and continue to update their own knowledge and understanding so they can hold school leaders to account for the safeguarding of pupils.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and are safe at school. This view is confirmed by pupils' responses to their online questionnaire. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View agree that the school keeps their children safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies too much across the key stages and subjects. Work in pupils' books demonstrates that not enough pupils receive learning activities that are well matched to their skills and abilities. Where teachers have well-established routines and consistent expectations across the curriculum, pupils learn and cooperate well together. In these classes, pupils are making strong progress over time.
- Some teachers do not provide pupils with precise enough feedback to enable them to improve their work and make progress at the pace that they could. Where pupils receive effective feedback, either verbally or in writing, they respond quickly and make rapid improvements, particularly in writing. But, in other classes, pupils do not know how to improve their work and have less opportunity to edit or redraft their work so it improves.

- The quality of teaching in reading varies and the whole-school approach to teaching reading is not applied well enough, particularly in key stage 1. The school library is a high-quality resource. Staff and volunteers frequently listen to young pupils read.
- Pupils are provided with many opportunities to write and pupils' workbooks illustrate that they apply their writing skills in a range of subjects. However, adults do not reinforce expectations of handwriting and spelling. Consequently, the quality of pupils' handwriting varies significantly. Many pupils do not form their letters correctly, nor apply their knowledge of sounds in spelling well enough. This detracts from the quality of their work.
- When the teacher's subject knowledge is strong and expectations for learning clear, pupils settle rapidly to their learning activities and produce work of a high standard. They demonstrate secure levels of skills and understanding. This is particularly true for the older pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- Generally, teaching assistants and other adults are used effectively when working on a one-to-one basis with pupils. They ask probing questions and help pupils understand new concepts, especially when listening to pupils read. At times, in classrooms, teaching assistants are not deployed as well as they could be and their impact varies. They do not check that younger pupils form their letters well enough.
- In pupils' books in subjects such as science, geography and history, the most able and lower attaining pupils are often provided with the same worksheets. These provide little opportunity for pupils to practise their skills or develop their fascination for learning.
- All adults have positive relationships with pupils. They encourage pupils to participate well in learning activities. As a result, pupils demonstrate an enjoyment of learning and respond quickly to their teachers' instructions.
- The teaching of mathematics is consistent across the school. This is because there is a clear whole-school approach to developing pupils' skills and abilities. Resources are readily provided to help pupils develop their independence when learning new mathematical concepts.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. All pupils who responded to their online questionnaires stated that they are happy and well cared for, and enjoy learning.
- Older pupils are caring towards the younger children who have started school. They help and support them to settle well into school life. The school is a friendly place in which to learn.
- Pupils carry out their additional responsibilities seriously and maturely. For example, in Year 5, pupils are responsible for leading prayers and lighting a candle at the start of their collective worship time. They speak clearly and confidently to the whole school

and encourage all pupils to participate well.

- Pupils who have specific special educational needs and/or disabilities have their needs carefully and sensitively met. As a result, these pupils make strong progress personally and academically.
- Pupils spoken with during the inspection, and those who responded to the pupil online questionnaire, demonstrate that they have an accurate understanding of what bullying is and what it is not. Although pupils say that bullying does occur, they are certain that school leaders will deal with any concerns they have.
- Nearly all parents who responded to their online questionnaire stated that their children were happy and settled at school. One parent's comment expressed the view of many: 'My son has grown in confidence and has a very positive attitude to his schoolwork which is encouraged by all adults in school.'
- Pupils could identify a person that they would be happy to speak with should they have a concern. All pupils spoken to considered that adults would listen to them and deal quickly with any issue that arose.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- They are confident, polite and well mannered. Good relations and friendships are evident at playtimes and lunchtimes as pupils of all ages mix happily together.
- Pupils enjoy their playtimes in expansive and well-kept grounds. They play well together and have sufficient adult supervision. Consequently, any friendship issues are effectively dealt with.
- Pupils demonstrate good conduct in school and lessons. When low-level disruption occurs, they are quick to respond to adults' correction. As a result, lessons proceed without the need for interruption.
- Attendance was in line with national averages for 2017. Leaders follow up on any pupil who does not reach the high standards of attendance set. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent was dramatically reduced over the year.
- In the pupil questionnaire, nearly all pupils stated that behaviour in and around school was good most of the time. Inspectors agree that this is the case. Pupils want to learn and show their best.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement varies across key stages, particularly in reading and writing. Pupils of different abilities do not always make enough progress for outcomes to be good. For example, in key stage 1, the less able pupils are not provided with precise enough support or resources to develop their independence and skills.
- The most able pupils do not make as much progress as they could from their starting points. By the end of the academic year in 2017, no pupil reached the higher standard

in reading, writing and mathematics combined in Year 6.

- Similarly, in key stage 1, the proportion of pupils who worked at greater depth in 2016/17 was lower than that found nationally in reading and mathematics. Currently, these most able pupils are not yet provided with sufficient opportunities and activities for them to persevere and excel.
- Disadvantaged pupils generally make progress that is at least in line with that of their peers in school and nationally, and many reach the expected standard by the end of Year 6. This has been the case for the previous two years. However, no disadvantaged pupil achieved greater depth in mathematics or writing by the end of their time at the school, even where they demonstrated these higher skills in reading.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress from their individual starting points that is often in line with or better than that of their peers. Adults provide support increasingly well. However, it is currently too soon to evaluate the impact of new leadership on the progress these pupils make.
- Pupils achieve very well in the Year 1 phonics screening check. In 2017, the proportion who reached the required standard was well above that found nationally. Nonetheless, this high level of achievement does not extend to spelling or applying sounds well enough in other forms of reading.
- Leaders recognise that the achievement of pupils in other subjects varies. They have firm plans in place to measure the progress pupils make in other subjects across the curriculum. Currently, however, pupils' progress in subjects such as geography is inconsistent. Pupils of different ages and abilities often complete similar tasks which are too easy for some and too difficult for others.

Early years provision

Good

- Children start well at Thomas Bullock Academy. Children enter Reception with knowledge and skills that are broadly typical for their age. Over the last two years, they have left Reception well prepared for Year 1. The good level of development measure was above the national average in 2015 and 2016. In 2017, the proportion of children who left Reception with a good level of development was in line with the national average.
- Children settle well into a well-organised environment. Even at the start of the academic year, children demonstrate their understanding of routines and can explain how they choose their activities and the process for choosing their lunch. The learning environment is calm and purposeful, with high-quality activities for children to enjoy.
- The early years environment has a large outside area that is organised well for children to develop their physical skills. Children have good access to this space and have many interesting and stimulating activities to choose from. Adults use effective questions to increase children's vocabulary and explanations when learning outdoors.
- Children are keen to learn. They demonstrate their skills and understanding easily and have formed friendships. They get along with each other and adults very well.
- Parents commented that they are happy with the transition of their child into school

life. Parents are involved in their child's learning and help to settle them at the start of the day. Staff have set up positive communication systems so that parents can see how well their child is progressing.

- Children move around the class and outside sensibly and safely. They listen carefully to instructions and, as a result, are kept safe and well. They follow the high expectations set, so they can demonstrate their independence, for example when leaving the classroom to go to the toilet. Child protection and first-aid requirements for staff are in place.
- This year, leaders have identified and improved the way children develop their handwriting skills and letter formation. The emphasis on developing early skills was highly evident in class through activities such as colouring and painting. It is too soon to assess the impact of this work, but early signs are positive.

School details

Unique reference number	141192
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10036095

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Lynda Turner
Headteacher	Paul Madsen
Telephone number	01362 820300
Website	www.thomasbullock.dneat.org
Email address	head@thomasbullock.dneat.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website and does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish. Information is not compliant in respect of: the curriculum for each year group; certain policies such as the charging and remissions policy; publishing examination results since operating as an academy; and information regarding barriers for disadvantaged pupils and when the reviews of the spending of pupil premium funding take place.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for additional government funding through the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and receive school support is in line with the national average. Those who are supported by

an education, health and care plan is below that found nationally.

- Nearly all pupils speak English as their first language and are of White British origin.
- The school is sponsored by the Diocese of Norwich Education Academy Trust, which it joined in November 2014.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included observing learning in all classes, some of which were jointly seen with the headteacher. The teaching of phonics was observed and inspectors listened to Year 1 pupils reading.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils formally and informally. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' workbooks from a wide range of subjects. Pupils' books were from the current year and those kept by the school from the previous academic year, to take account of the progress that groups of pupils make over time.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation to evaluate the quality of leadership and management. The school's own evaluation of its performance and areas for improvement were considered.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, subject leaders, the chief executive officer of the academy trust and the school improvement director. A telephone call was held with the vice-chair of the governing body, together with visits from representatives of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors examined the school's documentation around child protection and scrutinised the recruitment checks made by school leaders when employing staff.
- Parents' views were considered from 41 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, together with 34 comments provided on the free-text service.
- The inspectors took account of staff views from 15 responses to their staff questionnaire. Pupils' views were also considered from 18 responses to an online pupil questionnaire.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards.

Inspection team

Kim Hall, lead inspector

Heather Hann

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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