

Inspection of a good school: Thameside Primary School

Cotman Close, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 5NL

Inspection dates:

29 and 30 September 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders want every pupil at Thameside to be the best that they can be and to keep on trying, even when they find learning difficult. Leaders and staff expect pupils to behave well, work hard and to make the most of their time in school.

Pupils enjoy school and most behave sensibly. They feel safe in the care of staff and know that any worries are quickly sorted out. Some pupils told the inspector that the best thing about their school is the teachers. Although there is, very occasionally, some bullying, leaders take prompt action to resolve this.

Leaders have created a caring school community, where everyone is encouraged to look out for each other. Pupils are friendly and welcoming. They like telling visitors about the things they enjoy learning and special events, such as their recent visit to Abingdon town.

Although pupils experience a wide curriculum, some do not achieve well in subjects, like geography. This is because some areas of the curriculum are not yet planned well enough. Leaders also know that many pupils in key stage 1 do not yet read well enough and that some have had set-backs as a result of the pandemic.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are currently making changes and improvements to the curriculum. They are adjusting their plans to take account of the recent change to mixed-age classes in key stage 2. Leaders have mapped out the areas of learning that pupils will study through each year. However, some plans do not include the specific knowledge they want pupils to learn. There are also some big chunks of time when pupils do not learn some subjects, such as geography. As a result, some pupils find it difficult to remember and re-connect with previous learning and do not achieve as well as they could.

In contrast, the curriculum for mathematics is well planned. Plans map out a clear pathway for pupils' learning. The early years provides children with a good foundation for future learning. Leaders have adapted their plans to give greater emphasis to crucial concepts, such as place value. Mathematics is taught well. Teachers keep a close check on how well pupils are learning. Catch-up sessions are used to revisit any tricky bits of learning. This is helping pupils to achieve well.

Phonics teaching gets underway promptly in Reception. Reading is currently a school priority. Leaders have just introduced a new phonics scheme to help improve early reading. Recent training has ensured that there is a greater consistency of approach. However, staff are still getting to grips with a new way of working and it is too soon to see the impact of this new scheme. Leaders and teachers are aware of the significant gaps in key stage 1 pupils' learning. Too many of these pupils do not read well enough. Leaders have put in place extra catch-up sessions to help boost learning. However, some pupils have much ground to make up.

The school's reading books are now well matched to pupils' reading skills. However, these books are currently not available for pupils to read independently or take home. This limits pupils' opportunities to practise and apply their knowledge. Pupils learn from and enjoy many quality texts. Texts are chosen carefully to support pupils' personal development and general knowledge. Leaders have recently introduced a new approach to reading in key stage 2 to further develop pupils' reading.

Leaders have a good understanding of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Effective systems help them to quickly and correctly identify pupils' needs. They waste no time in providing support and specialist help for pupils. Teachers adapt tasks well for pupils with SEND. Staff support pupils well, including pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs.

The school is a calm and orderly environment. Most pupils settle quickly to learning and work with positive attitudes. Staff foster warm, nurturing relationships. The school provides well for pupils' all-round development. Pupils enjoy taking on extra responsibilities, such as being librarians or 'buddies' to younger pupils. Leaders and staff encourage pupils to grow up respecting one another and valuing difference.

The hard-working staff work together as a tight-knit team. They enjoy working at the school and appreciate leaders' kindness and consideration for their well-being. They value the way leaders consider workload when introducing any changes in the school.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that personal, social and health education and science may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The well-being and safety of every pupil is leaders' top priority. Staff at this school really care about pupils. Their strong relationships with and good knowledge of pupils help them

to spot quickly if something is not quite right. Regular training means staff know just what to do if they have a concern. The home school link workers provide lots of early help and support to families. When needed, leaders refer concerns promptly to outside agencies. They make sure pupils and families get the support they need. Governance oversight of safeguarding is strong.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Too many pupils in key stage 1 do not read well enough and some have significant gaps in their learning. Some of the weakest readers have much ground to catch up to enable them to be well prepared for learning in key stage 2. Leaders need to continue their work to ensure that pupils receive the support they need to help them catch up quickly and become proficient, fluent readers.
- Decodable books for younger pupils to practise reading independently and at home are not yet in place. This limits the opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their reading skills. Leaders need to implement their plans to provide decodable books for pupils to read independently.
- In some foundation subjects, leaders have not identified precisely enough the important knowledge and concepts they want pupils to learn. Some key components and building blocks are sometimes being missed out. As a result, pupils are not building securely on their learning or achieving as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that they identify and plan the important knowledge and concepts pupils need to learn and remember with greater precision.
- In some subjects such as history and geography there are very lengthy blocks of time when pupils do not learn these subjects. This makes it difficult for pupils to re-connect with and remember their previous learning and build on their knowledge. Leaders need to review their current arrangements for the teaching of foundation subjects and address this shortcoming.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Thameside Primary School, to be good in March 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	144871
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10203151
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	176
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Beth Taylor
Headteacher	Anna Grice
Website	www.thameside.oxon.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Thameside Primary School converted to be an academy school in August 2017. When its predecessor school, with the same name, was last inspected it was judged to be good overall.
- The school joined the Vale Academy Trust in August 2017. Thameside is one of eight schools in this trust. The board of trustees has delegated some strategic responsibilities to the school’s local governing board. This is set out in the trust’s scheme of delegation. The school is supported by trust leaders, including the director of education.
- The number of pupils on roll has declined in recent years. The school now has one class in each school year from Nursery to Year 3. There are two mixed-age classes of pupils in Years 4 and 5 and Years 5 and 6 respectively.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and geography. The inspector met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also looked at curriculum plans and discussed other subjects with leaders. The inspector heard some pupils read.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the leader with responsibility for SEND.
- The inspector met with a trustee and four members of the local governing board. A separate meeting was held with the chief executive officer and director of education from the trust.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector reviewed school policies, procedures and records along with the school's record of recruitment checks. The inspector met with leaders responsible for safeguarding and spoke with staff and pupils.
- The inspector took account of parents' views through the 18 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and parent's written comments. The inspector also spoke with parents at the start of the second day of the inspection.
- The inspector considered the views of staff during meetings with them and the 19 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. The inspector took account of the 29 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and spoke with pupils during lessons, meetings with them and during lunchtime.

Inspection team

Sue Cox, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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