

Inspection of a good school: Thomas Gamuel Primary School

Colchester Road, Walthamstow, London E17 8LG

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 November 2021

Outcome

Thomas Gamuel Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy being at school. They say that they feel safe and that their teachers make learning 'fun'. They know that there is always a member of staff they can speak to if they are worried about anything. Pupils speak with great enthusiasm about their forest school and the opportunities this provides to learn about nature and wildlife. Leaders prioritise pupils' well-being. Pupils engage well with their learning and contribute positively to the life of the school.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes embody the school values. Pupils are polite and caring towards each other. Incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Bullying is not tolerated. Pupils have a clear understanding of equality. They told the inspector that 'everyone is welcome in our school'.

Leaders have designed an ambitious and well-organised curriculum. Staff have high expectations for every child. Pupils achieve well in reading and mathematics, and in most other subjects. They do not do so well in art and music because of the more limited time given to these subjects.

Parents who shared their views during this inspection said that the school was welcoming and fully inclusive. They appreciated how positive their children were about learning. Parents reported that staff are always approachable. They know that staff and leaders provide children and their families with a high level of care and support.

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

Leaders have carefully developed clearly sequenced teaching plans for each subject. They are clear about the knowledge that pupils need to be well prepared for every stage of their education. Because of this, pupils achieve well overall. Teachers are offered a wide range of professional development opportunities to support their subject knowledge.

Reading is a key priority. The phonics programme is taught from the Nursery onwards. Children get off to a good start in the early years foundation stage. A strong focus is

placed on ensuring that pupils acquire a wide vocabulary. The daily phonics sessions are highly structured. Pupils learn to read in a systematic way. They use their phonics skills well to sound out words. Books are well matched to the letters and sounds pupils are learning. Pupils enjoy reading and talking about books. Staff regularly assess how well pupils learn new sounds. As a result, if pupils fall behind, staff provide extra support. The school fosters a love of reading. Story times are a daily feature of the school in every class.

The mathematics curriculum is sequenced so that pupils secure and revisit knowledge over time. Pupils can explain their learning and how it relates to their mathematical learning in the past. Pupils use mathematical vocabulary well, right from the early years. Teachers provide appropriate mathematical equipment to help pupils understand their learning. For example, in the Reception Year, children use teddy bear counters to count up to seven. In key stage 2, pupils use rulers and shapes to learn about volume and geometry.

The religious education (RE) curriculum has recently been revised. Pupils learn about other religions and cultures and where there are similarities and differences. For example, in Year 6, pupils could discuss in some detail the differences between Islamic art and Christian mosaics. In key stage 1, pupils learn about the Jewish festival of Hannukah using films and artefacts. However, while the curriculum has been revised, some resources have not been updated and do not capture pupils' interest. In art and design and in music, the curriculum is carefully planned for all ages. Although pupils say that they love these subjects, not enough lesson time is allocated to them. Consequently, pupils' knowledge and skills in art and music are underdeveloped.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve exceptionally well. Staff identify these pupils' needs quickly and provide additional support and resources. This helps pupils with SEND to understand what they are learning. Leaders' careful planning ensures that these pupils experience the same ambitious curriculum as their peers.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of trips and cultural activities, such as the recent Year 6 visit to the Royal Albert Hall. Pupils eagerly take on additional responsibilities in school. They are proud to be school councillors and to help the local environment in their forest school setting.

Governors and representatives of the multi-academy trust know the school well. They support leaders to plan and develop the curriculum and they hold them to account. Leaders engage well with staff. They take account of workload and well-being. Staff are positive about the school's leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding culture is strong. Leaders prioritise the safeguarding of all pupils. Records about the safeguarding of pupils are thorough and fit for purpose. Leaders make

sure that the correct checks are made when staff are employed by the school. Governors monitor that this is happening. Leaders work well with external agencies and ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive specialist support if they need it. Leaders know pupils' families well.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe at school and when they are online. They learn about e-safety, cyber-bullying and stranger danger within the computing curriculum.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum in RE is new. Senior leaders have developed this well and it is being taught throughout the school. However, some of the resources used in lessons have not been updated and do not engage pupils in their learning. This leads to some younger pupils being off task. Leaders need to ensure that high-quality RE resources and artefacts are used in all key stages.
- Curriculum programmes for art and design and for music are carefully planned and sequenced. However, the implementation does not always match the ambitious plans laid out by leaders. There is variation in the amount of time allocated to art and design and to music within year groups. Pupils do not have the same opportunities to develop their skills and creativity. Leaders need to review timetables and ensure that pupils have sufficient time for these subjects.

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 school to be good in October 2016.

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	140405
Local authority	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Inspection number	10200234
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	330
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of parental advisory board	Nick Gordon
Headteacher	Andrew Bocchi (Executive Headteacher) Paul Acheson (Head of School)
Website	www.thomasgamuel.net
Date of previous inspection	13 and 14 October 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Thomas Gamuel Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average. Pupils come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and speak a wide range of languages.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector met with the executive headteacher, the acting head of school and phase leaders.

- The inspector met with the chair of the parental advisory board and a representative from the multi-academy trust to which the school belongs.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and RE. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work. He heard pupils read and observed pupils reading to a familiar adult. The inspector considered early mathematics in the Nursery and Reception classes. He also considered plans for pupils with SEND.
- The inspector also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects such as art, geography and music.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at playtimes and listened to what pupils had to say about their school.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents about safeguarding. The inspector scrutinised the records that the school keeps in relation to safeguarding and welfare. The inspector looked at the single central record and at records of staff training. He spoke with staff and pupils to understand the school's culture of safeguarding.
- The inspector reviewed the responses submitted by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire. The inspector also reviewed responses to the staff survey and spoke with parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Sean Flood, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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