



Thameside Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109800
LEA Reading LEA
Inspection number 278273
Inspection dates 25 April 2006 to 26 April 2006
Reporting inspector John Earish AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Wolsey Road
School category	Community		Caversham
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Reading RG4 8BY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01189 015551
Number on roll	215	Fax number	01189 015552
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms Sue Blessett
Date of previous inspection	15 January 2001	Headteacher	Mrs Jane Moore

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Thameside is situated in the relatively prosperous area of Caversham, but mainly serves pupils whose social circumstances are not favourable. Lower Caversham is identified as one of three 'areas of deprivation in the midst of affluence' within the region. Just under half of the children are entitled to free school meals. About a third of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and eight are learning English as an additional language. When children start school, their skills and abilities are much lower than those expected of four year olds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is greater than that found nationally, but the proportion with statements of need is broadly average. Many children leave and join the school throughout the year. 'Rising fives' have only recently been admitted in line with the new policy for Reading.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school judges its effectiveness as satisfactory and the inspectors agree. The headteacher states that the recent dip in standards, particularly in writing, has been a real challenge for the school. Recent steps taken to bring about improvement are showing signs of success and there is a tangible sense of resolve that these gains will be sustained in the future. This is reflected in the school's good capacity for further improvement. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and provides satisfactory value for money.

There are several strengths in the school's work. The pupils are usually well behaved and their personal development is good. Attendance levels have significantly improved and are just below the national average. The care guidance and support for pupils are good. Leadership and management are satisfactory; the school has improved the systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress but systems to review the effectiveness of this process are not yet established. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and there are many good features. There are weaknesses however because, on some occasions, tasks are insufficiently challenging and do not capture the pupils' interest.

Most pupils make satisfactory progress and their achievement is also satisfactory, and the school's detailed tracking information shows that standards are rising. The quality and standards in the Foundation stage are satisfactory. The pupils start school with skills in English and mathematics that are much lower than expected for their age and make satisfactory progress. Good teaching and booster classes have had a significant impact on standards in Year 6; the pupils are now making much better progress in English, mathematics and science.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the overall quality of teaching so that it is consistently good
- Establish systems to monitor the effectiveness of the target-setting and tracking processes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, the standards attained by the pupils and their achievements are satisfactory, given their low starting points. The pupils make steady progress in the Reception class, but few reach the goals that are expected for them by the start of Year 1. Assessments at the age of 7 show that standards are below average. The high mobility and the significant proportion identified with extra learning needs means that many pupils make a slow start to acquiring basic skills. Standards at age 11 declined in 2005 and were significantly below average in mathematics and English.

The school is particularly concerned that pupils did not achieve well in writing and has taken action to tackle this underachievement. This is bearing fruit; the school's tracking

information shows that pupils in the current Year 6 have made much better progress and some have already met the challenging targets that were set for them. The school assessments indicate that results will improve this year in both mathematics and English. The pupils who have learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, and there is no evidence that particular groups of pupils underachieve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

A caring ethos pervades all aspects of school life and pupils of all ages, ethnicity, gender and ability work and play happily together. They behave well, are keen to learn and feel safe and secure. This is reflected in improvements to attendance in recent years, and last year it was the second most improved school in the authority. Attendance is just below average.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Through assemblies and the celebration of festivals pupils gain a set of values and begin to understand about living in a diverse community. The school council provides many opportunities for pupils to make a positive contribution in school and within the community. For example, they are fully involved in charitable fundraising such as Leukemia research. Older children look after the younger ones and learn how to manage simple budgets when, for example, choosing and buying play equipment for the newly refurbished playgrounds.

Pupils have a good understanding of the benefits of healthy food and exercise. They choose healthy eating options and take full advantage of games and physical activities at lunchtime and after school sports clubs. They develop appropriate skills in basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) which will prepare them for life beyond school. Opportunities for pupils to work independently are less well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The senior management, with the support of the local authority, is bringing about improvements in the quality of teaching. Teachers are being helped to make better use of assessment data to ensure that work is well matched to pupils' needs and to closely monitor their progress. This is enabling the school to eradicate the recent underachievement and raise standards in English and mathematics.

Foundation Stage teaching provides interesting and challenging activities that cover all areas of learning. Frequent and regular checks on how well children are learning are helping the teacher provide well for their individual needs.

Most teachers are skilful at using questions to probe pupils' understanding of new ideas and to extend their learning. In the best lessons, teachers are making good use of tracking information to continue to raise pupils' achievement. They constantly check pupils' understanding and quickly explain where pupils have gone wrong and correct mistakes. On some occasions, however, the way learning is planned or managed does not fully engage all pupils within the class and progress slows.

Teachers are introducing new ways for pupils to gauge how well they are learning through, for example, marking each other's work and discussing their understanding with a partner. The involvement of pupils in their own assessment is developing at a good pace and is having a positive impact on standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that the curriculum is good. It meets the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those who are learning to speak English. The very recently introduced Foundation Stage is developing at a good pace. However, the school has not yet been able to evaluate the effectiveness of the new provision to ensure that all learners make progress and develop well.

Teachers make useful links between subjects in order to make learning more interesting and the pupils speak excitedly about the recent improvements in provision for ICT. For example, they use computers well to present their ideas using PowerPoint and are able to mix and record musical compositions.

The school ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to participate in and enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities and after school clubs. A residential visit for the older pupils, visitors from the community and outings to places of interest all add to the pupils' enjoyment of learning. Such experiences, together with learning in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and the emphasis on staying safe and healthy, teach skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's care and support for its pupils is good. Pupils' personal and academic development is monitored thoroughly in mathematics, English and science and the needs of all pupils are being addressed. In order to be outstanding, teachers need to provide the same clear and effective guidance in other subjects. Vulnerable pupils are given very good support and arrangements for child protection are strong.

Consideration for pupils' safety and well-being is an intrinsic part of the school's ethos. Health and safety procedures are reviewed regularly.

Well-planned PSHE lessons support and promote the pupils' personal and emotional development. Pupils are taught how to take care of themselves. The older ones say they have 'confidence in their teachers' and appreciate how they are helping them 'understand the importance of making safe and healthy lifestyle choices'.

The inspectors agree with the positive views of parents who welcome the school's support for pupils and families. For example, the homework club helps parents and carers to be more involved with their children's learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and leadership team have responded positively to the recent decline in achievement. They have quickly and accurately assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the school, particularly in terms of teaching and learning, and are taking effective action to bring about improvement. Senior staff recognised that changes were needed to the systematic tracking of the progress of groups and individuals to make it more rigorous. This has been achieved, but a system to monitor the effectiveness of these processes is not yet in place. Some initiatives, although relatively recent, are boosting achievements or have already done so.

Governance is good and governors are fully committed to ensuring the best possible outcomes for pupils. They are clear that pupils' achievements must not be allowed to slip again. Governors have a range of ways in which they hold the school to account and act as critical friends. The school self-evaluation is secure and takes account of the views of parents and others. Its accuracy is fully supported by the judgements of inspectors and the school is now well placed to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Pupils

As you know, Mrs White and I visited your school recently. Thank you all for being so welcoming, polite and helpful. We were glad to talk to some of you in lessons and in break times. We would also like to thank those members of the school council who told us about the school.

There are lots of things that we like about your school. Some of them are: * your school is friendly and welcoming; you behave well and get on well with each other * you listen carefully to what your teachers have to say and try hard in your lessons * you willingly raise money for charities so they can help those who are less fortunate * you are very friendly and you look after each other; you share with each other and do not leave children out when you play * the school council represents your views very well and the older children help the school run smoothly.

Your headteacher and all of the other people who help run your school are working very hard to make sure that you get the very best education. To help them to do this, teachers are going to make sure that the work you do in lessons is always just right - not too hard and not too easy - and to regularly check that you are always doing your best. We have also asked your teachers to make sure that your targets are the right ones for you and that you reach them. We enjoyed being in your school. We hope that in the future it is even more successful in helping you to do as well as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Earish

Lead Inspector