

# Thomas Fairchild Community School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100243
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hackney
<b>Inspection number</b>	307335
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Olson Davis

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	299
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Hannah Blom-Cooper
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Shona Ferguson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	Napier Grove London N1 7HX
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7253 9469
<b>Fax number</b>	020 7608 3008

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This large school serves a diverse community. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. Most pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups are of Bangladeshi, Black-African, Black-British backgrounds and of Turkish and Polish heritage. A small number of pupils are from families seeking asylum. Approximately seven out of ten pupils speak English as an additional language with an above average proportion at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils who find learning difficult, including those with a statement of special educational need is well above the national average. There are 12 pupils with specific language impairment included in the mixed age classes. Many more pupils than usual join or leave the school at other than the usual times. There has been recent significant turnover of staff.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Thomas Fairchild Community School provides a satisfactory standard of education. It is making steady and sustainable improvement from a period of turbulence when there were staffing difficulties and standards in behaviour were declining. The highly committed headteacher has been successful in providing clear direction for the school. There is now a common purpose among staff, firmly fixed on raising standards and improving provision for pupils. There is a good ethos and a strong sense of community. All pupils, including those from different minority ethnic groups and those of different abilities, feel welcomed and want to learn.

The school has strengths in the care provided by all adults and has many positive features that contribute to pupils' good personal development. Parents are pleased with the impact the school has on their children's personal development. One parent wrote, 'My son is doing so well both at home and in school. He looks up to his teachers and headteacher as his mentors. I have seen him change over the years as the school has had a great, positive influence over him'. Pupils enjoy their school and they feel safe. As a result, they behave well and are keen to do well in their work. Good partnerships with outside agencies and with parents enrich the curriculum and provide benefits for pupils learning and well-being. For example, the school shares the community garden with its families. Many grow their own food, sharing ideas from around the world. The pupils grow food for cookery giving them a good insight into nutrition and environmental issues.

Standards are low but they are improving. Given the low starting points and complex learning needs of many pupils, this represents satisfactory achievement. Pupils make sound progress because the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teaching is quite often good, but not consistently so. In some instances, teachers do not make effective use of assessment when planning learning activities and pupils are not sufficiently challenged to achieve their best. The quality of marking varies. Pupils only have targets for writing. As a result, pupils do not always have a clear idea of what they need to do next to improve in reading, mathematics and science. The school recognises that more remains to be done to raise standards further, particularly by teachers making more rigorous and consistent use of assessment information to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve as well as they can.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although there have been improvements such as in writing and pupils' behaviour, there is more to do to ensure that systems and initiatives are fully implemented and effective. Leadership's monitoring of teaching has not yet ensured that teaching is consistently good, particularly regarding the use of assessment. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Children start the Nursery with skills well below those expected for their age. Warm relationships between adults and children help children to settle quickly. They are well cared for and they enjoy their time in school. As a result, they make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. They make steady progress in the other areas of learning. However, given their starting points, many do not reach the goals expected for children when they enter Year 1. Skills in language and number are not as well developed as in other areas. Teachers and teaching assistants are now making better use of their observations to plan the next steps in

children's learning. The quality and range of the planned activities are satisfactory. An adequate balance exists between work directed by the teacher and activities selected by the children, which develops their independence. However, the outside area is not used well enough to provide children with experiences in all areas of learning. Children sometimes miss out on working on a more active level than is possible indoors.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Make better use of assessment, marking and target setting to inform the next steps in learning and increase pupils' awareness of how they can improve their work.
- Improve the monitoring of teaching and use the outcomes to ensure consistently good teaching.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory for all groups of pupils, and provides a sound basis for the next stage in their education. Pupils make sound progress but standards at the end of Year 2 and are low in reading and mathematics. Writing has improved because of the special focus it has been given by teachers this year. Standards in the current Year 6 are low, reflecting pupils' low starting points. Those learning English make good progress in acquiring fluency in spoken English but their reading and writing skills do not improve as rapidly. They have difficulties in understanding the technical language in mathematics and science and this hampers their progress in these subjects. School tracking shows that achievement is improving but progress is uneven because of inconsistencies in teaching. Older pupils make better progress because teaching is consistently good. Pupils who find learning difficult and pupils with specific language impairment make similar progress to their classmates, because they are given effective support by well-briefed teaching assistants.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Assemblies successfully reinforce the strong moral and social values of the school community. There are good relationships. This results in a productive and purposeful learning environment in which pupils increasingly take responsibility for their learning. Pupils have adopted well safe and healthy lifestyles. As one pupil said, 'They make sure we eat vegetables'. Pupils engage enthusiastically in physical activities in lessons, at break-times and after school clubs. Members of the school council take their responsibilities seriously. They are leading the school on the choice of class names for September. Attendance is satisfactory. Despite the school's strong efforts, too many parents take their children out of school during term-time and this hinders progress for these pupils.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teachers provide enjoyable learning experiences, which capture the interest of pupils. They plan activities which enable pupils to discuss their work with others and to learn in a collaborative way. Teachers frequently praise pupils to reinforce positive attitudes. As a result, pupils are generally keen to participate in the lesson. In some lessons, particularly in mathematics, assessment is not used effectively enough to plan the next steps in learning and pupils' learning is not moved on quickly enough. Some teachers do not always check pupils' understanding enough to correct misconceptions and ensure that pupils acquire the correct technical vocabulary in mathematics and science. Teachers' comments in books are not often linked to the purpose of the lesson. As a result, pupils are not always aware of what they need to do to improve their work.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

Target groups in English help pupils to make better progress in writing by allowing teachers to match work more closely to pupils' needs. Teachers are beginning to make links between subjects to make learning more meaningful. Pupils have opportunities to practise their writing skills in other subjects but these are not extensive. Pupils enjoy practical lessons but some opportunities to develop their problem solving skills and investigative skills are not yet developed systematically in mathematics and science. Pupils benefit from a well-planned personal, social and health education programme. Through it, they learn how to stay safe, live healthy lives and develop good relationships. Music is a strength and pupils take part in a range of community events. Enrichment activities, visitors and visits enhance pupils' learning and contribute to their good personal development.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

The warm and caring atmosphere in school is shown by how keen pupils are to talk and to share their views and feelings. They say that there is always someone to go to if they need help. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and safety are securely in place. The needs of pupils who find learning difficult and pupils with specific language impairment are monitored closely. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Systems for tracking pupils' progress in English and mathematics and evaluating how well they are doing are developing. These systems are paper-based, which makes it difficult to monitor the progress of different groups, and to identify quickly when they are not making the expected progress. Teachers are making sound use of this information to set challenging targets for pupils in writing, but not in other subjects. The process for setting whole-school targets is satisfactory.

## Leadership and management

#### Grade: 3

School self-evaluation is satisfactory. Although school improvement planning identifies key areas for development, some specific plans do not always have measurable outcomes against

which school leaders and governors can judge the success of their actions. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked well to develop the role of middle managers. These are focused on improving standards in their areas of responsibility and provide good support for staff. Teaching is monitored regularly and this has led to improvements, particularly for teachers in their first year. This is already having a positive impact on standards, particularly in writing. More remains to be done to ensure consistently good teaching. Governors are supportive and place strong emphasis on developing the community aspects of the school's work through their involvement with the Children's Centre. They recognise the need to strengthen their monitoring role so that they can more fully hold the school to account.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thomas Fairchild Community School, London, N1 7HX

My fellow inspectors and I visited your school recently to check how well you were getting on. Thank you for being so friendly and making us feel so welcome. We found that your school provides you with a satisfactory education.

Here are some of the good things about your school.

- Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress in developing their personal and social skills.
- You enjoy your learning and the other activities in school.
- You behave well and want to do your best in lessons.
- You take lots of exercise and know a good deal about healthy living.
- The school council represents your views well and you all help the school to run smoothly.
- The adults take good care of you, which makes you feel happy and safe.
- You are making satisfactory progress in your learning and this is getting better.

The headteacher, staff and governors are continually trying to make your school better for you. To improve further, we have asked the school to improve three main things.

- To help you do better in English, mathematics and science lessons.
- To make sure that you are given tasks that are at just the right level for you and to help you know what you need to do to improve your work.
- Make sure that senior staff and teachers with responsibilities observe lessons more thoroughly to see how well you are learning and to help teachers give you just the right level of work.

You can help by always trying your hardest and doing your best work. A few of you take time off school and when you do, your learning suffers. You can make sure that you come to school when you should unless you have very good reason. We hope that you will help your teachers as they work hard to make your school even better for you.

Yours sincerely

Olson Davis

Lead Inspector