

# Thomas Arnold Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101220
<b>Local Authority</b>	Barking and Dagenham
<b>Inspection number</b>	307615
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Sudworth

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	393
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr B Speak
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs N Barrand
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	Rowdowns Road Dagenham RM9 6NH
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8270 4588
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8270 4580

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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

Children enter the Nursery in the September following their third birthday dependent on available places. Most transfer to the Reception classes. The school serves an area with pockets of high deprivation and the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is approximately double the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than nationally. Some of these speak little English when they arrive. The headteacher is in her first year at the school.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Thomas Arnold Primary provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The school is improving under the new headteacher's good leadership. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall but they make better progress in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2. Pupils usually reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6 and in 2007 they were above average.

New subject leaders in English, mathematics and science have worked diligently in the past twelve months to improve resources and ensure that pupils have a better grounding in basic skills. For example, a quicker introduction to pupils' learning of letter sounds has contributed to faster rates of progress in reading and writing. A more practical approach and a greater use of pupils' number skills are helping them to make better progress in mathematics across the school. Teachers are also identifying pupils who are not making expected gains in their learning much earlier than before and setting up special teaching groups for them. Much more, however, remains to be done to improve speaking, reading and writing skills in Years 1 and 2. The school has been receiving an increasing number of pupils who speak little or no English. The teachers have not received training to enable them to support these pupils effectively and, as a result, they are not making enough progress.

Very few parents responded to the inspection questionnaire. While the responses express mixed views about the school, most are positive. Given past results, their concerns about reading and writing are justified. Pupils have a good understanding of keeping themselves safe and living healthily. They engage in regular exercise. However, attendance is unsatisfactory because some parents do not send their children to school regularly enough and not always punctually. These factors affect their children's progress adversely because they miss important work. Overall, pupils are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education. They acquire a sound range of skills that contribute to their personal development. Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to take responsibility, such as older children organising playground games for the younger pupils. They sometimes engage in local community activities and gain a sound understanding of the world as a global community.

The staff take good care of the pupils so they feel safe in school. Pupils are confident to share any concerns with them. They do not yet get enough consistent academic guidance, for example in how they can get to the next level in their learning and what they need to do to improve their work. Curriculum content and balance are satisfactory. The school aims to make it more creative in future. Extra-curricular activities are a good feature and pupils enjoy them, especially the sport.

Staff who lead subjects have limited experience in monitoring pupils' progress and teaching and learning in order to improve the quality of pupils' learning experiences. The school recognises that this is an area for further development. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and currently demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Children enter the Nursery with below expected skills, especially in their social development and their communication skills. They make good progress in their communication, language and mathematical skills and standards are broadly average in these areas by the end of Reception. However, their attainment in other areas of their learning is below average. In the main, they

make satisfactory progress. Children sustain their concentration well in activities. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features. Staff are not able to extend children's learning experiences well enough because the outside provision is underdeveloped. This affects pupils' physical and creative development adversely. Action to improve this provision is imminent. Planning is detailed and staff keep good records and evidence of the children's progress. Questioning is satisfactory, but sometimes staff do not engage the children well enough in conversation to develop their speaking skills.

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

- Ensure that pupils' make better progress in speaking, reading and writing, particularly in Years 1 and 2.
- Improve the teaching of pupils who have little or no English to help them to make swifter progress in learning English and in understanding their lessons.
- Work with parents and the Local Authority to ensure all pupils attend school regularly.
- Develop subject leaders' skills in monitoring provision to improve pupils' learning experiences, the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is graded 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**

Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. Although their attainment at the end of Year 2 is below average, this reflects their relatively low starting points. Their skills in reading and writing are weak and reading results have been falling. Pupils' speaking skills are also below average. By contrast, mathematics attainment has been rising year-on-year. Pupils who find difficulty in reading and writing have not made enough progress in Years 1 and 2 in the past. The school's efforts to raise standards in reading and writing are beginning to bear fruit and there are now clear signs of an improvement.

Pupils make good progress in Years 3 to 6 which enables them to catch up. They usually reach broadly average standards by the time they leave. In 2007, the percentage of pupils reaching the higher level was above the national average, although the current group of Year 6 pupils are not attaining so highly, as they are not as able. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English do not make enough progress because the teachers have received little training to deal with the increasing numbers of these children.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are satisfactory. A few pupils are not as courteous as they should be and can interrupt lessons. While most are attentive in class, some find difficulty concentrating. Pupils do not talk about school with great enthusiasm and their attendance is well below average. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe, such as 'not getting in with the wrong crowd', and how to live healthy lives by 'eating greens' and undertaking regular exercise. Pupils engage well in extra-curricular activities, especially sport. They feel safe in school 'because all teachers are nice and will help you.' They make good contributions to the school community through their various roles. For example, older pupils teach the younger

pupils new games. The school council has opened a fruit tuck shop and is suggesting more equipment in the playground 'because it is empty.'

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Staff have good relationships with pupils. Lesson planning is well structured. Activities are often well matched to pupils' needs, except for pupils who speak little English. Teachers are developing their skills with modern technology to present lessons visually. Generally, teaching is of a better quality in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2 and results in better progress in these classes. Teachers share the purpose of lessons well in language that the pupils can understand. However, pupils are not always sure how successful they have been in their learning because expectations are not made clear enough. Teachers' questioning is good and involves pupils in discussion, but they often only ask those who volunteer answers. Pupils are very reliant on their teachers and they are not independent enough, for example in drawing on classroom resources for themselves when they are unsure in their learning. A few teaching assistants are of a high quality and really support pupils well in lessons from beginning to end, but this good quality is not consistent in all classes.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is developing as the school works towards making it more creative and relevant for all pupils, but there is not enough attention to geography, history and religious education in some classes. The good range of extra activities widens the pupils' interests and supports their healthy life style effectively. Pupils are enthusiastic about visits that enrich the curriculum. One boy looking forward to a museum trip said, 'It will make my learning more real.' Provision for information and communication technology is satisfactory and the school wants to develop its use across the curriculum further. It has willingly engaged in several pilot projects to improve this aspect of its work and this continues. The school engages well in other initiatives that support the breadth of the curriculum and widen pupils' experiences, such as visits from artists and poets and a Year 5 residential visit. These support pupils' creative thinking well and add variety. Provision for reading and writing in Years 1 and 2 has been unsatisfactory, but it is improving quickly and resulting in improved rates of progress.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

Child protection arrangements are very thorough, training for staff is regular and there is strong support for vulnerable pupils. Links with external agencies are good and support pupils' social and emotional development effectively. The school has a number of trained first-aiders and the accident book is well-maintained.

The quality of marking of pupils' work varies from class to class. Mostly, comments help pupils to know how they can improve their writing. Pupils have targets to support their future learning but these are often too broad and pupils do not always know what they mean. They are not sufficiently aware how they can get to the next level in their learning. Tracking systems have developed well in the last year. They are beginning to be used effectively to identify pupils

who are falling behind and have been particularly instrumental in improving rates of progress in Years 1 and 2.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher has made good strides in developing the school. She has an accurate perception of its strengths and weaknesses. She is well supported by the senior management team, which is playing an increasingly effective role. Members of this team recognise that they need to ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching across the school. Subject leaders in English, mathematics and science have worked hard during the last twelve months to improve standards. In English, for example, the quality and range of books have improved immensely and pupils take them home more regularly. Focused group reading sessions have been introduced successfully. The library is welcoming and well ordered, encouraging pupils to borrow books and take a greater interest in reading.

The school development plan is good, identifying the correct priorities and focused on raising attainment. Subject leaders are still developing their expertise in monitoring standards and the quality of provision. Nevertheless, the leaders of English, mathematics and science create purposeful plans and are taking effective action to improve and develop their subjects. The governing body has a satisfactory understanding of its roles and responsibilities but struggles to obtain a sufficient number of parent governors. The loyal chair of governors has supported the school well through periods of difficulty and change.

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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	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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

17 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thomas Arnold Primary School, Dagenham, RM9 6NH

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, talking to you about your school and hearing your views. You are obviously very thoughtful children and I passed on your views about the improvements you would like to see made to your headteacher. Your school is an improving one and gives you a satisfactory education. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress and reach a standard about that expected for their age. Other pupils make satisfactory progress but not enough pupils have been reaching a high enough standard by Year 2 in speaking, reading and writing. Year 2 pupils have done better this year because staff have worked hard to improve matters but more work is needed to improve these areas of your work in future.

When we examined the attendance figures, we found that some children do not attend school regularly enough. This is harming your education and affecting your chances of doing well in life. We urge all children to come to school regularly because it is so important for your future.

Your school is a very interesting one because many children have different types of needs. The staff work hard to meet these and take really good care of you. To help support pupils who arrive and do not speak very much English, we have asked that staff should benefit from further training to help them meet these children's needs in learning English and with their other work.

Your headteacher and the senior staff have done well during the year to improve your school. However, some staff need further training to make sure that they can help to improve the teaching and learning in different subjects, such as geography, and ensure that you are making the best possible progress in them.

Thank you once again for your welcome and help. We wish you well for the future and hope that you will continue to work hard and that you will all attend regularly.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sudworth

Lead Inspector