

Thomas Willingale School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115309
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311908
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Sarah McDermott

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	455
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Pickering
Headteacher	Mrs M Smith
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Broadway Loughton Essex IG10 3SR
Telephone number	02085087287
Fax number	0208 502 5364

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2008
Inspection number	311908

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Thomas Willingale is a large primary school situated in the middle of Debden. It has a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals as other primary schools. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Few pupils speak languages other than English at home. The proportion of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school has gained the Investors in People award and the Activemark. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) consists of two morning Nursery classes, two afternoon Nursery classes and two full day Reception classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Thomas Willingale is a school where pupils thrive in very stimulating and caring surroundings. One parent wrote, 'Both my children said they love the school and they learn a lot because it's fun!' The headteacher goes out of her way to bring experiences to pupils that they might not otherwise have. Pupils settle in and learn well because they have great confidence in the adults. Parents are very appreciative of the school and quite rightly believe their children are extremely safe and very well cared for.

Pupils arrive at school with skills and knowledge that are often well below those expected for their age. They make good progress across the school and leave with standards that are in line with national averages for English and mathematics. They make particularly good progress in science because the school has a strong interest in the environment. Standards in writing were above the national average for Year 6 in 2008, but progress in writing is inconsistent in other year groups. The personal development of the pupils is good. They behave sensibly and get on well with their friends and teachers. They participate in plenty of healthy physical activities and know they should eat a balanced diet. Most pupils enjoy their learning. Councillors are very proud of their roles and the older pupils keenly take on responsibilities around the school.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers manage their classes well and are very good at questioning pupils to extend learning. Some teachers match work very closely to the different needs of pupils, but not all do this consistently. The school provides an extremely interesting and lively range of activities to promote learning. It has an especially strong interest in the geography and history of the local Loughton and Epping Forest localities. Pupils hunt for minibests, develop a hedgerow and plant trees in the school's extensive grounds. It is not surprising that pupils are so knowledgeable about the environment. Writing standards have recently improved due to concentrated events such as the Writing Day. However, writing is not consistently and regularly threaded into everyday learning and there is too much reliance on worksheets and workbooks. Academic guidance is good. Teachers give good verbal feedback and they mark work regularly. However, pupils are not always sufficiently clear about what they should do to improve their work to enable them to be more independent in their learning.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher works very well with her team which comprises a deputy and assistant headteacher. They focus clearly on supporting and doing their best for the pupils. They do not yet have a system that enables them to access information on academic progress quickly and easily. Consequently, their evaluation of how the school is faring, compared with the national picture, is not always precisely accurate. However, the school has already successfully raised attendance levels to the national average, as well as improving the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels in their tests. This demonstrates a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress during their time in the EYFS. They start with abilities well below what is expected. They develop well in all areas of learning although most leave Reception with skills still below those expected. Children who find learning difficult or speak another language at home also progress well. All children develop social skills such as saying 'please' and 'thank you'. They understand about eating healthily and staying safe. For example, one girl reminded

the inspector to wash her hands before eating lunch. In a music lesson, the children sang enthusiastically and listened carefully to instructions. They showed impressive self-control by not touching the musical instruments in front of them.

Adults are kind and supportive although at times they tend to over direct the activities rather than allowing the children to take the initiative themselves. The classrooms are colourful and stimulating. However, children do not always have sufficiently free access to the outside area. The EYFS leadership team regularly monitors teaching and learning. They are clear how each child is progressing, but are aware they are not all sufficiently knowledgeable how this progress compares with national data. Welfare arrangements for safeguarding pupils are outstanding. The school is working successfully to develop further links with parents, by increasing home visits to new families. Already a good number of parents help in class and share positively in their children's learning. One parent commented, 'I think the Nursery is a credit to the school'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunity to extend their writing skills across all subjects of the curriculum.
- Establish a whole-school assessment system to ensure pupils receive accurate guidance on how to improve their work and to enable senior managers to evaluate success and areas for development with ease.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress from their starting points in Year 1 to reach standards that are broadly in line with national averages in English and mathematics. They make particularly good progress in science, where standards have been above average for several years. The school has met its challenging targets for the last two years.

In 2007, standards were in line with national averages at the end of Key Stage 1 for reading and mathematics, but were a little lower for writing. At Key Stage 2, standards broadly mirrored national results for English and mathematics, but were above for science. In 2008, Key Stage 1 standards continue to reflect the national average. Unvalidated results for Key Stage 2 indicate that standards are improving further. Writing standards for Year 6 were above the 2007 national average. The school's tracking of current pupils indicates that standards continue to be average and achievement good. However, despite last year's good writing results, the school's data shows that writing is still an area needing improvement across the rest of the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who do not speak English at home make similar progress to their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils look forward to coming to school. One pupil exclaimed, 'We have such a lot to do here!' They know how important it is to exercise and eat healthily, although a few of the older pupils do not have a balanced packed lunch. Pupils participate enthusiastically in the daily ten-minute workout led by the headteacher. They know how to stay safe. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a well-developed empathy for needy children. They keenly fill Christmas shoeboxes for children in Romania. Pupils are at ease with classmates from different social and ethnic backgrounds. Most behave extremely well, although there is a minority who

are sometimes silly and go off task if lessons lack pace. Pupils are polite to each other and pay attention to their teachers because they are confident that their views are valued. However, a few pupils are reluctant to take the lead in their learning or to 'have a go' at answering questions without enthusiastic encouragement from their teachers. The active school council has implemented corridor monitors and introduced a toy box in the playground. The home liaison officer has successfully raised attendance to average levels. Sound basic skills in literacy and numeracy, good behaviour and strong environmental awareness mean that children move on well prepared for their next stage in education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Strong relationships between teachers and pupils underpin the good quality teaching and learning. Teaching is sometimes outstanding and never less than satisfactory. In one of the best lessons observed, the teacher and teaching assistants worked extremely successfully as a team to promote excellent learning for all because each of them was very clear about their particular role. This excellent deployment practice does not yet extend to all lessons. Teachers manage their classes well so all pupils have easy access to resources and are well involved in the lesson. Most pupils take part readily in class and group discussions. However not all teachers push their pupils to think for themselves rather than wait to be told what to do. Teachers' planning is thorough and they share their expectations with pupils in 'child-friendly' language. Teachers' secure subject knowledge is evident in their very pertinent questioning to reinforce and check understanding. Oral feedback to pupils is very helpful. Teachers are starting to improve the quality of marking to ensure that pupils are clear how to improve their work next time.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Although the curriculum is good overall, the school provides an outstanding range of rich and relevant experiences that make a considerable contribution to the pupils' love of learning. The school invites specialists and professionals to provide exciting opportunities for pupils to develop an interest in drama, music, sport and the environment. Trips in the local area and further afield as well as a wide range of clubs greatly enhance pupils' learning. The school gives high priority to the development of pupils' basic skills. Organising pupils into ability sets from an early age is paying dividends in the progress made in reading, mathematics and science. However, the wide use of worksheets and workbooks results in limited opportunities for pupils to write independently and at length. Essential information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developed systematically across a wide range of subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is a very friendly and caring community where staff know pupils very well. The outstanding pastoral care is reflected in pupils' sensible behaviour and positive attitudes to school. Good support for pupils with particular emotional, behavioural or learning needs enables them to achieve just as well as their peers. Arrangements for child protection and safeguarding pupils are thorough and followed conscientiously. As a result, pupils are confident that staff

will help them to deal with any worries. Parents agree and one commented, 'They always put the children first.' Teachers are quick to give a word of encouragement or a helping hand when pupils are struggling in lessons. However, not all teachers are adept at making sure pupils are clear about the next steps in learning so they can progress independently.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Pupils, parents and staff quite rightly hold the headteacher in high esteem. She is an excellent role model in her teaching practice and enthusiastic encouragement of the pupils. She takes on a heavy management and teaching load herself, but works effectively with her senior managers to run a 'tight ship'. The happiness and care of the pupils are a high priority. There is no discrimination at school and every pupil has a very fair chance to participate in all that is offered. The school gives pupils a good grounding in how to be valuable members of their community and to appreciate how people of other faiths and different backgrounds can live in harmony across the world.

Senior managers focus well on raising standards with unwavering determination. They are still working on finding a system to collect data in a manageable way so they can have a realistic view of how their school is doing against other schools. The school has overcome previous difficulties in recruiting parent governors. It now has a full complement of supportive governors, who are beginning to be more astute in holding the school to account for standards and achievement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	2

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

26 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thomas Willingale Primary School, Debden IG10 3SR

Thank you very much for helping us on the inspection by talking to us and showing us what you can do. Your parents are pleased with your school because they believe you learn well and are in safe hands. We definitely agree.

You go to a good school. We think you are making good progress because your teachers and helpers organise your lessons well and question you to check you are learning well. Standards in English and mathematics are similar to other schools, but standards are above average in science. You have excellent opportunities to visit interesting places and to have a go at exciting activities, like African drumming and karate. We are particularly impressed with the way so many of you are involved in school plays and musical performances. We can see that your teachers check that you are doing your homework and mark all your work regularly. Mrs Smith and her team of senior teachers lead the school well. They set challenging goals for your national tests and do all they can to help you achieve them.

You told us that you like coming to school and we are not surprised. Behaviour is good and you get on well with your teachers and friends. We are pleased that you know how to lead healthy and safe lives. We especially like the way you are developing as responsible young people with a particularly strong awareness of 'green', environmental issues. It is not every day that we hear about pupils who campaign to save their favourite and historically important oak tree!

To make your learning even better, we have asked your school to do two things:

- make sure you are given more opportunities to write other than in workbooks or on worksheets
- find a data system so your leaders and teachers can quickly identify how well you are learning and know accurately how your school compares with other schools.

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school. We know that your teachers make your school a special place for you. You can do your bit by continuing to be positive and by making the most of your time at Thomas Willingale School.

Yours sincerely

Sarah McDermott

Lead inspector