

# Thomas Barnes Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 124087           |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Staffordshire    |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 314801           |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 27 February 2008 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Barbara Crane    |

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>                | 4–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 76   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                           |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mark Lloyd                                   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | John Baker                                   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 8 December 2003                              |
| <b>School address</b>                     | School Lane<br>Hopwas<br>Tamworth<br>B78 3AD |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01827 475683                                 |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01827 475683                                 |

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching, the curriculum, and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from observations, discussions and the school's assessments of pupils' progress. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included in this report.

## Description of the school

This small school takes its pupils from a wide area, with families reflecting a full range of social and economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Pupil mobility in and out of the school is very high. There have been extended absences by senior staff in the last year. The present headteacher took over the school in September 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This satisfactory school is improving. It provides pupils with a sound springboard for the future in terms of their achievement and supports pupils' personal development well. Parents feel that the school is developing in the right direction. The view of one parent that 'it is pleasing to see the changes being made and the promising improvements' is typical of many. Strong leadership by the headteacher is at the heart of the drive to revitalise the school. He has provided a fresh vision and direction firmly based on raising pupils' achievement. He inspires confidence in the pupils and parents and sets the school's welcoming atmosphere at the start of the day as he personally greets arrivals. The desire to drive up standards and boost pupils' progress is shared by the staff, and action is proving successful.

The small numbers of children in each year group means that each cohort's ability ranges widely from year to year. From their various starting points, pupils make satisfactory progress from starting the school to leaving. This is because of sound teaching. Standards vary from one year to the next, but are currently average. The information gathered by the school shows that pupils' progress in writing is slower than in other areas. Swift action has been taken to improve teaching of writing and so pupils' progress shows signs of speeding up, particularly in the complexity of sentence structure and accuracy of punctuation. Nevertheless, pupils' standards in writing are still not as high as they should be and rightly forms the school's priority for improvement. The school's effective work in strengthening the way in which it tracks pupils' progress is providing a firmer basis on which to provide academic guidance and set targets for individual pupils. The targets that are set are mainly well matched to pupils' abilities, but there is sometimes a lack of challenge in the guidance and teaching to enable more able pupils to do their best, particularly in English and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive sound support to reach their individual targets.

Pupils really enjoy school and take full advantage of the good range of clubs and extra activities. Pupils behave well and form good relationships. As one pupil said, 'We all know each other and rarely fall out. If we do, it doesn't last long because people help us make up again.' The Year 6 pupils relish their responsibilities in supporting the youngest children at lunchtime and playtime. Pupils are eager to learn because they know that the staff will help and support them over any difficulties. Newcomers are quickly integrated into the school's community because pupils are so friendly and caring towards each other. Pupils' good social and moral development means that they know how to reach compromises so that they can find the best way forward to benefit everyone fairly. The school council effectively gathers pupils' views to help the school improve. In this way, they have organised a rota so that different year groups have the opportunity to play football at playtimes. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging to the school and are proud of their achievements when they represent it in the wider community. A group of boys and girls have recently won a local sports competition, for example, and pupils are eagerly awaiting the outcome of the next round at county level. In spite of the school's best efforts, a few families do not ensure their children's regular attendance. This adversely affects the school's overall rate of attendance, so that it is only average.

The strong partnership with parents gives good support to pupils' understanding of why it is important to lead healthy and safe lifestyles. The school's travel plan, for example, successfully safeguards pupils and enhances their fitness levels. The emphasis on building more practically-based activities into the satisfactory curriculum is enhancing pupils' motivation to learn. Pupils' ideas for writing in a historical context, for example, were strengthened by a

Victorian day in Years 4, 5 and 6. Nevertheless, writing across the curriculum is not sufficiently well planned to enable pupils to put into practice what they have learned in their literacy lessons. Parents are rightly pleased with the pastoral support given to pupils. The pupils know that adults will listen to their concerns and readily offer support to overcome any problems that pupils meet. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are secure.

The school has not flinched from recognising where more work is needed. This has led to new systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress that are enabling teachers to look more closely at where pupils are making good progress or falling behind. Teachers are now accountable for the progress that pupils make in their class. Sound self-evaluation means that the school has the right priorities, but the staff rely on the headteacher to recognise areas for improvement. Whilst a good start has been made on developing their skills in using information to make decisions about the best way forward, these are not yet well developed. This limits the staff's ability to support fully the school's drive to raise standards and pupils' achievement. Governors provide satisfactory support for the school's work. They are steadily developing their ability to ask pertinent questions to help the school reflect on its performance. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Children start school with skills that are close to expectations for their age. Teaching is satisfactory and children make sound progress. They reach average standards in all areas of learning by the time they start in Year 1. Children learn to play and work together harmoniously through a broad range of activities indoors. Sound leadership and management have meant that the correct areas have been identified for improvement. The more frequent opportunities planned this year for children to link sounds with letters and practise how to form letters in writing are paying dividends in boosting children's progress in literacy. Children's learning outdoors is presently very limited, but appropriate plans are in hand to improve facilities. In common with the rest of the school, there are times when the more able children are not as fully challenged by teaching as they need to be to do their best.

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

- Improve standards in writing throughout the school.
- Raise expectations of more able pupils in all year groups.
- Extend the staff's skills in school self-evaluation.

A small proportion of 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.

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## 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? | 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?                                  | 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

27 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thomas Barnes Primary Schoool, Tamworth B78 3AD

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. You were all very polite and friendly. I really enjoyed talking to the Year 6 pupils and the school council who told me a lot about the school. Now I am writing to tell you what I found out about your school when I was with you. At the moment, your school is providing you with a satisfactory education:

- Sound teaching means that you make steady progress in your work and reach average standards.
- You behave well and really enjoy looking after each other - well done to everybody for being so friendly, kind and keen to take responsibility!
- I was glad to see that you know how to stay fit, safe and healthy - keep it up!
- You enjoy the way that lessons are helping you to use what you have learned through practical activities, like the Victorian Day.
- The staff look after you and give you extra help if you need it.
- The people in charge of your school are working hard to make your school even better.

You told me that you think that your school is improving and so did many of your parents. I could see why you felt that way. I have asked the staff to do a few things to help with the school's improvement.

Firstly, I have asked them to help you do better with your writing. Secondly, I have asked them to make sure that those of you who can do a bit more than others get work that is a little harder. Lastly, I've asked the staff to give even more help to the headteacher in checking what is working well in your school and what needs to improve.

You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Crane Lead Inspector

27 February 2008

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Barbara Crane  
Lead Inspector