

Thomas Eaton County Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110648
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	325191
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Ronald Cohen

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	185
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 Lester Young
Headteacher	Mrs Pamela Jones
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Street Wimblington March Cambridgeshire PE15 0QS

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2008
Inspection number	325191

Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Thomas Eaton Primary School is a smaller than average school serving the rural community of Wimblington, near March, in Cambridgeshire. About 25% of the pupils come from out of the catchment area. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is provided by an on-site playgroup, funded by the local authority, and managed by the Governing Body, for children age 3, and by a Reception class. Usually, all the children of the playgroup go into the Reception class. The children are predominantly from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils achieve well because of the good teaching and a caring ethos. A large majority of parents are pleased with the school and value the quality of education their children receive. One parent summed up the views of many saying, 'My daughter loves school and can't wait to leave the house in the morning.'

Transition between the on-site Playgroup and the Reception class is very effective and praised by parents. Children enter Reception with standards that are broadly average and make a good start to their learning. When they enter Year 1, pupils' standards are a little above average but average in literacy, especially writing. Current Year 2 pupils' attainment, is already indicating that they are on target to reach above average standards. Building on this good start, progress through Years 3 to 6, though sometimes a little uneven, is good overall. Provisional information indicates that the current Year 6 will attain standards that are above average in English and science and represents good progress from their starting points. The standards in mathematics are only average. In Key stage 1, pupils sometimes have difficulties in solving number problems. In Key Stage 2, using written methods to multiply and divide are the relatively weaker areas. The school is aware that, while literacy remains an ongoing target area, more needs to be done to improve standards in mathematics.

Pupils' personal development is good. The school council is a vibrant force that is active in promoting and developing areas of the school. Behaviour is good. All pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and a good knowledge of how to stay safe. Attendance is average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development is good but their knowledge and awareness of the wider, multi-ethnic community is not developed enough.

Teaching is good because staff use their good subject knowledge to plan well-paced lessons. Pupils work well both together and independently. Teaching assistants provide very effectively for those who find learning difficult. The vast majority of lessons seen had pace, challenge and an exciting buzz. In a small number of lessons, however, teachers do not always maintain high levels of expectation, and pupils sometimes gain praise which is not reflected in the standards of their work, or the depth of their efforts. The good curriculum provides a rich range of learning experiences. Well-developed cross-curricular links make learning more interesting and fun. Extra-curricular activities are extensive and a range of clubs, and visitors who bring their knowledge and skills into school, enrich learning and bring it alive for pupils. However, opportunities are missed to use the curriculum to broaden pupils' knowledge and awareness of the wider and global community. Care, guidance and support are good. Links with support agencies and cluster schools are effective. Pupils who find learning difficult are identified quickly and good support is provided for them to ensure they make good progress. Pupils' work is marked regularly but there is too much variation in the manner in which points for improvement are identified for pupils.

The school is well led and managed. Together with the deputy headteacher and senior managers, the headteacher has carefully assessed both the strengths and areas for development in the school and set in place a number of successful initiatives to raise standards further and promote even better personal development for all pupils. Governors are gaining in skills and recognise the importance of extending further the challenge they offer to the school and in raising pupils' awareness of, and participation in the wider community.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children have a very good start to their education in the playgroup. This continues into the Reception class. The quality of teaching is good throughout and the work of other adults is very effective in supporting good progress. In the playgroup and then in the Reception class, the focus on developing children's social skills and the adults' knowledge of the children and their families promote children's excellent personal development and welfare. Behaviour is very good and the children clearly enjoy being at school. The vibrant range of indoor activities help the children make good progress in all areas of learning. The use of the outdoor area is excellent in both settings and provides many imaginative opportunities for children to develop their skills. The leadership and management of the EYFS is good. There is detailed and effective planning and children are continually observed and assessed. By the end of the Reception year almost all have achieved the expected levels and a good proportion has done even better.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of mathematics by improving problem solving skills for younger pupils and improving older pupils' abilities to divide and multiply using written methods.
- Spread the existing good practice in teaching by ensuring a more consistent provision in the use of praise and in marking which helps improve progress.
- Enhance opportunities for pupils to engage in appropriate activities that increase their understanding of the diversity of UK and world communities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' attainment at entry is broadly average, though there are some weaknesses in early writing skills. By the end of EYFS, pupils have made good progress. Year 2 attainment, which had been above average over the previous three years, dipped in 2008, due to staffing and other issues. However, the current Year 2 are already working at national averages in most areas and are on course to meet targets which are above national average. Over time, Year 6 results have been above national averages. But this generality masks a difference between subjects. Standards attained in English and science are securely above national levels, but the standards attained in mathematics, particularly in the areas of multiplying and dividing, are average. Current Year 6 work indicates rising standards, and predictions and targets, based on evidence of pupils' work in class, indicate that attainment at Level 4 is above national levels in all core subjects. At Level 5, it is above national levels in science and English. The current picture clearly indicates that pupils are making good progress from their attainment at entry. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress due to the well targeted intervention and activities which teachers promote in the classrooms.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school places a high importance on pupils' personal development and ensures that they feel valued. As a result, many have good attitudes towards school and behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils talk enthusiastically about how much they enjoy school and, although attendance is satisfactory, it is not currently reaching the challenging targets set. Even so, the school is working hard to promote better attendance and it is improving. Although

pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development is good overall, pupils' cultural development is less well developed, because their awareness of the wider, diverse global community is more limited. Social development is a particular strength and results in pupils co-operating and collaborating well when given the opportunity. This, together with their acquisition of good basic skills, is preparing children well for their future lives. Pupils have an excellent awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle especially regarding eating and drinking, and readily involve themselves in games and exercise. They also have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe including when using the internet. The school council provides pupils with an excellent voice and decisions have had a very good impact on school life, for example, in the purchase of playground equipment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The best teaching is characterised by excellent relationships between staff and pupils. In some outstanding lessons, excellent planning ensures pupils use their skills in a range of situations. For example, Year 6 pupils used their knowledge of the Second World War, and their scientific knowledge about materials, to design and build model Anderson shelters, which were then tested in various ways. The work of teaching assistants is of high quality. They are very well trained and are deployed effectively to have a positive impact on pupils' progress, especially those with autism or other learning needs. Many lessons have a good level of pace and challenge. Teachers demonstrate a good awareness of the quieter pupils and those with learning or social difficulties, and specifically try to include them in discussions. Assessment of progress is generally used well when planning and teachers are very aware of how well their pupils are doing. In the small number of lessons where teaching is less strong, it is often due to inconsistency in the use of praise. Sometimes, teachers' expectations of pupils' work is not sufficiently demanding. Opportunities to reinforce learning are missed, the marking of pupils work is less effective and teachers sometimes accept and praise work of low quality.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum has been adapted well to meet the needs of all pupils, linking different subjects together and providing first hand experiences. Throughout the school, the very strong focus on pupils' personal, social and health education and the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programmes are reflected in pupils' good personal development. Another noticeable feature is the same degree of importance which is afforded to the curriculum provision for learners with difficulties and/or disabilities. Several pupils follow a personalised curriculum, and all benefit from targeted intervention. As a result, they make the same good progress as their classmates. The provision for the most able pupils is satisfactory. This is recognised by some parents in their comments. A good range of extra-curricular activities, local educational visits, such as that to the Stibbington Field Centre, and visitors to the school further enhance the range and variation in learning opportunities for pupils. However, opportunities are missed to enhance pupils' knowledge of the wider community beyond the locale, for example, by not maximising the opportunities of the school's links to a twinned school in Italy, to widen pupils' horizons and understanding of the global community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a secure and safe environment, which is much valued by pupils and by a large majority of the parents. The school knows children's families well and the procedures for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. This includes their first aid and child protection arrangements. Pupils say bullying does not happen and they talk about how much they trust their teachers and other adults in the school to sort out any problems quickly and effectively. Learning needs are identified early and the provision in the school for these pupils has improved recently and is now a significant strength. Links with outside agencies support this process well. Pupils are well aware of their individual academic targets and know what is needed to reach the next level. Targets are reviewed on a regular basis and this helps keep pupils on their toes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher sets clear direction for the work of the school. She is an excellent role model in her commitment to promoting the personal development and well-being of pupils. She is supported well in all her endeavours by her senior management team and staff. Leaders at all levels are involved in school self-evaluation which is effective in identifying the main priorities for improvement. There are good systems in place for tracking pupils' progress which are now used to set challenging targets and to focus support in order to accelerate progress. However, the use made of this information to improve standards in mathematics and to address variations in progress between classes is not fully developed. Governors are supportive of staff and firmly committed to the children and families in the community served by the school. They involve themselves well in the life of the school and contribute effectively to its development. Governors are dedicated to the continual raising of standards. They are equally steadfast in their support for and their challenge to the school. They are keenly aware of the need for their closer monitoring of the progress the school is making in promoting community cohesion, particularly in the wider community. Resources are good and are continuing to improve and the school provides good value for money. All the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection have been fully addressed. The school's self-evaluation is secure and it has a good capacity to improve further.

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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
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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?	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?	1
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	2
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	1
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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	2
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**

13 December 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Thomas Eaton County Primary School, Wimblington, near March, PE15 0QS

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to your school recently. Your friendly and helpful approach to us made our visit a real pleasure. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and your teachers, looking at your work and finding out about the things you enjoy most in school. You told us that you enjoy being there because you learn a lot. We agree with you that yours is a good school.

We saw that the majority of you behave well in lessons and around the school. You are enthusiastic about your work and want to do as well as you can. Your teachers work hard to make sure your lessons are enjoyable and interesting. But you told us, and we saw, that some lessons are more interesting than others. You like the targets that are set for you and recognise that they help you to move forward in your learning. We think your school is well led and managed and this is why you enjoy learning and make good progress. You understand very well about keeping safe and what you need to do to be healthy. We saw that everyone works hard to make sure that you are extremely well cared for and safe in school.

We have suggested three things to make your school even better.

- We want your teachers to ensure that in all classes the standards you reach in mathematics are improved, especially when you do number problems, or, when you get older, use written methods of multiplication and division.
- We have asked that your teachers make all your lessons as exciting and challenging as the best ones. We have asked them to do this by telling you how to improve your work, and then praising you for trying your very best.
- We want you to know lots more about the people who live in the rest of the UK, and indeed, about people throughout the world.

We think that you will enjoy knowing about, and even meeting, people from other parts of the world. You can start by knowing more about your 'twin' school in Italy. Maybe, you will even go and visit it!

We know you will continue to work hard and help your teachers to make your school even better. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ron Cohen

Lead inspector