

Thomas Gray Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134785
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	328983
Inspection date	10 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Graham Martin

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	258
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	Rev R Drive
Headteacher	Miss Sarah Moreland
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Balfour Road Bootle Liverpool L20 4LR
Telephone number	0151 922 3723
Fax number	0151 922 2446

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the school's overall effectiveness and investigated the following issues.

- How well the children in the Nursery and Reception Classes (Early Years Foundation Stage) make progress.
- How well the teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 help to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- How well school leaders ensure that standards improve.

The inspectors gathered evidence from lessons and from the school's own evaluations of its work. Discussions were held with staff, pupils and governors. A range of documentation was evaluated. Samples of pupils' work were scrutinised and the views of parents were collected from questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated 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. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average school which serves an area where levels of social and economic disadvantage are much higher than the national average. A high proportion of pupils move in and out of the school at varying times. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Very few pupils are from a minority ethnic background and very few are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. A new school building is currently under construction on a nearby site so the school is making use of the infant building and temporary classrooms for its accommodation. The school holds a number of local and national awards. These include the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Artsmark and Activemark as well as National Healthy Schools, Investors in People and International Schools awards.

There is a playgroup on-site which is run by a private provider and did not form part of this inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Thomas Gray Primary is a good school. Parents are pleased that staff continue to provide well for their children's education despite disruption to the accommodation. 'The school has progressed well having infants and juniors in one building,' was a parent's comment that represented a majority view. The school's commitment to meeting the needs of pupils is evident in the good guidance, care and support pupils receive to help them develop into mature, confident young people, well prepared for the next stage of their education. Parents note positively the school's impact on their children's academic and personal development. 'The school welcomes parents' opinions and is a credit to the community,' was a typical statement.

Pupils achieve well overall. Standards are average in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6, although standards in writing are below average. Pupils achieve well in reading, science and mathematics at Key Stage 2, but not quite so well in writing. Pupils' spoken use of language is below average in Key Stage 1 and not enough is done to address this to help improve writing skills across the school. From a very low start, children make good progress in Nursery and Reception in all areas of learning. Even so, by the time they start Year 1 their levels of skills remain below those expected for their age. Standards are below average by the end of Year 2 in reading and mathematics, as well as in writing, which represents satisfactory progress. In 2008, there was a dip in the school's results in national tests at the end of Year 2 because some higher ability pupils moved away from the school before assessments took place. The school acknowledges that, to a lesser extent, this situation has occurred again this year and standards at Year 2 are likely to be below average again in 2009.

Pupils are enthusiastic learners and enjoy lessons. They take pride and care in their work, evident in the good presentation of work in project books, careful mathematics calculations and excellent artwork, such as those produced in a Chinese style. Pupils appreciate school and this is reflected in the high numbers who take part in the extensive range of activities provided, including after-school clubs. The school works well, with growing success, to improve pupils' satisfactory attendance. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are friendly, courteous and show considerable regard for each other and adults. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils feel safe, saying they have confidence and trust that adults will listen if they have any concerns. They enjoy sport, recognise the importance of eating healthily and understand the value of an active lifestyle. School councillors represent the pupils' voice well. They take their responsibilities seriously and advise on improvements to the school's facilities. School council members are rightly proud that they organise wider consultation through suggestion boxes. Older pupils show maturity in their care of younger children, such as through a daily routine where Year 6 pupils work alongside Reception class children. Pupils make a good contribution to the wider community, raising funds for several national and global charities. They develop good team working and problem solving skills, such as through enterprise weeks, which prepare them well for their future economic well-being.

Teaching and learning are good. The pace of learning accelerates in Key Stage 2 with the good emphasis on strengthening pupils' speaking, listening and vocabulary skills. Teachers provide varied and interesting activities. The good relationships that staff foster mean that pupils are keen to please and lessons are productive. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning, especially through the extensive, good quality support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities that ensures they make good progress. The more able pupils, including those with gifts or talents, benefit from extension work that challenges them further.

The good curriculum is enriched by visitors, visits and residential stays that promote pupils' progress and contribute well to personal development. Pupils appreciate the extensive range of additional activities offered, including good opportunities to learn Spanish. English, mathematics, science and computer skills are applied effectively in other subjects. Pupils' personal development is enhanced by the good quality of care, guidance and support they receive. Procedures to safeguard pupils meet national requirements, ensuring that they feel safe and secure. Academic guidance is good. Systems to assess and track pupils' progress and attainment are used well. Pupils know what they need to do to improve their work because good marking guides them. They develop good skills for evaluating and reflecting on their learning by discussing frequently whether they have achieved their targets.

Good leadership and teamwork have carried the school through a disruptive period. Parents credit staff for their good team spirit in relocating classes in and out of rooms. During this time, the school has continued to develop supportive partnerships and strategies, as seen in the improvements to the teaching of speaking and listening skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the implementation of a whole-school writing project. School leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and their evaluations are accurate. They take good steps to provide equal opportunities for all and ensure that racial discrimination is eliminated. Procedures for checking the school's work, including pupils' progress, are robust and systematic, so areas for improvement can be tackled efficiently. The action taken so far indicates that the school's capacity to improve further is good. The school knows, and engages with, the needs of its community and local area well. The curriculum ensures that pupils appreciate the wider United Kingdom and global communities, for example, through the excellent links with a school in China and the developing links with a community in Spain. The governing body knows the school well and provides good levels of guidance and challenge.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Much emphasis has been placed on improving language skills in the Nursery and Reception classes and this is impacting on children's faster progress. Children enter Nursery with knowledge and skills well below those expected for their age. Children achieve well but are still below the levels expected of their age at the end of the Reception year. Good teaching, careful attention to children's personal development and an interesting range of activities enable children to make good progress in all areas of learning. Children make good gains in their personal and social development because of the positive relationships established between adults and children. Children thoroughly enjoy their learning because there is good provision for them to use their senses and participate in the activities. They form good relationships with each other and behave well. Staff provide an effective blend of activities led by adults and ones that allow children to explore, be creative and work independently. Good attention is given to language, literacy and numeracy. Children learn through interesting topics and themes such as 'growth and life cycles' and their progress is checked carefully. Outdoor learning is provided for as well as can be expected while construction of the new school progresses. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well, resulting in effective improvements to provision recently.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of reading and mathematics in Key Stage 1.
- Improve speaking, listening and vocabulary skills in Key Stage 1 to promote higher standards of writing in both key stages.

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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?	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?	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
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	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**

Inspection of Thomas Gray Primary School, Liverpool, L20 4LR

You may remember that two school inspectors visited your school recently. Thank you for welcoming us and being so friendly and polite. It was a real pleasure to talk to you and see you busy working. I am writing to let you know what we found out.

Thomas Gray is a good school. Your teachers have worked very hard to make sure that you still receive a good education while all the building work goes on around you. We saw how well you get on with each other and how much you enjoy lessons. You work hard and take a very active part in all of the extra activities. Your Chinese artwork is very impressive.

You take your responsibilities seriously and we were impressed with how well you support and help each other. You behave well and we were pleased to see how responsibly you all acted when everyone had to evacuate the building during a false fire alarm. You and your teachers work well together and the levels you reach in most of your work show that you have tried your best.

Your headteacher and all of the other adults work hard to make your school even better for you. There are two things that your teachers need to do to make your school better so we have asked them to do the following:

- help the children in Year 2 to reach better standards in their reading and mathematics
- help you all to develop better speaking, vocabulary and listening skills so that you can make better progress in writing.

We saw how mature and sensible you are and how keen you are to learn. We feel sure that we can trust you to try hard and help your teachers to make these improvements. We wish you all success.