

Little Thurrock Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114839
Local Authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	338462
Inspection dates	17-18 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Anthony Green

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	445
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Blandford-Davis
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	7-8 June 2007
School address	Rectory Road Grays Essex RM17 5SW
Telephone number	01375 373586
Fax number	01375 371183
Email address	admin@littlthurrock.thurrock.uk

Age group	4-11
Inspection date(s)	17-18 September 2009
Inspection number	338462

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 18 lessons and, also some parts of lessons. They held meetings with governors and staff, senior leaders, subject leaders and groups of pupils, including the school council and a sample of pupils from across the school. Inspectors examined the school's work and evaluated pupils' work. They looked at the school development plan, policies, curriculum and lesson planning, information on pupils' progress, documentation on the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. An analysis of 103 parent questionnaires, 39 pupil questionnaires and three staff questionnaires was carried out.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the attainment and progress of pupils in writing, especially that of boys
- the attainment and progress of pupils in mathematics, especially that of more able pupils
- the impact of leaders and managers on raising the quality of teaching
- the impact of staff turnover on pupils' learning
- the impact of the lack of space on the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average primary school, situated in a residential area of Grays. Almost one-third of the pupils come from outside of the catchment area. The majority of the pupils are of White British heritage and a few come from a range of minority ethnic heritages. Very few of these are learning English as an additional language. The number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is in line with the national average. Their needs are wide-ranging and include dyslexia, speech and language difficulties, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and physical disabilities. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage comprises three Reception classes, one of which is in the main school building and the other two are accommodated in a bungalow in the school grounds. As of November 2009, it is intended that the Early Years Foundation Stage will be accommodated in a new, purpose-built, building. In each year from Year 1 to Year 6 there is one mixed-age class and two single aged classes. For many years the school has had on-going difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. The school has gained a number of awards and accreditations, including the Activemark. The school provides an early morning breakfast club and an external provider manages an after school club.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Little Thurrock Primary is a satisfactory school. It is led well by the headteacher who has guided the school through long periods when staff turnover has been high. She is very ably supported by her newly appointed deputy headteacher. They are focused sharply on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. The difficulties in appointing and retaining experienced teachers has hampered improvement. However, recent key appointments, and increased stability in staffing, have strengthened management and teaching. As a result, pupils' achievement is beginning to rise. National test results for 2008, for Year 2, were in line with national averages but there was a significant improvement in writing and mathematics when compared to 2007. Key Stage 1 results for 2009 indicate standards are broadly in line in reading, writing and mathematics. Over a period of time attainment in English, mathematics and science has been broadly average by the end of Key Stage 2. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in English was below average. The 2009 results indicate that attainment overall remains average, but below average at the higher levels in mathematics and writing. In 2009 boys did not perform as well as girls in writing, though this is not a trend seen in previous years. This is being actively addressed by providing more opportunities for writing across the curriculum at both key stages, and by providing a wider range of books with stories designed to engage boys.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Some groups of pupils, such as the present Year 5, have had a number of teachers during one academic year, which has impacted adversely on their progress. Inspection evidence shows that teaching has improved and two-thirds of lessons observed were good. In the past, teaching was weakest in Years 3 and 4 but this has also improved. Being so early in the school year, the impact of good teaching has yet to be seen in pupils' attainment, but progress in most lessons seen was good. The school works hard to deal with any unacceptable behaviour. Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties are given good support and make good progress against their targets for behaviour. Inspectors saw nothing but calm and purposeful lessons and pupils behaving well around the school. Although activities are planned to meet the needs of different groups, the work set does not always match those needs effectively, especially for the more able. This is because the use of assessment to inform planning is not yet embedded and pupils are not yet regularly involved in assessing their own work, so as to set their own targets for improvement. The school has correctly identified the need to challenge higher ability pupils more. Teachers' marking varies and so pupils are not clear about how successful they have been in their work, or what their

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

personal targets are to improve. Although pupils have individual targets, they are not always made aware of the small steps to take to achieve them. There is an inconsistency in presentation of work by pupils, because teachers do not always set them clear expectations.

There is now a shared vision amongst staff. Senior leaders and subject leaders are very enthusiastic about their roles but not all have been in their posts long enough to have had a full impact.

The curriculum for the Early Years Foundation Stage has been hampered by the very limited outdoor space and the fact that the three Reception classes are not close enough together to allow for the wider interaction of children and adults. However, despite these drawbacks, children make satisfactory progress but good progress in their communication language and literacy skills. The soon to be opened Early Years Foundation Stage building will provide a purpose built learning environment and greater space indoors and out.

The school is doing enough to raise standards and strengthen the quality of teaching, demonstrating that it has a satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress of pupils in English, in particular boys' writing, and for more to reach the higher levels in mathematics by:
 - ensuring planning takes account of groups of different ability and gender within a class so that work is well-matched to these groups
 - setting targets for pupils which are frequently evaluated and reviewed, to ensure that they are being met
 - extending planned opportunities to use writing and mathematics across the curriculum
 - ensuring teachers model high quality presentation in pupils' books and when using the interactive whiteboard
 - giving subject leaders the opportunity to regularly monitor and evaluate teaching and learning.

- Involve pupils more in assessment, especially in English and mathematics, by:
 - involving pupils in regularly evaluating their work against clear and specific success criteria, which matches their ability
 - giving pupils more opportunities to discuss with their peers and with their teacher how well they are achieving.

- Develop the provision of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

- improving the accuracy of baseline assessment to ensure progress is closely monitored
- moderate assessment of children to ensure accuracy against local and national expectations
- develop the new premises and, especially, the outside area, to ensure that children have access to the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Overall, achievement and enjoyment are satisfactory. However, progress of boys in writing in 2009 was not as good as girls and more able pupils did not achieve as well as they should in mathematics in 2009. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress against their targets. In all lessons observed, pupils behaved well and were motivated by their work. Pupils are polite and engaging when talking to adults and visitors. They often refer to the 'core values' of the school, such as respect for each other and co-operation, and these are clearly having a positive impact on pupils' personal development and are seen by them as important ideals to aspire to. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. As a result, attendance is good. Pupils are developing satisfactory skills to prepare them for their next stage of learning.

Pupils have a good understanding of the need to eat healthily and to take plenty of exercise. The school is buzzing long before the start of the school day because of the large number taking part in sporting activities or attending the breakfast club. Pupils enjoy having responsibilities in class and around the school and supporting the wider community through fund raising. The school council makes a good contribution to school life by, for example, proposing the zoning of the playground for different activities at break times. As a result, they are eager to have more responsibility.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Lesson planning is good with appropriate objectives for learning, but these are not always communicated clearly, so that pupils can assess themselves against the success criteria of the lesson. A good example was observed of pupils responding to their teacher's marking, by writing their responses below the teachers, thus developing an on-going dialogue. But this form of assessment is not embedded throughout the school. Good systems are now in place to track the progress of all pupils in English and mathematics, which are now reviewed termly by senior leaders and class teachers.

The newly planned links between subjects is making the curriculum more interesting and relevant for pupils. For example, one pupil spoke with passion about her enjoyment of Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' and proudly discussed her account of the play, which she had word-processed on the computer. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used satisfactorily to enhance learning, especially in the computer suite, but pupils' use of peripheral equipment, such as digital cameras, is limited. Planning for ICT does not always take account of pupils' prior knowledge, especially when skills are brought from home. There is good enrichment of the curriculum through visits, visitors and clubs. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about the local and wider community and culture by, for example, visits to the Royal Opera House and the British Museum.

Staff work hard to meet the needs of pupils who are vulnerable, ensuring that they are settled and make good progress. Although there are some incidents of unacceptable behaviour, pupils recognise that through the 'core values' behaviour has greatly improved.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Senior leaders are developing a clear vision of how to move the school forward. The school improvement plan is geared effectively to raising standards and achievement. The headteacher and deputy headteacher monitor teaching and learning, but other senior leaders have not had the same regular opportunities. Governors are very supportive. They bring a range of experiences to the school, and work within well-structured committees. However, their analysis of data and self-evaluation lacks rigour.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is a strength. The school works hard to engage different groups by opening its premises. These include a baby and toddler group and various church groups. Links have also been established with schools in France, South Africa and China.

At the time of the inspection, safeguarding and child protection procedures were robust and meet requirements. Vulnerable pupils are supported well by staff and by the good links with outside agencies. Practices for promoting equality of opportunity are good.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Reception classes with knowledge, skills and understanding that are generally in line with that expected for their age but below this in their speaking and listening skills. The school's data shows that children make satisfactory progress and by the end of the Reception year most children achieve the expected levels. Due to the fact that children had not started school at the time of the inspection, the team was not able to judge how well they joined in with lessons and worked together. However, school data and observations of last years Reception children,

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

now in Year 1, show that personal development is good. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The very new leader has not had time to make an impact on raising achievement. However, she is managing the imminent move to the new building with enthusiasm and is clearly focused on developing the provision. The new build has a large, easily accessible, covered outdoor area, which will significantly improve outdoor provision. Good links have been established with local pre-school providers and parents to ensure a smooth transition into Reception.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents or carers were positive in their views. Most were happy with the school and felt their children were kept safe and healthy and enjoyed school. Parents commented positively on the range of clubs, visits and visitors. A few parents commented on an inconsistent approach to pupils with poor behaviour. However, inspectors found procedures to be clear and understood by pupils. A small minority of parents commented on inconsistency of information about their child's progress and information to support their child's learning at home, to which inspectors agreed. The school recognises that these are areas for improvement and have already planned to re-launch the home-school 'Partnership book'.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Little Thurrock Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 103 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 445 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	63	63%	34	34%	1	1%	0	0%
The school keeps my child safe	62	62%	36	36%	0	0%	0	0%
The school informs me about my child’s progress	36	36%	54	54%	8	8%	0	0%
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	38%	54	54%	6	6%	0	0%
The teaching is good at this school	47	47%	46	46%	1	1%	0	0%
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	40	40%	49	49%	8	8%	0	0%
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	50%	47	47%	1	1%	0	0%
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	40	40%	48	48%	4	4%	1	1%
The school meets my child’s particular needs	43	43%	50	50%	5	5%	0	0%
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	38%	48	48%	6	6%	1	1%
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	29%	59	59%	5	5%	1	1%
The school is led and managed effectively	41	41%	45	45%	7	7%	2	2%
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	55	55%	44	44%	0	0%	0	0%

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.



21 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Little Thurrock Primary School, Grays, RM17 5SW

Thank you so much for your warm and friendly welcome when we visited recently to inspect your school. We very much enjoyed talking to you in lessons and around the school. We would also like to thank the groups of pupils we spoke to about their views of school. We were impressed by how polite you all were. Also, thank you to those who completed our questionnaire and took the time to write extra comments. Many of you wrote that you are happy at school, enjoy attending the many clubs provided, find the many visits very interesting and believe that the 'core values' of the school has improved behaviour.

As a result of our inspection we judged your school to be satisfactory. The things that we thought were good are:

- you feel safe in school and enjoy the work you do. Many of you told us you have fun at school, which was good to hear
- you behave well in class, in the corridors and in the playground
- those of you who sometimes find learning more difficult than most, are given good support, especially by your teaching assistants
- you have a good understanding of the need to eat healthily and to take exercise. We were impressed by how many of you take part in sports clubs
- the subjects you are taught and the visits you go on make learning interesting
- your parents and carers are happy that you attend Little Thurrock School.

These are what we feel can be improved and your school agrees:

- improve how well you do in your English and mathematics work. You can help by working even harder with your writing and presentation of your work

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

- involve you more in the assessment of your work, so that you know your targets well and what you need to do to improve
- develop the new Reception classes and the outdoor space, so that Reception children have a good start to their education in school.

Yours faithfully

Anthony Green
Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone [08456 404045](tel:08456404045), or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.