

Thames Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119254
Local Authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	339391
Inspection dates	9–10 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Gillian Salter-Smith

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	398
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bradley Burrow
Headteacher	Mrs Jean Martin
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2008
School address	Severn Road Blackpool Lancashire FY4 1EE
Telephone number	01253 341466
Fax number	-
Email address	jean.martin@thames.blackpool.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 19 lessons and 17 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with parents, groups of pupils, members of the governing body, staff and the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors observed the school's work, and documentation looked at included the school's self-evaluation form, the school improvement plan, recent data on pupils' progress and attendance, safeguarding policies and other relevant school policies. Questionnaires received and analysed comprised 117 from parents and carers, 149 from pupils and 25 from staff.

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

- Attainment and progress in English, especially writing, across the school.
- Whether the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is outstanding.
- Whether the outstanding judgements given by the school for a number of the Every Child Matters outcomes and aspects of leadership and management are accurate.
- The effectiveness of leaders in bringing about improvement in English, especially writing, and attendance.

Information about the school

This is a large primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. A well-above-average proportion of pupils join and leave the school throughout the year. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and around 10% come from other ethnic groups. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average although there is a below average proportion of pupils identified with a statement of special educational needs.

The school has achieved the following national awards: Basic Skills Quality Mark, ICT Quality Mark, Healthy Schools, Investors in People, and the Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark.

On-site provision includes The Thames Children's Centre, which offers places for up to 54 children aged under five years in a Nursery and other childcare facilities. An out-of-school club offers up to 48 places for children aged from four to eight years.

A special resource provision in the form of a Blackpool Primary Transient Non -routine Admission Centre, and known as Illuminate, is funded by the local authority. Up to 6 weeks of intensive induction and a re-introduction programme are provided for pupils who are new to Blackpool and/or have missed a great deal of learning.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Thames Primary is a good school. Highly committed leaders, managers and staff pay close attention to ensuring the well-being of every individual pupil, many of whom have had an unsettled experience of education or face significant difficulties in their lives. The outstanding care, guidance and support and the exceptionally rigorous procedures to ensure pupils' safety and well-being are supported by excellent partnership with local agencies. As a result of the focused attention on individual pupils and their families, pupils feel extremely secure and happy in school and most are ready to enjoy learning. Within this highly supportive environment, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress.

The Children's Centre makes a strong contribution to pupils' early development reflecting the school's positive and supportive culture. The 'Illuminate' centre provides very effective support for children from across the local authority who are moving back into mainstream education.

Leaders and managers, including members of the governing body, set high expectations of pupils, staff and themselves. They pursue improvement relentlessly. A systematic approach to self-review and monitoring pupils' progress and provision ensures that improvement plans are tightly focused on the right priorities. As a result, teaching and the curriculum are good and are supporting improvements in achievement. Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils make good progress from low starting points, particularly in communication and literacy skills. By the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average but is weaker in writing, especially for boys. The impact of improvements to the curriculum and teaching are beginning to raise attainment and accelerate progress in writing. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well which contributes to the school's good capacity to improve.

Overall attendance is low and is adversely affected by the high proportion of pupils who move into and out of the school during the school year. The proportion of pupils with persistent absence has been reduced significantly as a result of tenacious strategies with individuals and their families to encourage good attendance.

The curriculum and activities within the local community provide pupils with an awareness and understanding of cultures different to their own. However, the implementation of the community cohesion policy and evaluation of its impact on pupils are in the early stages of development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise attainment in writing, particularly for boys, by:
 - improving pupils' confidence to talk about what they are going to write about before tackling a writing task
 - paying closer attention to improving spelling, punctuation and handwriting.
- Improve the overall attendance rates by:
 - continuing to pursue and support pupils with particularly low attendance
 - identifying a broader range of pupils for specific encouragement and support from those pupils whose attendance falls below the national average
 - involving parents more in seeking ways to improve their children's attendance, including discouraging term-time holidays.
- Improve the effectiveness of the community cohesion policy by:
 - developing links with the wider national and global communities to further develop pupils' tolerance and understanding of cultures other than their own
 - ensuring that the impact of the community cohesion policy on pupils' outcomes is evaluated systematically.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils enjoy lessons and achieve well. They listen carefully and are eager to answer questions. They form positive relationships with staff. Consequently, behaviour is good and pupils are becoming more confident learners, ready to tackle challenging tasks. When given the opportunity, pupils enjoy talking to each other about their work and are increasingly confident about sharing their ideas with each other and the class. Occasionally, pupils become restless when they have spent a long time sitting on the carpet and have not been actively involved in a lesson.

Pupils make good progress in all key stages so that by the end of Year 6 attainment is average in mathematics, science and reading. Although attainment is below average in writing, particularly for boys, this reflects good progress from very low starting points for most pupils. The rate of progress in English is accelerating year on year and there is evidence of improving attainment in pupils' written work, particularly when pupils are stimulated to write at length about subjects that have captured their interest. Although sentences are increasingly well structured and include imaginative vocabulary, there remain weaknesses in punctuation, spelling and handwriting.

Pupils who join the school at different times during the school year make good progress because effective individual support helps them to catch up rapidly on lost ground. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because early assessment of their individual needs leads to precisely tailored targets and plans that underpin the highly effective support provided by staff and teaching assistants. Pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language make rapid progress because support is well focused on their needs and class teachers adopt appropriate strategies to promote their learning.

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Pupils have a very clear understanding of how to keep safe. They have high levels of confidence and trust in the adults in the school. Incidents of bullying are very rare and are dealt with effectively. A good proportion of pupils enjoy healthy lunches and take part in extra-curricular sport. Most understand the benefits of a healthy diet and exercise. Pupils take on responsibilities within the school well. The school council has helped to make improvements to playtimes and lunches. They have played a part in interviews for new staff. Pupils extend their life skills through involvement in many additional social activities. The poor attendance and weaker writing skills of a small minority of pupils means that, overall, pupils are prepared only satisfactorily for their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
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
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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Positive relationships and good management of pupils' behaviour ensure that lessons are calm and purposeful. Lesson planning takes good account of pupils' prior learning and capabilities so that tasks are usually well matched to individual needs. Teaching assistants are briefed thoroughly on how best to provide support, especially for pupils

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

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with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In the very best lessons, pupils enjoy a brisk pace and frequent questioning that challenges them to think things out for themselves. Occasionally pupils do not have enough opportunity to talk through problems with their work, or, for example, to talk through what they are going to write about before they tackle a writing task. From time to time, a long session listening to the teacher leads to some restlessness. Work is marked regularly and clear targets help pupils to know how to improve their work. Pupils' progress is assessed and tracked thoroughly and this information is used to ensure that pupils falling behind are given the support they need to catch up.

The curriculum develops pupils' basic skills systematically, increasingly within the context of themes that provide opportunities for excitement and challenge. For example, the week spent studying all aspects of the book 'Wind in the Willows' led to imaginative writing at length from many pupils, including the boys. As the school moves toward a more thematic approach, the curriculum is continually being reviewed for its effectiveness, particularly on improving writing. A wide range of visits and visitors to the school enhance pupils' learning experiences and many pupils benefit from the extensive provision of extra-curricular activities in sport and music. The success of the choir in local competitions is particularly impressive.

Support for pupils and their families is targeted exceptionally well to meet the wide variety of learning, social and emotional needs. A highly comprehensive range of strategies, drawing on excellent partnerships with external support agencies, is very well matched to the different circumstances of children and their families. More vulnerable pupils benefit enormously from the arrangements provided, for example, at break and lunchtimes when adults provide highly relevant support and guidance for pupils struggling with emotional and behavioural development. Excellent systems to ensure that pupils move smoothly into and through the school mean that pupils, particularly those deemed to be more vulnerable, settle quickly into routines. The wide range of strategies to improve attendance has resulted in reducing the number of pupils persistently absent and individual case studies demonstrate their effectiveness on improved attendance, particularly on those falling below 90% attendance. However, the school has yet to broaden its strategies to fully include those pupils falling just below the national average for attendance and those taking holidays in term time.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

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An impressive leadership team, well supported by governors and staff, provides a common sense of purpose strongly focused on improving the progress and life chances of every pupil, whatever their circumstances and background. The strong focus on equality of opportunity is reflected in the school's success in closing the gaps between the progress and achievement of different groups of pupils. However, although the progress made by girls and boys is similarly good, boys attain lower standards than girls in writing. Ambitious targets are set for individual pupils, staff and the school, helping to raise aspirations and ambitions. Rigorous self-evaluation and careful monitoring of pupils' progress underpin the focus of school improvement and ensures that all groups of pupils receive the additional support they need to help them make good progress.

Members of the governing body are well informed of the school's performance enabling them to pose critical questions about the school's performance and to hold leaders to account well. They work effectively with school staff to ensure that the safeguarding of pupils is outstanding. Robust systems to vet staff, rigorously applied policies for child protection, high-quality record keeping, comprehensive training of staff and governors and stringent health and safety policies contribute to the outstanding practice.

The school understands what needs to be done to develop community cohesion locally, nationally and globally. Much is done within the school and the local community to develop tolerance and understanding between different groups. However, the school is in the early stages of developing links with different communities nationally and globally, and evaluation of the impact of the policy on pupils' outcomes is limited.

Pupils and parents are consulted regularly as part of well planned self-review. They are supportive of the school overall but as yet not all parents and carers are responding to the school's efforts to improve overall rates of attendance.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in both the registered provision in the Thames Children Centre and in Reception are happy, well-behaved, self-assured and, from very low starting points, achieve well across each phase of their early education. Very strong partnerships abound and are pivotal in providing a welcoming, secure, inclusive environment for the children's first experiences away from home.

Secure routines, efficient management systems and the effective deployment of well-trained key persons ensure children's good progress. Provision for the babies and toddlers revolves around stimulating hands-on activities that result in obvious enjoyment for all. Practical learning experiences continue for the older children with many opportunities to steer their own learning. The children's learning is recorded through a range of media, celebrating achievements and providing a secure base for planning for the next steps. All adults know the children and their families well and the excellent liaison and transition plans across the setting and within the school ensure seamless moves through each phase.

Good quality self-evaluation is at the core of all the work. Tracking systems are used well to identify each child's or group's learning or development needs or aspects of the curriculum that may need extra input. School data show that actions taken to bring about improvements in the children's physical development have been very successful.

The school acknowledges that, while the children make great strides in their early learning, many enter Year 1 with still some considerable way to go in acquiring key skills, especially in writing and in some areas of mathematics. The school has put in extra adult support to help close the gaps.

The effectiveness of the provision arises from the management team's continual drive for improved outcomes for children. With the dedicated support of all staff, there have been measured improvements since the last inspection demonstrating good capacity for improvement. The provision complies with requirements for registration.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers, responding to the questionnaire, are highly supportive of all aspects of the school's work. Many comment on how much they value and appreciate the quality

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of the support their children receive, recognising the continual efforts made to ensure that their children are happy and safe in school. Inspectors endorse the parents' positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thames 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 117 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 398 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	73	62	41	35	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	75	64	37	32	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	63	54	48	41	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	57	49	48	41	5	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	69	59	47	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	50	51	44	5	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	57	49	54	46	4	3	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)	49	42	57	49	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	56	48	54	46	4	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	54	46	45	38	8	7	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	50	43	51	44	8	7	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	62	53	45	38	4	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	69	59	40	34	4	3	2	2

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 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupil's 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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thames Primary School, Blackpool, FY4 1EE

Many thanks for giving the inspection team a warm welcome. We think you are right to be proud of your school. Thames Primary is a good school and parts of its work are outstanding. The care, guidance and support provided is excellent and this helps you to feel extremely safe and secure in school. Staff work exceptionally hard to bring in a wide range of other people from outside the school who know how to help and support you. Those of you who find learning difficult make outstanding progress because the staff work out very precisely what support you need and what small steps and targets you should aim to reach.

You behave well in school and enjoy lessons. You make good progress and achieve well. This is because you are taught well and increasingly enjoy a programme of work that you find interesting and stimulating.

Leaders and governors are continually looking for what more can be done to help you improve. We have asked them to make improvements to:

- attainment in writing, especially for boys
- attendance, not only for those of you with poor attendance but also for those whose attendance is slipping below the national average
- the programme for improving your awareness and tolerance of people from cultures and backgrounds different to your own.

I hope that you will try your best to attend school regularly and make the most of all the many opportunities the school has to offer you.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Salter-Smith

Lead inspector

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