

# Thakeham First School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125856
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	340853
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Thrussell

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>	First
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–10
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	72
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Chris Coghlan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dave Evans
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 July 2007
<b>School address</b>	The Street Pulborough RH20 3EP
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. All teachers were seen and eight lessons were observed. Meetings were held with the headteacher, governors, senior teachers and a group of pupils. Inspectors looked at documents, including the school improvement plan, monitoring files, data on pupils' progress, documents relating to safeguarding, and the results of questionnaires returned by staff, pupils and 38 parents and carers.

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

- ? pupils' attainment and their progress and how well teaching contributes to their learning, especially in writing and mathematics
- ? the effectiveness and use of assessment and the support systems to drive improvement
- ? the role of leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, in securing and sustaining improvements
- ? the provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially relating to the direct teaching of literacy and numeracy skills and opportunities for children to initiate their own learning.

## Information about the school

Thakeham is a much smaller-than-average first school, taking pupils up to Year 5. There are three mixed-age classes, with children in the Early Years Foundation Stage catered for in a mixed Year 1/Reception class. No pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The main needs currently being supported are behavioural, emotional and social. Teaching and leadership have been disrupted in recent years as there have been significant staff changes. The headteacher has been in post for just over two years and the three class teachers have all been appointed within that time, two in the current year.

**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

Thakeham First is a good school. The headteacher and governors have successfully steered the school through a challenging time and ensured that a high level of care has been maintained. They have quickly addressed a decline in pupils' learning and progress and significantly improved the quality of teaching, despite many staff changes. The Early Years Foundation Stage has been reorganised to promote children's independent learning more effectively and children now make good progress in all of the areas of learning, especially writing. This shows that the school has a good capacity for further improvement. Nevertheless, the headteacher has been the main driver of change and in remedying weaker aspects of provision, as not all staff have been fully involved in helping to shape improvement. The school improvement plan is a useful tool for guiding improvement, although some planned actions lack detail and precision and timescales for the completion of tasks are not sufficiently clear. The school is now in a much stronger position to involve all staff and governors fully in planning for improvement, to ensure that all work together as a team for the continuing betterment of the school.

Pupils throughout the school are making good progress. Teachers are developing a stronger grasp of assessment, using the information with increasing effectiveness to plan work for the different ages and abilities in their classes. Along with more practical investigative work, this has resulted in good learning and progress in mathematics. There is more to do on the use of assessment in writing, to raise progress further, but learning and progress are nevertheless good. This is due in part to increased opportunities for pupils to write at length about things that are of relevance and interest to them. A systematic approach to teaching sounds and letters is further reinforcing pupils' good progress in reading. Attainment at Key Stage 1 has improved significantly in the current year. Older pupils are making especially good progress, helping them to make up quickly lost ground in their learning, which was due to past weaknesses in teaching. Attainment at Year 5 is above that which could be expected at this age, showing that pupils have achieved well given their starting points in Year 3.

Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning are strong contributory factors to their good progress. They are keen to take on responsibilities around school. For example, older pupils have been trained as play leaders. They help to engage those pupils who 'are at a loose end' at playtimes, recognising that it helps to maintain good behaviour. Pupils' responsibility for their own learning is less well developed. From their questionnaires and in discussion, many indicated that they do not know how well they are doing in lessons. Although older pupils have individual targets and understand their importance in helping to improve their work, this practice is much less developed elsewhere. Lessons do not provide sufficient time and opportunity for pupils to discuss

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and evaluate their learning for themselves.

The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is carefully monitored and a good range of additional support ensures their good progress. Elsewhere, although pupils' progress is tracked, enabling underachievement to be identified and tackled, assessments made on progress throughout the year are not yet regular enough to ensure more timely and effective intervention.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- ? Raise progress, especially in writing, by making the fullest use of assessment to:
  - ? track progress regularly to identify readily and address underachievement
  - ? plan the next steps in pupils' learning so that all make the best progress possible
  - ? share with pupils how well they are doing in lessons and set individual targets to show them how to improve.
- ? Improve the planning for school improvement by:
  - ? being more specific in the actions that are planned, showing their timescales and how they are to be monitored and evaluated
  - ? involving all staff and governors
  - ? developing leadership roles among the new staff to distribute responsibility for planned actions.

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

Pupils' achievement, both boys and girls and groups of differing abilities, is good and the standards seen in lessons and pupils' books are generally above average. Pupils feel safe in school, enjoy lessons, want to do their best and make good progress in both their personal and academic development. This is reflected in their good attendance and shows that they are well prepared for their future life and learning. Whether singing sea shanties, working on multiplication or writing letters, pupils' enjoyment was obvious during the inspection. Good behaviour has a part to play, with pupils needing little reminding about this. Older pupils were intrigued when their teacher came into class in the role of a hospital inspector, reporting that a local hospital was due to close. During the letter-writing activity about the closure, pupils had good opportunities to increase their vocabulary and to extend it using persuasive words. In a science lesson, the same pupils cooperated well when measuring and comparing body parts and there was a working 'buzz' about the room. Good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities enables this group also to make good progress. This was seen when some were setting out cones on the playground to help them understand simple multiplication, ably assisted by a very patient and supportive teaching assistant.

Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and are keen to take part in sport and physical activity and to eat a healthy diet. Their understanding of healthy eating is

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promoted by the school's allotment, where pupils are eager to take part in growing fruit and vegetables. Pupils take part in the 'Village Day', make suggestions for school improvement through the school council, use a budget to purchase additional playground equipment, and take the initiative in charity fundraising. This shows their good contribution to the school and local community and their good moral and social development. Although they appreciate their school and local community, their understanding of different cultures and communities within Britain today is less well developed.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
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	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Good relationships ensure that pupils are well behaved and quickly settle to work. Lessons are well planned and prepared, with clear learning objectives that are shared with the pupils so that they understand the purposes of lessons. Teachers' questioning is often brisk and challenging, helping pupils to develop their ideas and understanding, but lessons do not always set aside sufficient time, especially at the end, for pupils themselves to discuss and evaluate how well they are doing. Teachers make learning

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<sup>1</sup> 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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interesting and purposeful. This was seen in a mathematics lesson where pupils were using symmetry to plan and replicate a hospital ward as part of their topic work on the human body. Assessment is used well to group pupils by ability. Although it is quickly improving, the use of assessment to plan work for different aptitudes and abilities, especially in writing, is satisfactory rather than good. This means that the work for more-able pupils is not always sufficiently challenging, and that for less-able pupils is too difficult, so that progress slows.

The school has made a good start to introducing a more creative curriculum that makes links between different subjects and encourages pupils to use and develop their key skills. This approach engages pupils in interesting and purposeful topic work and is providing them with further opportunities to use particularly their writing and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. There is good provision for pupils' personal and social development. A range of well-attended clubs and many educational visits, including a residential visit, effectively contribute to this. Specialist music tuition and French lessons enhance the curriculum. Good links with other local schools contribute effectively to curriculum provision and development, for example by providing additional activities for gifted and talented pupils.

The school provides a safe and secure learning environment for pupils and ensures a high level of pastoral care. The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well planned and managed. There is especially good support for the few pupils with emotional, social and behavioural needs. Good links with outside agencies contribute to this and also help to ensure support for the families of these pupils. Transition arrangements for pupils transferring to the intermediate school are well developed and effectively support those making this move.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher and governors are clear about the actions needed to drive school improvement, as is shown in some of the measures they have taken to raise attainment and progress in writing and mathematics and to improve the quality of teaching. Recent teaching and leadership appointments have been carefully made to ensure that these improvements are sustained. Lesson observations are very perceptive and identify both strengths and areas for development, which are followed up in subsequent observations. Governors support the work of the school well and ensure that good safeguarding

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procedures are in place and that equality of opportunity is well promoted to eliminate any discrimination. Their challenge on the school's performance is strong and persistent, so influencing the rate of improvement. Links with parents and carers are good. They are kept well informed of what is happening in school, with encouragement given to support their children's learning both at home and in school. Computer links with the school provide further learning opportunities for pupils to work on at home alongside parents and carers. Although school promotes pupils' understanding of local communities and cultures actively, it has recognised that more has to be done to promote such understanding, especially at a national level.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children get off to a good start and enjoy their time in the Reception year. They become active learners quickly and learn the skills to work independently. They behave well and understand the rules set for their own safety. Children make good progress in all of the areas of learning, particularly in reading and writing, due to the direct and lively teaching of the class teacher. One parent/carer commented that the teacher's way with the children is amazing; her love for the job shines through and has a very positive effect on the children'. Children participate willingly in all activities, whether initiated by them or directed by staff. The setting is well organised to promote children's independent learning, although the use of the school playground as the outside area limits the opportunities for children to learn outdoors, and restricts the free flow of activities. Observations and assessments ensure that activities build on children's



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acquired skills. A key feature of the assessment is the children's own assessment of their learning and understanding of how well they are doing, shown in the learning journals which are now being produced. Teaching assistants supervise the different activities, but opportunities are missed to channel and develop children's learning through further talking and questioning. The setting is managed effectively and staff work well together.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

A high number of parents and carers completed inspection questionnaires and most are happy with their child's experience at school. A small minority are concerned about behaviour, but inspectors found that this is good and well managed. A few are concerned about the leadership and management of the school and of the degree of staff changes. The inspection showed that the school has effectively come through recent difficulties, is well led and managed and now has an effective teaching and support staff.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thakeham First 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 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 72 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	61	11	29	1	3	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	23	61	14	37	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	39	22	58	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	53	12	32	2	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	45	18	47	0	0	1	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	37	20	53	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	32	24	63	0	0	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)	14	37	17	45	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	39	18	47	1	3	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	18	18	47	6	16	3	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	24	23	61	2	5	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	7	18	24	63	4	11	2	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	19	50	15	39	1	3	2	5

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	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



20 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thakeham First School, Thakeham, RH20 3EP

Thank you for taking part in the inspection. We spoke with some of you during our visit and found you interesting to talk to, and very polite and helpful. You spoke enthusiastically about enjoying school and all the things you take part in. Thakeham First is a good school.

These are the things that the school does well.

- Children get off to a good start in Reception and make good progress throughout the school.
- The school looks after you well.
- Those of you who need particular help are well supported.
- You behave very well and are keen to take on responsibilities and to do jobs around school.
- The school encourages you to eat healthily and keep fit.
- The school provides many additional activities for you. You benefit from many clubs and educational visits.
- The headteacher, staff and governors are doing a good job.

We have asked the school to work on the following things.

- Although you are making good progress, you could do even better. The school should look more closely at how well each one of you is doing, especially in writing. This will help it to quickly identify those of you who need extra help with your work and to plan appropriate and challenging work for you all. This work should be just right for each one of you, neither too difficult nor too easy, so that you can all make the best progress possible. It would also help if you had more opportunities consider how well you are doing and all had targets to show you how to improve your work.
- All the staff and governors should work more closely together in helping the school get even better, checking carefully that any planned improvements are working well.

Thank you again for your help. You can do your bit to help by continuing to work hard in lessons and enjoy all that you do in school.

Yours sincerely

Peter Thrussell

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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