

Thameside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123083
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	385396
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2012
Lead inspector	Christopher Russell HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sharron Jenkinson
Headteacher	Joseph Rubba
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 October 2010
School address	Cotman Close Abingdon OX14 5NL
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	21–22 March 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Christopher Russell

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gail Robertson

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with no notice. Fifteen lessons were observed; all nine teachers were seen teaching. Meetings were held with pupils, staff, parents and carers, a representative of the local authority and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation.

There were no parental, carer, staff or pupil questionnaires because of the nature of this inspection, but views collected by the school since the last inspection were taken into consideration and the lead inspector met with a small group of parents and carers.

Information about the school

When Thameside Primary School was inspected in October 2010 it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently, the school was inspected on three occasions. At the last monitoring inspection the school was judged to be making good progress.

Thameside is smaller than average. The majority of pupils are White British and relatively few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is slightly above average. An above-average number of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Years 1 and 2, and Years 5 and 6 are taught in mixed-age classes, although Years 5 and 6 pupils are currently being taught separately for English and mathematics. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which set the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress.

The assistant headteacher took over as acting headteacher after the school was placed in special measures. A new headteacher took up post in September 2011 and a new leadership team was established.

A privately run pre-school is based on the school site. It did not form part of this inspection.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.
- Thameside is now providing a satisfactory education for its pupils. The school is improving rapidly and is well placed to maintain and continue this improvement. Although some aspects of its work are good, Thameside is not yet a good school. This is mainly because teaching is not consistent enough for pupils across the school to make good progress.
- The school’s leadership is now secure. The headteacher has already achieved a great deal. He and the assistant headteacher form a strong and highly effective team. They have worked closely with the school’s relatively new leadership team to ensure that all are able to play a full role in the school’s improvement. Leaders monitor the school’s work well and are providing effective support to improve the quality of teaching and pupils’ performance.
- Their work is leading to much better teaching. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, although much is now good. As a result, pupils are achieving more. Pupils across the school now typically make satisfactory progress. They increasingly make good progress, particularly as they move through the upper years of Key Stage 2.
- The school is a positive and pleasant place. Pupils typically behave well in lessons and around the site. They are polite and friendly, and speak confidently to visitors. Their attendance is slightly below average, but has improved dramatically over the past two years. Staff provide high quality, intensive support to pupils who need it. They work closely with parents and carers, and are tenacious in their attempts to engage and involve everyone.

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?

- Ensure that pupils across the school are able to make good progress by reducing the remaining variability in teaching, in particular by:
 - ensuring that all lessons provide sufficient challenge for everyone
 - developing the way in which teachers use questioning in their teaching
 - developing the way in which teachers use their intended outcomes for the lesson to test pupils' learning and progress, and help them to understand and recognise what they are trying to achieve by the end of the lesson.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most parents and carers feel that their children make good progress in school. Pupils recognise that they are now challenged much more in lessons and are making better progress. Inspection evidence shows that achievement is now securely satisfactory overall, but rising quickly.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skill levels significantly below those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress and typically reach outcomes at the end of Reception that are below those found nationally. Children moving from the Early Years Foundation Stage in September entered Year 1 with higher levels of attainment than in 2010. Children's skills in the area of communication, language and literacy were weaker than their skills in other areas of learning; this has been recognised by the school and a range of useful additional provision has been developed to support children's development in this area.

Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 1 and into Key Stage 2. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 is below average. Progress typically accelerates towards the end of Key Stage 2 as pupils make rapid progress in Years 5 and 6 in particular; this helps to narrow the gap, although attainment in reading and writing remains below average at the end of the key stage. Gains in mathematics are particularly rapid and pupils often reach average standards in this subject.

Recognising that literacy is a significant barrier for many pupils, the school has developed a more focused approach to the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants have been trained and phonics provision is monitored carefully. This is helping to ensure a consistent and effective approach, although it is too early to see the full impact of this work.

The school's focus on writing provides pupils with support to help them develop their writing skills; it involves pupils routinely writing at length. This is popular with pupils and is having a very positive impact on their writing skills and enjoyment of writing. Pupils often join the school with weak speaking and listening skills, but a concerted focus on using talk partners and promoting discussion in class has led to clear

improvements in this area. Most pupils now listen well, concentrate and speak confidently.

The achievement of different pupils and groups of pupils is tracked carefully. The results of this tracking demonstrate that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to others, as do pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. They also show that boys do not achieve as well as girls in some year groups; having recognised this, staff are working to close the gap.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is improving. It is now typically satisfactory, but increasingly good. Parents, carers and pupils recognise and value the improvements that have been made. Teachers manage their pupils well and relationships are very positive. This and the well-established routines for behaviour ensure that lessons enable pupils to develop positive attitudes and good patterns of behaviour. Work done over the past term has improved the quality of planning in subjects other than English and mathematics. Teaching assistants provide skilful and sensitive support.

Teachers' marking provides pupils with clear advice about how to improve their work. Teachers check to ensure that pupils follow up their suggestions. Pupils' targets in English are precise and clear; targets in mathematics are not as precise.

There is some outstanding practice in the school. Pupils made impressive progress in a lesson on persuasive writing because of the teacher's exceptional use of questioning and class discussion. Her questions were precise, carefully targeted at individual pupils and very probing. This led to an extremely high level of debate and discussion between pairs of pupils and across the class. This, in turn, left pupils contemplating a long session of writing with enormous enthusiasm.

There are three common weaknesses in less-effective lessons.

- In some cases pupils are not fully challenged. This is sometimes because the teacher keeps the class together for too long at the beginning of the lesson. At other times the lesson activities are not pitched at the right level.
- Some teachers do not make full use of questioning in their teaching. All teachers direct their questions at particular individuals rather than at pupils with their hands up; this keeps pupils involved in the lesson. However, not everyone makes enough use of questioning in their teaching, or pushes and prompts pupils for more detailed answers.
- Teachers' plans make clear what they hope pupils of different abilities will achieve by the end of the lesson. However, not all teachers make enough use of this during the lesson to check progress or ensure that pupils are absolutely clear about what they are trying to achieve.

Pupils speak confidently with adults and each other. They collaborate well in pairs and groups. Lessons, supplemented by an increasing number of trips and visits, also help pupils to widen their cultural experience and understanding.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour has also improved and is now typically good. Pupils recognise this improvement. Discussions with parents and carers, and their responses to the school's questionnaire, indicate that few are concerned about behaviour. While some pupils' special educational needs mean that they sometimes present challenging behaviour, staff deal with this very well, working closely with parents and carers, and providing very good support. There have been no exclusions for over two years. Pupils are polite and very friendly to visitors.

Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for; parents and carers support this view. Much is done to ensure that pupils understand the different kinds of bullying. This includes recent, effective work on cyber-bullying. The school's records show that bullying is rare. Pupils confirm this: they say that incidents are uncommon and that staff deal with any that do occur.

A small number of younger pupils who were finding school difficult were removed from most of their lessons and taught in a small nurture group, where they were given a range of targeted help and individual support. As a result of this support, these pupils have now been successfully integrated back into classes.

Although, attendance is still a little below average, it has improved considerably over the last two years. Concerted action with families has led to a sharp drop in the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school.

Leadership and management

The school's leadership has been strengthened significantly and is now good. The assistant headteacher achieved a great deal when the school was placed in special measures, lifting staff morale and beginning to tackle the key issues. The headteacher has built on this very well, successfully building an effective leadership team for the school. Parents and carers hold these two leaders in high esteem; they are right to.

Governance has also been strengthened. The Chair of the Governing Body has a strong background in school improvement herself and a very good understanding of the school. She has ensured that the governing body is both supportive and challenging.

Leaders and governors have a clear and very realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is based on rigorous monitoring of the school's work. The wider leadership team is fully involved; the headteacher has been careful to ensure that they have the skills to do this rigorously. All of this leaves the school in a strong position to continue its improvement.

Teachers benefit from a wide range of useful support to help them to develop their teaching skills. A detailed self-assessment is carried out by each teacher and forms the basis of discussions with the headteacher. Teachers complete these assessments

honestly and realistically. They provide a very useful tool to focus on individual lesson observations and professional development activities.

The curriculum meets the school's current needs well. Given the historically low attainment and variable progress across year groups, the focus is rightly on English and mathematics. However, the wider curriculum is well planned and interesting for pupils. An increasing range of trips, visits and visitors enriches the curriculum and makes a useful contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Staff promote equality and tackle discrimination well. The achievement of different groups of pupils is tracked carefully. Pupils with significant problems receive extensive and personalised support. Staff are tenacious in their attempts to engage and work with parents and carers, however hard to reach. Systems and processes that keep pupils safe meet government requirements.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



23 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thameside Primary School, Abingdon, OX14 5NL

As you know, I have been visiting the school every term since the school's last inspection to check on progress. The school has now improved so much that I do not need to come anymore. The school is now satisfactory. It has improved a lot over the past eighteen months and some aspects of the school's work are now good. Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us. Many of you told us about the improvements.

The most important improvement is that teaching is better. Lessons now challenge and interest you much more. This is helping you to make better progress as you move through the school. However, while much more teaching is now good, quite a lot is still satisfactory. The most important thing now is for the school to make all teaching good. That will help you to make even more progress.

Behaviour has improved a lot. You are very polite and friendly to visitors and I have enjoyed talking to you on my visits. We were both impressed by how confident you were when you spoke to us. Your attendance has also improved a lot.

The headteacher and his staff are working hard to continue the school's improvement. They have a clear understanding of strengths, areas for development and what to do next to continue the improvement.

I will miss my visits to Thameside, but I am really pleased that the school has improved so much. Best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Chris Russell
Her Majesty's Inspector

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