

Thompson Primary School

School Road, Thompson, Thetford, IP24 1PY

Inspection dates

7–8 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement, although improving, is not consistently good throughout Key Stage 2.
- Teaching is not consistently good and little is outstanding. In some lessons, pupils are not learning enough or given work of the right level of difficulty for their ability.
- Attendance has been below average in previous years. It is now average but the school has further to go before attendance rates reach the school's ambitious targets.
- The school's leadership does not make full use of the data collected on pupils' attainment and progress to compare the achievement of different groups of pupils.
- The school development plan does not make it clear how the success of the actions taken each year to bring about improvement will be measured.
- Parents do not always get enough information about how well their children are doing.

The school has the following strengths

- The teaching of early reading skills is good.
- Teaching has improved this year for pupils in Years 5 and 6, and this is helping them to achieve higher standards.
- The support and care provided for disabled pupils and those with the most acute special educational needs is good and this helps them to make good progress.
- Most pupils behave well, feel safe, enjoy coming to school and get on well together.
- There is good leadership and management of literacy and in the coordination of improvements being made in teachers' assessments.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in each class and visited 10 lessons. Four lessons were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector had meetings with staff, groups of pupils, three members of the governing body, including the Chair and Vice-Chair. He also met a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a range of evidence including: the school's self-evaluation and development plans; attainment and progress data; teachers' planning; performance monitoring reports; and the school's safeguarding arrangements. He also observed pupils' behaviour and discussed this with pupils, looked at the work in pupils' books and heard pupils from Years 1 and 2 read aloud.
- The inspector took into account the 32 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the information on the views of parents provided by the school. He also met some parents informally at the end of the first day of the inspection.

Inspection team

Rob McKeown, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes.
- Most pupils are White British and all pupils speak English as their first language.
- Only a small number of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, children of service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils identified as disabled or who have special educational needs and are supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is average.
- A very small number of pupils in Key Stage 2, who have special educational needs, receive specialist teaching at Wayland Academy on four mornings each week.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The governing body manages a daily after-school care club for children at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching so that it is good or better in all classes by ensuring that:
 - the work that pupils do is suitably demanding and exactly right for all pupils, whatever their ability
 - lessons move along at a good pace and pupils make the most of their learning time
 - a check is kept on pupils' progress through each lesson to pick up on and resolve any errors and misunderstandings
 - the other adults working alongside teachers are equipped with the subject knowledge required to make sure that pupils do not misunderstand what they are being taught
 - teachers apply the school's marking policy consistently and give pupils time to respond to the comments made about their work.
- Improve the effectiveness and impact of leadership and management by:
 - identifying the most important and immediate priorities in the school development plan, and setting measurable targets by which to judge the impact of the actions taken
 - ensuring leaders' observations of teaching look at the aspects that most require improvement
 - improving the collection and analysis of attainment and progress data so that leaders quickly know how well different groups of pupils are achieving
 - responding quickly to the views of parents and providing more information to all parents about their child's learning and progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Despite better progress and higher standards last year in English and mathematics, the achievement of pupils leaving the school in Year 6 requires improvement. Children start school with the skills and aptitudes that are broadly typical for their age. Pupils leave in Year 6 with standards that are still only broadly average and this does not represent good achievement.
- Since the last inspection, the progress of older pupils has been held back by weaknesses in teaching. At times, pupils, particularly the less able, do not make as much progress as they should because work is not pitched at the right level for them.
- The school's assessment data and the work in pupils' books show that pupils' progress varies too much as they move through Key Stage 2. Progress is better this year for most pupils in Years 5 and 6 but it remains too variable for pupils in Years 3 and 4. Teaching in the Year 5 and 6 class has concentrated successfully on improving pupils' mathematics and literacy skills and this is helping pupils to reach the higher standards of which they are capable.
- Results in 2012 showed a difference in the standards and progress made by the few pupils eligible for the pupil premium. Those in Year 2 were closer to the standards achieved by their classmates than those in Year 6. The additional funds allocated to support these pupils, which have been used to provide extra teaching and support, are not yet consistently ensuring that all those who are eligible do well enough.
- The progress made by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is generally good. The school provides extra support for these pupils, and individuals with significant needs make good progress because of the good help they receive for their learning. The small number of pupils who have specialist teaching away from the school site receive good support and are benefiting from this arrangement.
- Progress of pupils in the Reception and Year 1 and 2 classes is good. Most pupils start Year 1 having reached a good level of development and go on to achieve average or above-average standards by the end of Year 2. Reading is taught well in these year groups. The daily teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics) and regular reading practice is helping pupils to make good progress in acquiring early reading skills. The results of the Year 1 phonic screening check last year were above the national average.
- A majority of parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire believe their children are taught well and are making good progress. However, some parents feel that their children could do better, and despite receiving reports from the school, several indicate that they do not receive enough information about how well their children are doing.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Improvements have been made in the quality of teaching since the last inspection but it is still not consistently good in all classes. Although there were examples of good teaching seen during the inspection, reflecting the better progress pupils now make, there remains some less effective teaching in the early part of Key Stage 2. Very little teaching is outstanding.
- Where teaching is less effective, it is because the work pupils are asked to do is not exactly right for them, being too hard for some and too easy for others. There are also occasions when the

pace of learning is too slow and pupils do not get going quickly enough on the work they have to do themselves.

- The checks teachers make during lessons to pick up on errors and misunderstandings are not always systematic enough. On occasions, the other adults working alongside the teacher lack the subject knowledge to ensure that pupils' learning is accurate.
- Recent improvements have also been made in teachers' formal assessments of pupils' learning but there remain some inconsistencies in marking and in the way teachers involve pupils in checking their work. Evidence in books shows that the better marking in Years 5 and 6 makes clear to pupils how they might improve their work but it is not always acknowledged and acted upon.
- The most successful teaching develops pupils' communication, literacy and mathematics skills well. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 were practising their persuasive writing skills in arguing the case for and against social networking. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 also have regular opportunities to read to an adult, parent or older pupil to build their reading confidence and competence.
- Children in the Reception class have good opportunities to learn indoors and outside. They get lots of practical activities that help them develop their knowledge and understanding, as well as improving their speaking and listening skills.
- Teaching is making a positive contribution towards pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils in Year 1 and 2, for example, have been fascinated by watching chicks hatch in an incubator in their classroom.
- Much of the support provided by other adults working alongside teachers, and for individual and small groups of pupils is good. Those with a higher level of training are deployed well, for example to help individual disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to learn successfully, and to boost the confidence and communication skills of small groups of younger pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- During the inspection, pupils' behaviour in lessons and in their movement around the school was almost always good or better. Most pupils play well together at break times. Pupils are typically polite, helpful and welcoming to visitors. Relationships are good and pupils are generally friendly and considerate with each other. Most have positive attitudes and cooperate well in lessons, working hard on the tasks they have been given.
 - Pupils say they feel safe at school and most parents agree with this. Year 6 pupils commented on the fact that behaviour is better this year than last, when the school had to tackle some incidents of unacceptable behaviour and some bullying. This was done successfully and there has been no reoccurrence.
 - Older pupils are able to talk about the different types of bullying they might encounter, including those that involve prejudice and what to do if they experience any. They also learn about how to use the internet safely. The school keeps a record of any incidents of unacceptable behaviour, including any bullying, but these are not logged systematically so that the frequency and types
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of incident can be checked.

- Lessons in personal, social and health education are used effectively to develop pupils' understanding of relationships and personal safety. Adults working in the Early Years Foundation Stage care well for the children, helping them to develop good personal and social skills. School assemblies contribute successfully towards pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Attendance fell after the last inspection and has been below average. It has improved this year so that it is now broadly average. The school has set itself a challenging target for further improving attendance and is taking appropriate action to tackle absence and cut down on the number of pupils who arrive late for school.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher, staff and governors want the best for the pupils at the school and are committed to enhancing its overall effectiveness. Although some positive changes have been made since the last inspection, for example in strengthening learning in literacy and science, improvements are still required in teaching and pupils' achievement.
 - The school has identified the right improvement priorities in its three-year school development plan but leaders have not set out clearly enough what actions are to be taken in this or subsequent years. There is not enough detail about how the school will judge whether the actions have been successful, for example in improving the quality of teaching or raising pupils' achievement.
 - The headteacher checks the quality of teaching by routinely observing lessons in all classes each term. Checks are also made on the suitability of teachers' planning and the standards of work in pupils' books. However, leaders' observations of teaching do not look closely enough at the aspects that most require improvement.
 - The school's assessment coordinator has been instrumental in strengthening aspects of assessment, for example the recording of individual pupils' performance and the setting of learning targets for pupils. The formal assessments teachers make are recorded electronically, so that teachers can see how well pupils are progressing. However the school makes insufficient use of this data to analyse the progress of different groups; for example, those in receipt of the pupil premium.
 - The school makes good use of its links with other local schools and support services, particularly in the case of individual disabled pupils and those who have acute special educational needs. The school is committed to ensuring that there is no discrimination and that these pupils receive the support they need.
 - The arrangements and procedures for safeguarding pupils meet requirements.
 - The school has an attractive and accessible website which contains a good amount of useful information. This includes details of the learning going on in classes, school policies, events and pupils' achievements. It does not, however, indicate how parents might help with their children's learning at home.
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- The local authority has provided the school with suitable support since its last inspection, including guidance on strengthening teaching and learning in science, and by allocating places on an improving teaching course.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance has improved since the last inspection and governors are now better informed about how well the school is doing and how it compares with other schools. Governors have produced an operating handbook, which sets out how they manage their work, and there is a good system for recording the things governors do and see when they visit the school. Governors are keen to improve the school's effectiveness, for example by helping to update and improve the quality of the school's website. Individual governors have undertaken training to improve their skills and the governing body conducts an annual survey of parents' views, although action has not been taken on tackling the issues raised in the latest return. Governors appraise the performance of the headteacher, which includes setting targets for improvements in pupils' achievement. They know where teaching is less effective and how it is being addressed and oversee the checks made on performance of other staff to make sure that any salary increases are appropriately linked to evidence of pupils' performance. They know how funding is spent, but in the case of the pupil premium funding, have not reviewed its impact.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	120857
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	401973

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Long
Headteacher	Joanne Weight
Date of previous school inspection	9 March 2010
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