

Thomas Bullock Primary School

Pound Green, Shipdham, Thetford, IP25 7LF

Inspection dates

14–15 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
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 has serious weaknesses.

- The standards pupils achieve by the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics are too low.
- Too much teaching is inadequate in Years 3 and 4. There is not enough good or outstanding teaching to enable all pupils to make good progress.
- The pace of learning is too slow in some lessons and teachers do not always plan work that meets the needs of all learners. Feedback to pupils about how to improve their work is not detailed enough.
- There are wide gaps between the attainment of boys and girls in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The progress made by pupils who have fallen behind in their work varies too much. Pupil premium funding is not being used effectively to enable all eligible pupils to catch up.
- Although leaders and governors have made improvements, not all weaknesses have been tackled quickly enough to make sure pupils achieve well in all classes.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have shown their capacity to make improvements in teaching, particularly in the Reception class and Key Stage 1. As a result pupils make faster progress in these years and are reaching or exceeding the levels expected for their age.
- Stronger teaching in Years 5 and 6 is helping older pupils to make faster progress and to make up some lost ground.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they feel safe and secure at school. Strong emphasis is placed on the school's values and this supports pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons, of which five were joint observations with the headteacher. Some pupils in Years 1 and 2 read their books to an inspector.
- Documents scrutinised during the inspection included the school’s data on pupils’ progress, teachers’ planning, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and school improvement plans.
- Informal discussions were held with parents as they delivered their children to school.
- Meetings were held with pupils, senior and middle leaders, and the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors listened to the views of pupils during both informal and pre-arranged discussions.

Inspection team

Joan Beale, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Rachel Hobson

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- Thomas Bullock Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- A large number of pupils leave or join the school at times other than usual.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much smaller than seen nationally.
- There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for certain groups of pupils, in this case those known to be eligible for free school meals) is in line with that seen nationally.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is higher than in most schools. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than that seen nationally.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- In recent years the school has experienced many changes in staffing. In the last two years the school has appointed a new headteacher and new teachers in the Reception and Key Stage 1 classes.
- Supported by the local authority, the school has been working with a local leader of education in another primary school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that
 - teachers have enough opportunity to learn from the strongest aspects of good teaching in their own and other schools
 - teachers make more effective use of time in all lessons to enable pupils to learn quickly

- Raise attainment so that standards are at least in line with the national average in English and mathematics by July 2014 by:
 - giving pupils precise information on the level at which they are working and how they can improve their work
 - identifying the reasons for the gaps in attainment between boys and girls in writing and mathematics and taking action to boost boys' writing and girls' mathematical skills
 - ensuring that there are sufficient trained staff to teach the programmes planned for pupils eligible for support from pupil premium funding, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and other pupils who need to catch up.

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - teaching is checked more rigorously and that the scrutiny of teaching concentrates more on the impact it is having on pupils' progress
 - governors receive suitable training to enable them to become fully effective in holding leaders to account and contributing more to school improvement.

- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- The standards pupils reach in English and mathematics when they leave Year 6 are too low. Past weaknesses in the quality of teaching and current underperformance in Years 3 and 4 have contributed to pupils' progress being too slow. Achievement in Key Stage 2 remains inadequate because there is still too much inadequate teaching.
- The progress made by disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those eligible for pupil premium funding is also inadequate. The school has used this funding to provide additional teaching and support for these pupils. In some cases pupils are making better progress, but for a significant number of pupils this has not been successful. This is largely due to the high absence rates of staff delivering the extra support and the lack of suitably trained staff.
- At the end of Key Stage 2, girls achieve much higher standards than boys in writing and boys do much better than girls in mathematics. The combined effect of these wide gaps in the attainment of boys and girls means that for two years running the school has not met the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress. The school's assessment information shows that standards are likely to rise this year and the school will meet the floor standard.
- Since the last inspection standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have improved. However, the school's tracking data show that most pupils in Key Stage 1 are making better progress in reading and mathematics than in writing. Leaders have identified the need to improve writing as a key priority and, as a result, progress is now increasing.
- The teaching of early reading skills, including the sounds letters make (phonics) is given high priority in the Reception and Year 1 and 2 classes. This is helping to improve attainment in reading and writing. The results of last year's phonic screening check were above the national standard.
- Children start school with skills and abilities that are below those expected for their age. They get a good start in the Reception Year and make good progress because the teaching is good. They enter Year 1 with attainment that is broadly in line with that expected for their age.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection but there is still not enough good teaching to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Inadequate teaching in some year groups in the past has led to inadequate progress and attainment over several years. Teaching is much stronger in Reception, Key Stage 1 and Years 5 and 6 than it is in Years 3 and 4 where it remains inadequate.
- Where teaching is weak it is because teachers spend too long talking, so that pupils do not have enough time to get on with the tasks they are set. Work is not matched to the needs of all pupils. In some lessons teachers do not provide appropriate resources to support learning and their expectations of what pupils can do are too low.
- Although teachers mark pupils work regularly they do not always tell them what they need to do to improve. Pupils' books show that they are not given opportunities to respond to the advice

they are given. The school has started to address this but inconsistencies remain.

- In good lessons, teachers make clear what pupils are going to learn and link this to previous learning. They discuss with pupils what steps they need to take to succeed and expect pupils to discuss and reflect on these during the lesson.
- In the best lessons tasks are well matched to different levels of ability and all pupils are suitably challenged. In lessons seen in Years 2 and 6, for example, the teachers' lively presentations and preparation of a good range of stimulating resources, together with high expectations for work and behaviour, lead to all pupils being actively involved in learning and making good progress.
- Where lessons are well planned, teaching assistants give effective support to pupils who need it, including disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those in supported by pupil premium funding. In these lessons, teachers assess pupil's knowledge and understanding by asking appropriate questions and make good use of the interactive whiteboard to enhance learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils make a good contribution to the school's friendly welcoming environment. They like their teachers and other staff and this encourages them to seek help if they need it. Pupils are polite and considerate and happy at school. They value the school's reward system.
- Pupils' behaviour is consistently good throughout the day and makes a positive contribution to their learning. Attendance is currently below the national average. The school works hard to improve this and rewards good attendance with a series of certificates. However, a number of parents and carers still take holidays in term time without the school's permission, which affects attendance figures.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example they know about the dangers that some internet sites pose to children. They say that bullying in school is rare and that staff deal with any incidents promptly and effectively.
- The strong emphasis placed on the school's values supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The school makes every effort to make all pupils feel welcome and pupils understand well the importance of respecting each other.
- Parents are very positive about pupils' behaviour and feel confident that their children are kept safe. They appreciate the way that the school cares for their children and supports their learning.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Although leaders have made many improvements in the last two years they recognise there is more to do to deal with the inadequate teaching that still exists in Years 3 and 4. In addition, the pupil premium funding is not yet being used to maximum effect to raise attainment nor is its impact being monitored systematically by the governing body.
- The headteacher is leading the school's recovery from the adverse effects of frequent changes of staff in the past. He has successfully tackled underperformance in teaching in some year groups. As a result, teaching has improved and children in Reception get off to a good start and pupils in

Key Stage 1 are making faster progress. This illustrates well the school's capacity to bring further improvements.

- All staff are keen to improve their practice and senior leaders regularly check teachers' work. However, they do not focus these checks sharply enough on the impact of teaching on the progress that pupils make.
- Leaders follow appropriate procedures for managing teachers' performance but the targets they set are not linked closely enough to pupils' achievement and leaders do not hold teachers to account sufficiently for the progress pupils make in their classes.
- The school's improvement plan sets out clearly the right improvement priorities, based on an accurate evaluation of what is going well in the school and what could be better. Decisions are also taken in response to the checks made on pupil's attainment, for example, the plan to provide an additional teacher for Years 5 and 6 to help these pupils to catch up.
- The school has had appropriate support from the local authority, which has been instrumental in establishing links with a local leader of education in another primary school. This is strengthening the school's work in many areas including developing the quality of teaching.
- Pupils who fall behind are identified quickly and support put in place. However, this does not always help them to catch up because of high absence amongst staff identified to deliver the extra support and the lack of specialised training for support staff.
- Teaching programmes provide good opportunities for enrichment and promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. There are good links with the local parish church. Many children benefit from opportunities to learn a musical instrument, funded by the Thomas Bullock Trust. The school has links with a primary school in Malawi and this broadens pupils' experiences of worldwide cultures and customs.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance requires improvement, although it has improved since the last inspection. Members of the governing body are very committed to the school and want to secure good outcomes for pupils and their families. However, they do not have all the knowledge or skills they need to fully hold the school to account. Governors do not have an accurate enough picture of how well pupils are progressing or the quality of teaching to enable them to challenge the school and hold leaders to account. Governors know how money is spent but they have not ensured that pupil premium funding is used effectively enough to raise the attainment of pupils for whom it is provided. They make the final decision on whether the performance of individual teachers against their targets justifies a pay rise and ensure that only those who have done well are rewarded. Governors carry out their responsibilities, including the regular review of policies, to ensure the school's systems are robust and that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

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	121127
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	402007

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carolyn Lawrence
Headteacher	Paul Madsen
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2010
Telephone number	01362 820300
Fax number	01362 820581
Email address	office@thomasbullock.norfolk.sch.uk

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