

Thomas Bullock CE VA Primary School

Pound Green, Shipdham, Thetford, IP25 7LF

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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

- Teaching and learning are improving but they are not consistently good. Teachers do not always identify effectively what pupils can and cannot do before planning work. Pupils' achievement is inconsistent because work is sometimes too hard or too easy.
- Pupils' spelling, punctuation, grammatical and handwriting skills are not good enough, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- Pupils' speaking skills are not as good as they should be. A number of less-able and middle-ability pupils do not speak fluently and lack confidence when speaking aloud.
- Pupils are not writing at length often enough in order to build up their writing stamina in all subjects.
- Leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics is underdeveloped. The school lacks a clear strategy to make good leaders outstanding or a coherent plan to develop leadership in subjects such as science, humanities and creative subjects.
- The oversight of teaching assistants' work is not robust enough. The impact of the additional sports funding on pupils' lifestyles and physical well-being is not made clear in the school's action plan.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils enjoy school and feel safe and secure. They behave well and have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Most pupils in Reception and Years 1 and 2 are making good gains in their learning in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because teacher expectations are high and the work provided in these subjects is suitably demanding and stimulating.
- The headteacher, English and mathematics leaders and governors, with the support of the local authority and diocesan advisers, have successfully improved teaching and pupils' achievement. Consequently, standards are rising in all years.
- The school promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils effectively.
- Pupils get a good musical education. All pupils learn to play a musical instrument and have plenty of opportunities to perform music.

Information about this inspection

- When Thomas Bullock CE VA Primary School was inspected in February 2013, it was judged to have serious weaknesses. Subsequently the school was inspected on two occasions. At the last monitoring inspection in January 2104, the school was judged to be making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weakness designation.
- Nine lessons were observed. All teachers were observed teaching at least once. Some Year 4 pupils were heard to read. A sample of pupils' work in writing, mathematics and other subjects was evaluated with the English and mathematics leaders. A series of short visits to classrooms was carried out with the headteacher to find out how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, English and mathematics leaders, Chair of the Governing Body, school improvement adviser, members of the school council and the person in charge of maintaining the single central register.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan and school improvement board minutes indicating the progress made in addressing the school's serious weaknesses, the local authority statement of action, data about pupils' attainment and progress, monitoring of teaching and performance management records, and safeguarding information including scrutiny of the single central register.
- The views of 17 parents were analysed through the Parent View website. The inspector also spoke to parents informally to seek their views about school life.

Inspection team

David Rzeknik, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special education needs supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school currently meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expected for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is planning to convert to an academy on 1 September 2014. The sponsor is the Norwich Diocesan Academy Trust.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to ensure pupils' progress in English and mathematics is consistently good by:
 - ensuring teachers clearly identify what pupils can and cannot do before planning lessons in order that their work is never too hard or too easy
 - improving pupils' spelling, punctuation, grammatical and handwriting skills, particularly in Years 3 to 6
 - improving the speaking skills of the less-able and of middle-ability pupils by taking every opportunity to improve their vocabulary, sentence construction and confidence ensuring the less-able readers in Years 3 to 6 are heard to read regularly, in class and at home, and improve their comprehension skills and use of expression
 - ensuring pupils write at length more often to build up their writing stamina
 - implement the new mathematics programme, in September 2014, to further improve pupils' calculations skills, their understanding of mathematical vocabulary and their ability to use and apply their mathematical skills to solve problems
 - fully implement, in all years, the mathematics computer homework to further improve pupils' mathematical skills.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring the sports funding action plan clearly specifies the impact of initiatives on pupils' lifestyles and physical well-being
 - ensuring teachers and senior leaders oversee teaching assistants' work more effectively to ensure that assistants identify the most important weaknesses in pupils' learning and are using the most effective strategies to remedy any gaps in learning
 - identifying teachers with the necessary leadership, teaching and subject expertise to lead teaching and learning in subjects other than English and mathematics
 - produce and implement a coherent plan to provide training to make good leaders outstanding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement has improved significantly since September 2013 but it remains variable. The proportion of pupils making good progress has increased term by term, but pupils in Years 3 to 6 have not made consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics over the past 15 months. The progress made by a small number of less-able readers in Year 4 is too slow. This is because they are not reading enough in class or at home.
- In February 2013, the progress made by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and those eligible for pupil premium was inadequate. This is no longer the case as these pupils achieve similarly to their classmates. Support has been appropriately targeted to ensure both groups of pupils make much better progress. Support staff have been appropriately trained to deliver the extra help that is required to accelerate individuals' progress.
- The attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding, currently in Year 6, has risen sharply this academic year. In 2013, in comparison with their classmates, their attainment was two years behind in mathematics and reading and over a year behind in writing. The attainment gap has narrowed markedly with these pupils' attainment being about two terms behind other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupil premium money has been well targeted to achieve this result.
- Children enter Reception with basic skills that are typical for their age. They make good progress in all areas of learning because they are well taught. They enter Year 1 with basic skills that are exceeding expected levels.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are making good gains in their learning in reading, writing and mathematics because teachers demonstrate a good understanding of how pupils learn and make progress in these subjects. In 2013, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonic check was above average (phonics is the linking of letters and sounds).
- The progress of more-able pupils is accelerating at a good rate. A good proportion are achieving well in all year groups. This is because teacher expectations are higher regarding what must be achieved; activities are suitably challenging and work is better matched to their capabilities.
- Attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 is rising and many more pupils are achieving the nationally expected and higher National Curriculum levels for their age compared to July 2013. Currently Year 2 attainment is average overall, which is a significant improvement from below average attainment in July 2013. It is a similar picture of rising attainment in Year 6.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching and learning are improving but they are not consistently good. Teaching in some years, and some subjects, does not secure better than adequate learning in lessons and over time. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated and there is much more good teaching than in February 2013. However, there is not enough outstanding teaching and learning.
- Where learning is not fast enough it is primarily because teachers have not properly identified what pupils can and cannot do before planning work. There is too much consolidation of learning in the activities provided rather than it being extended. Progress information is not always used effectively to ensure activities are properly matched to pupils' capabilities.

- Teaching assistants are better deployed than during the last inspection, particularly to support those who are falling behind in their work. There are times when assistants provide well-focused support. For example, in a Year 4 writing lesson pupils were guided effectively to develop their ideas before writing. However, there are occasions when assistants do not quickly identify important weaknesses in pupils' learning. There are also times when they do not use the most effective strategies to teach concepts securely. When this happens pupils make less progress. Oversight of teaching assistants' work is not good enough.
- Teachers are not doing enough to improve the speaking skills of the less-able and middle-ability pupils. Not enough attention is given to improving their vocabulary, sentence construction and confidence to speak aloud.
- There are a small number of less-able readers in Years 3 to 6 whose progress in reading is too slow. They do not read often enough to adults in school or at home, or to their reading buddy. They are not progressing through the reading scheme at a fast enough rate. Not enough is being done to improve their comprehension skills and use of expression.
- Work seen in pupils' books reveals that teachers are rectifying weaknesses in pupils' spelling. However, it is not yet good. More-able pupils use punctuation better than those of lesser ability. Pupils are starting to write in a cursive script but not all pupils are writing in a fluent joined style. Leaders recognise that new policies to improve spelling, handwriting and punctuation are not fully embedded.
- Pupils' writing skills are improving despite some technical weaknesses hindering success. Pupils' use of descriptive language is developing well and so are their ideas. Writing structure is getting better and pupils are writing in a wider range of styles. However, pupils are not writing at length often enough, in all subjects.
- The teaching of letters and sounds is good in Reception and Years 1 and 2. Consequently, pupils' reading and writing skills are developing well.
- Reception teaching is effective so children get off to a good start. Learning in adult-led activities is good and result in good learning outcomes.
- A strategy that is promoting good learning in this school, is the opportunity for pupils to self-select the level of challenge that is best for them in English and mathematics. This is having a particularly beneficial impact on the progress made by the more able, who say they like this way of working because work is harder and challenges are motivating and interesting.
- Teachers are using the new practical mathematical resources effectively. In the past, mathematical concepts were too often taught in an abstract rather than a practical way. Pupils are now using equipment to help improve their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Marking is much improved. It identifies what is working well and what must be improved. The presentation of work has also improved since January 2014. Pupils are taking a greater pride in how they present their work. Work in books is tidier and neater.
- Innovative work has just begun, in some years, to encourage pupils to use a computer at home to improve their mathematical skills. Pupils involved in the programme enjoy the mathematical activities and say that work is stretching them and they are learning new things. A new

mathematics programme to further improve pupils' use of mathematical vocabulary and their problem-solving skills is to be introduced in September 2014. Leaders know that to be fully effective both schemes must be implemented effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good. Pupils conduct themselves well throughout the school day including at playtime and lunchtime. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good including in whole class work, group work or when working on their own. Their keenness to do well is a key factor in their improving attainment and progress.
- The values of the school, such as thoughtfulness, honesty, integrity, tolerance and pride shine through in the pupils. These values are reinforced effectively by the adults who work in school.
- Pupils are friendly, courteous and are well mannered towards adults and each other. They respect the school environment as demonstrated by the lack of litter, graffiti and damage to the premises and equipment.
- Pupils enjoy school life as demonstrated by the regular attendance and good punctuality of most pupils. They work diligently and persevere with their work, even on the occasions when work is not demanding.
- Persistent absence is below the national average. This is a much improved picture from July 2013, when it was well above average. Targeted support work by school staff, in cooperation with the parent support adviser, has been very effective in getting non-attenders to come to school more regularly.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and learning is rarely disrupted. Relationships between adults and pupils and between the pupils themselves are excellent. The climate for learning is very positive.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have a good awareness of the different forms of bullying. They report that they are free from harassment and this is confirmed by school records which indicate there have been no racist or bullying incidents since the last inspection. There have been no fixed term and no permanent exclusions this academic year.
- Most parents think that the school ensures their child is well behaved, safe and happy. Leaders have ensured that good behaviour and safety have been maintained since the last inspection.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The sports action plan is not comprehensive enough. It does not make explicit the impact of initiatives on pupils' lifestyles and well-being.
- Leaders are currently considering the development of future subject leaders but lack a coherent plan as to how potential leaders will be identified and trained to lead teaching and learning in key subjects. The school lacks a strategy to ensure good leaders become outstanding ones.
- The headteacher and subject leaders for English and mathematics are monitoring teaching and learning effectively, and know what is working well and what must be improved. Weaknesses in teaching and learning are suitably pinpointed and appropriate action is taken to bring about the

necessary improvement. For example, the mathematics leader identified that pupils' mental mathematical skills are weak, so the timetable was adjusted and the development of pupils' mental mathematics skills is a focus at the start of each day. The approach is working and pupils' mental calculation skills are improving, but there is a way to go before they are good.

- The headteacher, subject leaders for English and mathematics and governors, have all improved their effectiveness. The school is moving in the right direction and the pace of change has quickened markedly since January 2014. This is because senior leaders adapted some of the external advice given and started doing activities that they fully believe in, thereby engaging in work that fitted more closely with the school's vision and ethos. Consequently, there has been a change in some of the approaches used to improve teaching and learning, resulting in increasing proportions of pupils making good progress in English and mathematics since January 2014.
- The school improvement plan was significantly improved following the first monitoring inspection in May 2013 and work is appropriately targeted on key priorities. Senior leaders, local authority advisers and governors have rectified the serious weaknesses in teaching and achievement. As a result, inadequate teaching and learning have been eliminated and standards are rising.
- Leaders ensure that the school is a tolerant and harmonious community and are making good progress towards ensuring equal opportunities by narrowing attainment gaps between the school's performance and that seen nationally.
- Sports funding is starting to make an impact. For example, money has been spent to employ sports coaches to improve teachers' planning and teaching to raise standards in physical education. Pupils are taking part in more inter-school competitive events and a new sports day is planned to raise the profile of sport in school.
- A range of effective support has been provided by the local authority. Specialist subject advisers have improved teachers' subject knowledge and the methods used to teach English and mathematics. An audit carried out by school improvement advisers helped pinpoint what was working well and what must be improved. The school has worked with leaders in good schools, and good practice from elsewhere has been adopted to improve teaching and the leadership skills of subject leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - In May 2013, an external review of governance was carried out by a representative of the National College for School Leadership. The outcome is that governors have a more strategic approach to school improvement than in February 2013. They are robust in holding senior leaders to account for school outcomes. For example, the school improvement board committee, chaired by the school improvement adviser, is rigorous in evaluating the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, particularly those eligible for the pupil premium funding to check the funding is used effectively. The procedures for setting targets for teachers are robust. These targets are suitably designed to improve teaching and achievement. Governors, in consultation with the local authority, ensure that financial resources are managed effectively. They also ensure that government safeguarding arrangements and statutory duties are met.

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	445997

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Alder
Headteacher	Paul Madsen
Date of previous school inspection	15 February 2013
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