

Thomas Walling Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108480
Local Authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	288111
Inspection dates	12–13 June 2007
Reporting inspector	John Heap

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	325
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Jane Sutton
Headteacher	Mrs Andrea O'Neill
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2003
School address	Lindfield Avenue Blakelaw Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE5 3PL
Telephone number	0191 2860333
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The pupils in this above average sized school are mainly White British with a small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds including refugees and asylum seekers. The school is in an urban residential area of significant disadvantage and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The pupils generally join the school with low standards of attainment. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school provides a range of additional services that support the community; such as, family learning programmes.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school rightly judges itself to be satisfactory and it gives sound value for money. Feedback from most parents and pupils is very supportive of the school and its caring approach, particularly in the way it provides for the many vulnerable pupils. In this and other respects, the school receives good support from outside agencies. The school has been subject to intensive support from the local authority and there are clear signs of satisfactory recent improvements in standards, progress, teaching and leadership and management. These improvements have led the local authority to reduce the level of support to the point where the school is now self-sustaining. The school has a sound capacity to improve further.

Pupils' good personal development continues to be a strength of the school. It continues to be strong because of the broad provision for it in an otherwise satisfactory curriculum and the good pastoral care. Pupils enjoy school and attendance has improved markedly in recent years. They make a good contribution to school and the wider community. Trusting relationships between pupils and with staff mean that pupils feel safe and secure. Pupils appreciate the need to eat healthily and to exercise regularly.

Achievement is satisfactory. This judgement is recognition of improvements that have been made in the last two years. Nevertheless, there is still some way to go to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they should, particularly in writing. Children enter the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) with very low levels of skills. They are taught and supported well, but they still leave Reception with skills, knowledge and understanding that are well below expected levels. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are consistently well below average. Over the last two years there have been improvements in pupils' achievement, but the school knows that standards can rise further in writing, mathematics and science. Improvements in the collection and accuracy of assessment data have shown that current Year 6 pupils are making satisfactory progress. The subject most in need of development is writing. This is because marking is not sufficiently well focused to ensure pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. There is also not enough use and development of writing, and the other basic skills, across the full range of subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; those learning English as an additional language; pupils from minority ethnic and refugee backgrounds are also making satisfactory progress. Pupils identified as gifted and talented make sound progress and some are achieving well, especially those who receive provision from external sources, such as the local secondary school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. There is a far greater recognition that efforts have to focus on raising standards, increasing pupils' progress and improving the quality of the provision. Improvement planning reflects these priorities and there is a much stronger approach to monitoring and evaluating the school's work. The headteacher and senior colleagues are taking full advantage of the support provided by the local authority. Governance is sound. The governing body is highly supportive, but there are shortcomings in the way they monitor and evaluate the work of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, mathematics and science.
- Improve the use of assessment information to ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to make good progress.

- Identify and take all possible opportunities to use and develop the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children start in the Nursery with low basic skills in communication, numeracy, and general knowledge. Effective teaching and provision help them to progress well, but standards at the end of Reception are still well below the nationally expected level.

By the end of Years 2 and 6 standards are well below average. This is mainly because there are above average levels of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In 2006, results in the Year 6 national tests met the school's own targets in English, but not in mathematics. Standards are slowly edging up, but national data shows that progress is slow. Targets for 2007 are realistic and challenging. Teacher assessments show that standards are rising and pupils are making at least satisfactory progress. Standards are weakest in English and particularly in writing.

In 2006, there was no significant difference between the standards achieved by boys and girls, but the boys are clearly doing less well than girls in 2007 because of higher numbers with extra learning needs. The school is responding to this well and teachers are successfully striving to make lessons fun and interesting for boys as well as girls. Their achievement is showing the benefit. More able pupils reach the higher levels of attainment expected of them.

Pupils from the various groups that have extra learning needs make sound progress. The governing body has very positively provided extra support that is well matched to pupils' individual need such as that given to pupils learning English as an additional language.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Moral and social development is particularly strong and, as a result, behaviour is good and attitudes to learning are very good. As a result of circle-time (class discussions), peer massage and collaboration, pupils say that they are more self-aware, more in control of their emotions and more able to tolerate others. Pupils are adequately prepared for the future through the sound development of basic academic skills. Day-to-day responsibilities are taken seriously; such as, the pupils running a shop which successfully incorporates learning about shares and dividends. They maintain extensive gardens well and work as effective playground 'buddies' resolving fractious situations and helping others feel less vulnerable. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and how to lead healthy lifestyles. They enjoy school and make friends. Attendance is now average, which is a vast improvement over recent years. They find their teachers kind and helpful and are confident approaching staff whatever the problem. They consider their learning fun, participate enthusiastically in extra-curricular activities, particularly art and soccer, and are proud of the school's attractive environment inside and out. They make a strong contribution to the school and wider communities by participating in fundraising activities; involvement with local projects such as

singing and dancing for senior citizens and by collecting litter in the locality. The work of the active school council has resulted, for example, in the purchase of furniture and equipment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is strongest in the Foundation Stage where progress is good. Examples of good teaching are also found in other classes where pupils know exactly what they are to achieve, work is challenging for all groups, and support staff are effectively deployed. Teachers work hard to make lessons fun and positive behaviour techniques are used well to keep pupils on task. Progress is hampered because pupils are not consistently given clear targets for improvement alongside the opportunity to achieve these in subsequent pieces of work. Marking is not always linked to pupils' learning targets and does not always follow the school policy. This results in pupils not knowing exactly what they learnt and have done well, and exactly what it is that they have to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum promotes pupils' personal development well. There is a good range of after-school clubs and the opportunity for children to attend a residential course at Kielder. The promotion of academic development is satisfactory. Children in the Foundation Stage benefit from a strong and well balanced programme that enables them to make good progress. Some progress has been made in adapting the curriculum to the individual needs of pupils: extra time has been allocated for English and mathematics for the older children; and some subjects, such as history and geography, are taught in blocks of time to enable sustained study. There is not, however, sufficient focus on providing a curriculum which is clearly targeted on raising standards in the basic skills of English, mathematics and ICT. Opportunities for writing in other subjects, for example, are not clearly identified in teachers' planning or monitored by curriculum leaders.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This is a caring school where staff know pupils and parents well. A priority of their work is to overcome some of the major barriers to learning. Prime examples are the good policies on attendance and behaviour that have brought about significant improvements. Child Protection, safeguarding, risk assessments and health and safety procedures are robust and well managed. There are strong partnerships with outside agencies, including social services and educational welfare officers. The recent appointment of a parent liaison worker provides very good support for vulnerable children and their families. Transition arrangements, especially for Year 6 children, are comprehensive and ensure that all children are well supported at the beginning of their secondary school career. Support and guidance for learning is not sufficiently focused on the clear identification of pupils' learning needs and the improvement strategies which will enable them to make good progress. Individual education plans for those children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not always have clear targets which are consistently addressed at all times.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides satisfactory leadership. It is stronger in relation to the care and protection of pupils and their good personal development. As a result, these are significant strengths of the school, which are major factors in making sure pupils' learning is not badly affected by such factors as poor attendance, insufficient support for pupils with extra learning needs and misbehaviour. Strong support is given by senior colleagues and governors in these areas. In academic matters, there has been a more robust approach to improving assessment, managing data and expecting more from pupils. These developments are making adequate improvements to standards and progress. Currently, there are inconsistencies in the way individual staff implement procedures such as marking, but where they are implemented well the quality of teaching and learning is good and pupils are doing well. Many of these initiatives are at a relatively early stage of implementation and improvements in results are only slowly emerging. Improvement planning is directed at the right priorities but there is not enough rigour in the identification of measures of success. Governors are very helpful and hard-working, but there are shortcomings in the way that they evaluate the work of the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Thomas Walling Primary School, Newcastle upon Tyne,

NE5 3PL

Mrs Smee, Mrs Elton and I thoroughly enjoyed being in your school this week. We were impressed by your warm welcome, courtesy and the help you gave us.

What we particularly liked about your school was:

- the good progress made by children in Nursery and Reception
- your good behaviour, very good attitudes to school and the strong relationships you develop
- the interesting and fun lessons your teachers give you
- the way you all work so hard to make your school such a caring place to be
- the good contribution that you make to the life of your school and the wider communities
- the good range of activities that make learning so exciting for you, such as growing plants in the large gardens and the visits you undertake
- the way that your headteacher and other teachers are trying very hard to improve the school, particularly the things you learn and the progress you make.

We have asked your teachers to improve your learning in writing, mathematics and science. You can be a great help by always doing your best work and by continuing to show great attitudes to your work and school. We have also suggested that you need to have an even clearer view of how well you are doing and what you need to do next to improve. We are sure that you will want to follow the advice from your teachers very closely. Last but not least, we want your teachers to give you every opportunity to use and develop your basic writing, number and ICT skills in all the work that you do.

The inspection team wishes you well and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Heap

Lead inspector