



Thomas Bullock Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121127
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 292022
Inspection dates 16–17 October 2006
Reporting inspector George Knights

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Pound Green Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Shipdham, Shipdham
Age range of pupils	4–11		Thetford, Norfolk IP25 7LF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01362 820300
Number on roll (school)	171	Fax number	01362 820581
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs C Lawrence
		Headteacher	Mr D Saunders
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 16–17 October 2006	Inspection number 292022
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Thomas Bullock is a smaller than average sized Church of England primary school serving the village of Shipdham and its surrounding area. Pupils join the school at the beginning of the year in which they become five years old. Attainment on entry varies from year to year but is, overall, broadly average. Around a quarter of pupils are identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities, which is above average. Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds, including rented and owner-occupied housing, and the number eligible for free school meals is below average. A small number of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, including a few pupils from the Traveller community. Almost all pupils currently in the school speak English as their home language. The school holds the Silver Artsmark award and has met the requirements of the Healthy Schools award.

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 provides a satisfactory education for all its pupils and this accords with the school's own judgement. Pupils settle well into the Foundation Year and quickly become familiar with school routines. They make steady progress so that, by the time they enter Year 1, they are working at expected standards. Throughout the school, achievement is satisfactory with pupils reaching average standards by the end of Year 6, although in 2006 they were lower than anticipated, especially in writing. This pattern of sound achievement is the product of satisfactory teaching. Some teachers use assessment information well to successfully modify work to meet the needs of particular groups and, when this happens, pupils enjoy the challenging targets provided for them and respond positively. Elsewhere, lessons are not always well matched to pupils' needs and hence progress is slower. Pupils are very aware of when teaching is lively and stimulating and they recognise that this is when they learn best. They want to do well, both in lessons and in the other activities the school provides for them. Senior managers have identified the need to improve teaching standards and have begun to implement a programme of evaluation of teachers' work but subject leaders are not yet involved enough in this. This still lacks enough rigour, but is beginning to identify good practice and areas where further improvement is needed in order to raise standards.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The school takes good care of its pupils' pastoral needs. Consequently pupils feel safe in school and parents are confident that their children are looked after well. Pupils enjoy each others company and they also get on well with their teachers. Their personal development is good leading to good behaviour in lessons and around the school. They understand and can talk about the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and they enjoy the many opportunities they have for physical exercise. The school's curriculum is satisfactory and is currently under review. Outcomes from this process so far have seen an improvement in the range of activity for all pupils, particularly in the creative arts. Pupils also benefit from being able to learn French, and steps are being taken to introduce Spanish as an additional language. This broadening of the curriculum is one way in which pupils are being prepared for the next stage of education and for adult life. Good attention is paid to heightening pupils' awareness that they are growing up in a diverse cultural, ethnic and religious society.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. For a number of years after the previous inspection the school made slow progress, but the pace of improvement has recently increased and is now satisfactory. During the past year the newly appointed headteacher has involved staff and governors in rewriting the school's aims and in reviewing all aspects of the school's work in order to identify areas where improvement is needed. Outcomes of this review have formed the basis of the school's plans for further improvement. There is now a clear understanding of what needs to be done and hence the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. The school currently provides sound value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the data available from the tracking of pupils' work and progress to set challenging targets for improvement in all year groups.
- Bring more rigour to all of the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures and particularly the evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching.
- Extend the roles and enhance the leadership skills of subject leaders.
- Further improve writing standards throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Results in national assessments at the end of Year 2 and tests at the end of Year 6 have, in recent years, been average. This represents sound progress for the pupils involved. In 2006, Year 6 results were lower than anticipated, particularly in writing. The school recognises that writing is an area in need of improvement and has implemented a plan that is enhancing writing standards throughout the school. The achievement of pupils from all backgrounds currently in the school is satisfactory, with some variation from year group to year group, depending on the quality of teaching in each class. Teachers are aware of the specific needs of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. They are thus able to provide the support necessary for these pupils to make similar progress to other pupils in the class. The school did not meet its targets in 2006 but has demonstrated its commitment to raising standards by setting challenging targets for the coming year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils want to do well and they enjoy celebrating their achievements in assembly. They are confident and they feel safe in the school community. Prefects and the school's house system encourage pupils to work and play together harmoniously. The school makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through thinking about their own and different faiths and cultures, pupils learn respect and tolerance. Pupils are actively involved in the wider community, for instance by raising funds for charities, assisting at lunchtimes in the Day Care Centre and taking an active part in events such as Remembrance Day. All pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and, in recognition of this, the school is awaiting receipt of the Healthy Schools Award. Many out-of-class activities involve physical exercise. Fresh fruit is available for younger pupils and water is easily accessible. Pupils are successfully acquiring the essential skills that will equip them for the next stages of education and for adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, though with significant variation in quality from class to class. In the best lessons, teachers provide work which is well matched to the needs and prior attainment of pupils, but this is not always the case. Some teachers are skilled at asking challenging questions that excite and stimulate pupils, who respond thoughtfully. This is just one example of the sort of strength that exists in some parts of the school that could usefully be shared more widely. In some other lessons, however, pupils spend too much time undertaking routine tasks and exercises, rather than taking part in stimulating activities that would motivate them better and thus lead to improved achievement. Teachers mark work conscientiously but some do not consistently use day-to-day assessment of how well pupils have done to plan next steps. Hence activities are not always well matched to the needs of individuals. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together, with the teaching assistants providing good support to pupils in the groups they work with.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A review of the curriculum has led to a broadening of the range of activities in order to capture pupils' interests better and to raise standards in literacy and mathematics. One class has, for example, linked aspects of art, religious education and English by collecting and combining 'water words' into a dramatic collage, expressing the importance of looking after the earth's water supply. More remains to be done to improve the curriculum, for instance in developing further applications of information and communication technology. The school has been successful in gaining an Artsmark award for its music, arts and drama activities. Funding from the Thomas Bullock Foundation Trust supports tuition in a range of musical instruments for almost half the pupils in the school. Visits to places of interest, such as the Great Cressingham Victorian School, help to bring the curriculum alive, as do events such as the environment week. Visits from groups such as a gospel choir and events such as exhibitions of pupils' artwork stimulate pupils' creativity. Pupils with particular talents are supported through enrichment days which challenge their abilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are looked after well and they feel able to talk to staff if they have any problems. By sharing thoughts and feelings in circle time, pupils learn how to deal with issues and concerns in a sensible and fair manner. Links with the local church help promote Christian values, including those of care and concern for one another. Pupils feel that bullying is rare and that it is dealt with quickly and effectively when it does occur. Teachers know their pupils well and parents find staff friendly and approachable. Child

protection procedures are robust; arrangements are regularly reviewed and all members of staff are trained. Risk assessments are carefully attended to. The school is a safe place in which pupils move around in a calm and orderly manner. Pupils are prepared well for their move to secondary school. Their academic progress is adequately monitored and recorded but not enough use is made of this tracking information to set targets that are challenging enough to help pupils make better progress in each year group. The school works well in enlisting the help of others, such as the Traveller Education and Ethnic Minority Services, to support specific groups of pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Since he arrived just over a year ago the headteacher has successfully led staff and governors in a review of the school. This has ensured a better understanding of its strengths and areas for development and a clear sense of direction that all share. There is a growing sense of teamwork as the school seeks to move forward. Systems for evaluating much of what goes on in the school have not been rigorous enough in the past but are improving. Training is planned to equip subject leaders with the skills they need to lead their colleagues successfully in improving their areas of responsibility. Governors have recently undertaken a detailed evaluation of their own work and produced a plan of action for improving their effectiveness. The school makes sound use of the resources available and it also effectively enhances facilities by using funds it receives from a local charitable trust.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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	3
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	3
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.

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

18 October 2006

Dear Children

Thomas Bullock Primary School, Pound Green, Shipdham, Thetford, Norfolk. IP25 7LF

I would like to thank you all very much for making us feel so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. We really enjoyed coming to your lessons, joining you in assembly and watching you play together. Thank you for talking to us about your work and helping us to find our way around.

You clearly enjoy your time in school and you know that your teachers and their assistants help you to learn and get along well together. You know how you learn best and you explained this to us clearly. Your teachers are working to make sure that you will be able to learn in these ways in all your classes so that you can all do even better than you have been doing so far. We were pleased to see how well you help one another, both in lessons and when you are playing. You obviously feel safe in school and this is because members of staff care for you and make sure that you get the support you need. Your teachers are, rightly, going to make better use of the detailed records that they keep of how well you are doing. They will then be able to give you more help with your work.

Your headteacher, school staff and governors have put together a useful plan for how they are going to make your school even better. They still need to make sure that all teachers know what they do well and what they need to improve. They also need teachers to help one another to teach each subject even better by sharing ideas with one another. We have also asked them to help you to do better in your writing. We are sure that they can be successful in improving your school and we know that you will help them to do this.

Our very best wishes to you. We hope that you all do very well in the future.

Yours sincerely,

George Knights

Lead inspector