

# Thameside Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123083
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314487
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mary Sinclair

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	127
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Vanessa Chung
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Sally-Anne Crowther
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 January 2004
<b>School address</b>	Cotman Close Abingdon OX14 5NL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01235 527600
<b>Fax number</b>	01235 527600

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Thameside is smaller than most schools. Its catchment includes areas of significant disadvantage and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than usual. The vast majority of pupils are White British. Very few learn English as a second language. Until recently, the school has had a relatively high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. This is now broadly average. Two pupils have statements of special educational need.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with Section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, HCMI is of the opinion that the school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

In the Foundation class, lively teaching and a stimulating curriculum enable the children to make good progress and demonstrate their potential. However, teaching in Years 1 to 6 is not good enough to sustain this initial rate of learning. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have remained exceptionally low for five years. Progress has been inadequate, particularly in English and mathematics, for three years.

The school has received support from the local authority through its two-year intensifying support programme. One initiative involved introducing a system to track pupils' progress. This is helping the school to identify pupils who are underachieving and require additional help to catch up. In another initiative, pupils were encouraged to select the hardest target they could manage and then work to achieve it by the end of the lesson. This is helping pupils to become more involved in their own learning. These initiatives are helping to give pupils better access to the curriculum.

Despite this intensive support by the local authority, pupils across all year groups are not making satisfactory progress consistently. This is because the school's evaluation of itself has not been rigorous enough to identify accurately the weaknesses in its provision. Therefore the legacy of underachievement and low standards remains. There is a lack of well-focused monitoring. Strategic planning is not focussed sharply enough on the weaker aspects of the school's work. Consequently, barriers to learning remain, slowing pupils' progress. One of these barriers is low standards in reading. Although standards in reading at Key Stage 1 have fallen steadily over the last three years and are now exceptionally low, the causes of this decline have not been identified so that they can be addressed.

The school does not ensure that all pupils have equal access to quality learning and the curriculum. Insufficient emphasis is given to helping pupils to develop the skills that they require to become independent learners. This limits their opportunities to think for themselves, to apply their learning and to solve problems. In turn, this inhibits their progress, as it limits their access to the higher levels of learning. Adjustments made to the curriculum are not sufficient to meet the needs of all pupils.

Although pupils say that their curricular targets '...make you want to work harder', the academic guidance provided through teachers' comments in pupils' books is less effective. In a number of classes, teachers do not give pupils a clear idea as to how they might improve.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Teaching in the Foundation Stage reflects a secure understanding of how young children learn. Ordering food from a menu whilst eating out at a restaurant and explaining to 'Scruffy the Crow' how to improve letter formation are some of the stimulating activities that help children to make good progress from their low starting points. The curriculum provides a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Assessment is used effectively to advance children

to the next steps in their learning, enabling them to make good progress. Consequently, the majority of children achieve the expected levels for their age by the end of Reception.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Build the capacity of leaders to evaluate accurately the work of the school and to pursue improvement rigorously.
- Raise standards and improve progress in English and mathematics in Years 1 to 6 by identifying precisely what pupils need to achieve to advance to the next stage of learning.
- Use day-to-day assessment to set tasks that engage pupils and are well matched to their needs and capabilities.
- Provide pupils with the skills and opportunities to become independent learners.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Pupils enter Key Stage 1 with skills and abilities that are broadly in line with those expected nationally. By the end of Year 2 standards are below average, and very low in reading, and progress is inadequate. Significant weaknesses in pupils' basic skills hold back their learning. One reason for this is that teachers are not identifying precisely when pupils are ready to advance to the next steps in their learning.

At the end of Year 6, standards have been exceptionally low and progress inadequate for several years. Few pupils reach the higher Level 5 because of previous underachievement. Standards are better for the current Year 6, reflecting the ability of the cohort, but they remain below average. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in Year 5 are exceptionally low and progress is inadequate. Scrutiny of Year 6 pupils' work during inspection indicated that although progress in mathematics was likely to be satisfactory, in writing pupils progress was much slower. Pupils with learning difficulties are not making enough progress. Teachers do not adjust lessons sufficiently to help pupils of different abilities to engage in their learning and make better progress. Consequently, pupils are not as well prepared as they should be for the next stage in their education.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They know how to keep healthy. All join in 'Wake Up, Shake Up' sessions enthusiastically. Most pupils have positive attitudes to work and are keen to reach their curricular targets. A minority of pupils find it difficult to concentrate and occasionally their behaviour adversely affects the concentration of others. Some pupils, particularly pupils with learning difficulties, are over-reliant on teaching support and are reluctant to engage in independent work. For others, this work is limited by underdeveloped literacy skills. Pupils value their views being listened to and being able to take responsibility within the school. The school council meets regularly to represent their views. Older pupils enjoy helping the Reception children and staffing the school office at lunchtime. Pupils enjoy performing in the spring concert.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils try to follow the school's code of behaviour. They relate well to adults and enjoy welcoming visitors to the school. The school is working to improve attendance through closer contacts with parents, but this remains below average.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 4

Teaching is inadequate because it does not ensure that pupils make the progress of which they are capable. There is not enough good teaching to stimulate effective learning, generate rapid progress and raise standards quickly. In most lessons, pupils' behaviour is well managed and relationships are good. However, planning, teaching and assessment do not always identify the key points that pupils need to grasp to make progress. In many lessons, assessment information is not used well enough to pitch tasks at the right level and to motivate and engage different ability groups.

The quality of pupils' learning is not as good as it should be. Pupils have too few opportunities to think for themselves. Too often, teachers fail to match work to pupils' needs and set tasks that pupils cannot attempt without help from a teaching assistant. This makes pupils dependent upon support, and they often become passive learners, which slows their progress. Throughout the school, pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their skills as independent learners so that they generate their own ideas.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

At the time of the last inspection, the curriculum did not meet statutory requirements for religious education and information and communication technology (ICT). These issues have now been addressed. The curriculum is based on nationally produced schemes of work. However, these have not been sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of all pupils in the school. This limits pupils' access to the curriculum, which in turn limits their progress. The school does not appear to have identified and addressed this issue. The curriculum offers too few opportunities for problem solving and investigative work.

The school rightly places emphasis upon teaching English and mathematics and recognises the need for further development of these skills in other curriculum areas. Additional support is given to pupils who are underachieving in literacy and mathematics. A recent review of the whole school curriculum plan has provided opportunities to enhance cross-curricular work and increase the use of ICT in other curriculum areas. A high proportion of pupils are taught to play a musical instrument. Extra-curricular activities and visits provide further enrichment and are well attended.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

The arrangements for ensuring that pupils are safe are robust. Learners at risk are identified early and effective arrangements put in place. Behaviour is managed satisfactorily and supported by a successful behaviour policy. This explains why incidents of serious misbehaviour leading to exclusions have reduced.

Pupils are set curricular targets and pupils enjoy the challenge that they provide. However, the monitoring of pupils with learning difficulties has not been adequate, and some do not make enough progress. The school recognises that the support for these pupils is not sufficiently focused to meet their needs. Marking for all pupils is not sufficiently rigorous and does not

help pupils to know how to improve. The school makes effective use of a range of outside agencies to support vulnerable children.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 4**

The headteacher has established a calm working environment in the school. However, the quality of leadership and management is inadequate because leaders and managers have not been sufficiently effective in improving provision, or the achievement and standards of all pupils. The school did not meet all of its targets in 2007, and evidence provided during inspection suggests that it will not do so in 2008, particularly for higher ability pupils. It has focused its self-assessment upon signs of progress and interpreted these as clear improvement, whilst significant barriers to pupils' learning remain in place. Consequently, it has created too positive a picture of how well it is doing.

The school has made insufficient progress in addressing significant weaknesses raised in the last inspection report. Although key weaknesses in the curriculum have been addressed too little has been done to ensure that pupils make faster progress, particularly in English. The headteacher and senior management team have not monitored lessons rigorously enough to ensure that the tasks the pupils are set provide appropriate challenge. They have not ensured that the curriculum has been adjusted to give equal access to all pupils. This has prevented pupils achieving as well as they should.

The weak progress outlined above shows that the school's capacity to improve is inadequate. In contrast, work conducted in close collaboration with the local authority on target setting and tracking records has been effective and pupils' social skills are improving. However, not enough progress has been made in improving either the assessment of pupils' work or the quality of teaching. The governors support the school well and ensure that it meets statutory requirements but they do not probe deeply enough to identify the cause of barriers to progress.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

25 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thameside Primary School, Abingdon, OX14 5NL

This letter is to tell you about the findings of the recent inspection and to thank you for taking the time to talk to me about the school. I visited lessons, looked at some of your work and talked to some of the adults in your school. As a result, I have decided that your school is not doing as well as it should, and needs special help to ensure it improves quickly. I have asked your headteacher to find out more about the strengths and areas for improvement in your school, so that she can make changes where they are needed. This is so that you can make better progress and reach much higher standards than you do now.

Some of you said that you enjoy lessons but others thought the work was too hard. I have asked your teachers to make sure that the tasks they set are just right for you so that you will have to think and try hard in all lessons. I have asked your teachers to help you to learn the skills you need to work by yourself, without always needing the help of an adult.

I am sure that you will do all you can to help your school improve.

Yours sincerely

Mary Sinclair

Lead Inspector