

Thomas Buxton Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100930
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	323377
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2008
Reporting inspector	David Whatson

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	190
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Guy Nicholson
Headteacher	Ms Nicola Horton
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Buxton Street London E1 5AR
Telephone number	020 7247 5343
Fax number	020 7247 5569

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Thomas Buxton Infants' school is similar in size to other schools. It has 78 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Children enter the school in the September after their third birthday. Most pupils are of Bangladeshi origin and many of these are at an early stage of learning English. There are many more pupils than usual with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many of these pupils have speech and communication difficulties or moderate learning difficulties. The percentage of pupils who qualify for free school meals is well above average. The school holds the Basic Skills Award (2008). Three new teachers started in September; two of whom are new to the profession and are teaching in the EYFS.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Thomas Buxton's is a good and happy school in which all pupils achieve well because of the good provision. Staff, parents and pupils endorse this view.

High-quality care, guidance and support result in excellent personal development and well-being. Pupils develop as sensible and friendly individuals in a very safe environment. This contributes significantly to their enjoyment of school and their eagerness to learn. Pupils feel safe and their behaviour is excellent. They have a thorough understanding of healthy living and readily take on responsibilities around the school. Pupils follow the strong lead given by adults and this is reflected in their outstanding spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Attendance is broadly satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection. The school has worked successfully with parents to increase the rate of attendance.

The excellent curriculum enables all pupils to enjoy a wide range of interesting work. For example, in collaboration with a local Catholic school, pupils created their own humorous animations called 'Giraffes Can't Dance'. An extensive range of well-planned trips and visitors increases pupils' enjoyment and provides very good stimulus for pupils' writing. Popular out-of-class activities, such as dance and art, effectively promote children's good personal and academic development.

When children are admitted to the Nursery, their skills are below those generally found in three-year-olds. By the end of Year 2 standards are just below the national average. This represents good progress, and sometimes very good progress, as the school has focused strongly on meeting pupils' individual needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Standards in mathematics are not as high as those in reading and writing. The many pupils learning English as an additional language, and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make better than expected progress because of the high-quality support they receive.

Whilst teaching is good, and sometimes outstanding, there is at times a lack of challenge, particularly in mathematics. This means that, in some lessons, pupils do not make the progress they could. The teaching of letters and sounds and reading is very structured and is a key to pupils' very good progress. However, those pupils at an early stage of learning to write do not receive sufficient support and guidance for them to make good progress. Lessons are usually interesting and enjoyable, with clear explanations and interesting tasks that capture the imagination and encourage pupils to share ideas and work well together.

At the heart of this positive picture is the strong leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by her senior team. Since the last inspection, their focus on providing high-quality care and raising standards has made a positive difference to pupils' future life chances. The school's track record of improvements, and determination to make things even better, gives it a good capacity to improve. Governors support the school well and have a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's view of itself is mostly accurate. However, it does not know exactly how well it is doing or exactly how to improve, as its self-evaluation focuses on provision rather than outcomes, as does the school's improvement plan.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage. Excellent relationships with parents help children settle quickly. Indoor activities provide many opportunities for children to follow their own curiosity, to use their initiative creatively, make decisions and respond to challenges. These are well matched to children's developmental needs and represent a good balance between child-initiated and adult-focused activities. The outdoor area adds much to children's enjoyment, but the focus on learning is not always well planned. Support staff relate to the children very well and make a significant contribution to their learning. Children's progress is assessed throughout the day and teachers are increasingly using this information to plan the next stage in each child's learning. As a result, in relation to their starting points, all groups of children, including the most vulnerable, make good progress. They achieve standards in most areas of their learning that are just below that expected for their age by the time they start Year 1; however, they are lower in language and literacy. The well-led EYFS is steadily introducing new guidance concerning the teaching of children under the age of five.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics and writing by providing greater challenge in mathematics lessons and more structure and guidance to those at an early stage of learning to write.
- Monitor and evaluate school improvement more carefully against the targets set in order to gain a clearer picture of how well the school is doing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Assessment information shows that all groups of pupils, including those with speech and language difficulties and/or moderate learning difficulties, make good progress from their low starting points. The many Bengali speakers make good and sometimes very good progress, for example, in their speaking and listening, due to the focus placed on English language development and the skilful support they receive. Standards are higher than when the school was last inspected; in 2008 they were slightly below the national average. Standards were higher in reading and writing than in mathematics. Pupils make excellent progress in their reading, as do many in their writing. However, a few pupils at an early stage of learning to write and the more able in mathematics, did not reach the higher standards of which they are capable.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

'I really like my school' is typical of the comments of many pupils. Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school. They are friendly and courteous to each other and adults and work very collaboratively in pairs or in groups. Pupils report that they feel very safe in the school and know who they can speak to if they feel unhappy. The school council takes its role very seriously and is proud of its contribution in helping the school improve its playground provision. Pupils have a very clear understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and enjoy participating in 'Fit in Five' (a short daily session of physical exercise). Pupils value their differences and celebrate the many traditions among them and within the local community. Attendance is broadly similar to the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers carefully plan lessons that include learning objectives with a range of activities to quickly engage and interest pupils, and to make their learning enjoyable. There are, however, occasions when the higher attaining pupils in mathematics are not sufficiently challenged, especially by the questions they are asked. Additional adults in lessons are extremely well deployed and provide very good support for pupils with learning difficulties. The use of a highly structured approach to the teaching of letters and sounds and reading, supports pupils' very good progress in this area. However, this same high-quality approach is not used in the teaching of writing to those at an early stage of learning to write. Marking is usually encouraging with suggestions on how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The overall quality of the curriculum is outstanding and is enriched with an extensive range of varied activities to support pupils' learning. The school plans many visits to places of interest to give pupils first-hand experiences of the wide range of topics and projects studied. Resident artists, musicians and ceramicists provide expert skills to enhance pupils learning. The school also provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities during the lunch break that are highly valued and well supported by the pupils. The school's SEAL programme (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) is firmly embedded and makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. The school makes good use of its new information and communication technology facilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The systems to promote pupils' safety are very robust. All staff are very caring and always have the pupils' best interests at heart. There is a strong emphasis on forging positive relationships. Pupils who experience learning difficulties are identified at an early stage. They receive very good individual support often involving the assistance of outside agencies. The school has prioritised improving attendance and, due to the allocation of additional resources to this goal, there has been some success. There are detailed and secure systems in place to monitor pupils' academic progress with regular moderation sessions and the setting of challenging targets for future improvement. Parents are well informed of their children's better than expected progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The impact of senior leaders is especially apparent in the exciting curriculum, through the high levels of care and in pupils' outstanding personal development and their good progress. The headteacher's clear vision for taking the school forward is shared wholeheartedly by staff and governors. The senior team form a cohesive group, complementing and supporting each other. The governors' involvement in the strategic development of the school, and in holding it to account for the quality of education it provides, is developing. The headteacher and governors

have an accurate view of the school's performance. However, leaders and managers do not always know exactly how well the school is improving as they only routinely monitor and evaluate the school's provision rather than frequently evaluating its performance against outcomes. Links with other schools, business partners and those hard-to-reach members of the community are very strong.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

02 December 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Thomas Buxton Infants' School, London, E1 5AR

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we came to visit your school. We had a lovely time seeing how well you get on with each other and the exciting things that you do, such as your animations about a dancing giraffe. It was good to see how hard you work, how well you behave and how good you are at sharing and listening. A lot of you talked to us and told us what you were doing and what you like about your school. We agree with you that you do go to a good school. There are many good and sometimes excellent things about your school and these are just a few of them.

- You achieve well and make good progress in your learning, especially in learning English.
- Your teachers are good and provide an excellent curriculum for you to follow. You are fortunate to be able to try out lots of exciting new things.
- The Reception and Nursery classes give you a good start to your education.
- You enjoy coming to school and have a great time there.
- All the adults care a great deal about you all and look after you very well.
- The headteacher is good at her job and all staff and governors work well together.

Even in such good schools like yours there are always things that can improve. We have agreed with the school that it is important that those of you who are at an early stage of learning to write should be given more help and in mathematics we have asked the teachers to provide some harder work. All the school's leaders and managers want the school to get even better. So before we left it was decided that they would look more carefully at how well the school is doing so that they can plan future improvements even more carefully than they do now.

We hope you continue to enjoy school, work hard and come to school regularly.

Yours sincerely

David Watson

Lead Inspector