

Thameside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109800
Local Authority	Reading
Inspection number	325030
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Stephen McShane HMI

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	288
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	Mrs Sue Blesset
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Wallace (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wolsey Road Caversham Reading RG4 8DB
Telephone number	01189 015 551
Fax number	01189 015 552

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Thameside School is slightly bigger than the average primary school and has seen a recent increase in its number of pupils. Almost a third are in receipt of free school meals. The proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic group and that of pupils learning an additional language are above the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally; the majority of these have moderate or specific learning difficulties. This proportion varies greatly from year to year. Many pupils leave and join the school throughout the year.

The numbers of children in the school's Early Years Foundation Stage have increased. It now has two Reception classes, and following recent changes to the local authority's admission policy, all children now enter at the beginning of the autumn term.

Since January 2009 the school has had an acting headteacher, who is seconded from another Reading school. A senior member of the school's staff is the acting deputy headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Thameside provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has just entered a period of considerable change to its senior management team. The energy of the acting headteacher has focused and galvanised the hard-working staff and governing body. There are good features of the school on which to build. Time and again inspectors saw for themselves and were told how caring the school is. Adults know the pupils and their families well, and this creates an atmosphere where pupils feel safe. Pupils from diverse cultures play well together. They are polite and their behaviour is good.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Their attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average, but pupils enter the school with a wide spread of abilities, and different year groups have very different profiles. Standards are broadly average by the time they leave in Year 6. The number of pupils reaching expected levels fluctuates from year to year, which reflects the differences between the groups of pupils; nevertheless, pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points.

Teachers manage their classrooms well. They provide a range of activities and the pupils are diligent. However, sometimes teaching is not sufficiently and consistently targeted to meet the needs of individuals and groups to ensure that all pupils are making good progress. The school collects information on the pupils' progress and tracks them regularly. However, it does not always use this data consistently to inform teaching or to analyse which pupils could be making better progress.

Pupils develop good personal skills. They enjoy coming to school. They are very positive about their school, particularly the teachers and other adults. Parents share this sense of satisfaction. Pupils are reflective, have a good knowledge about healthy eating and how to keep themselves safe, and can talk about important issues such as the environment.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors and middle leaders are committed to the school and its improvement. Since the last inspection they have worked diligently on a range of different improvement initiatives. Up until now leaders and managers at all levels have not monitored and evaluated the school's performance consistently. It is early days for the new team, but the acting headteacher knows what the school needs to improve. With the governors and the middle leaders she has set suitable targets.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Overall provision in Reception is satisfactory. There is evidence of recent improvements, and there are aspects that are good. It has clear strengths in the care of children and in the development of stronger links with parents and carers.

Child/adult ratios are secure, and learning is promoted satisfactorily. A range of stimulating activities is provided, and children can choose activities for themselves during free-choice sessions. For example, children were observed enjoying making Valentine cards and working in the 'vet's surgery'. More formal sessions, for example in number work and literacy, are equally beneficial, with children acquiring basic skills at an appropriate rate. The children are confident in choosing activities, working with others, and clearing up at the end of sessions. The atmosphere in all areas is harmonious and purposeful. The outdoor area is broadly satisfactory, although it lacks a suitable surface for climbing and the range of activities is limited in poor

weather. The provision to enable children to move freely between indoor and outdoor play is underdeveloped and therefore restricts opportunities to explore the different activities on offer.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good support has been provided for a newly qualified teacher, and ancillary staff and resources are used well. Good links with pre-schools ensure that children settle well, and good provision is in place for those with additional needs. Assessment of children's progress is now thorough and undertaken on a regular basis, enabling teachers to track progress more accurately. These assessments show that children start Reception with a wide range of skills and abilities. They make satisfactory progress from their starting points. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, while children's skills are generally in line with those expected for their age, some children have particular strengths in personal, social and emotional development, language for communication and thinking, and physical development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' standards and achievement by improving teaching and learning, particularly the level of challenge for some individuals and groups of learners.
- Make better use of assessments to track pupils' progress accurately and plan interventions more effectively.
- Improve leaders', managers' and governors' skills in evaluating the school's performance to identify actions to improve pupils' achievement and the quality of provision.

A small proportion of the 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

Pupils' attainment on entry to Year 1 is broadly in line with the national average, but they enter with a wide spread of abilities, and different year groups, including the current Year 6, have very different profiles. Standards in Key Stage 1 have fluctuated in recent years. From a very low point in 2005 there was a steady improvement in all subjects in 2006 and 2007. In 2007, standards were at the national average. Standards fell in 2008, particularly in writing. Standards between 2006 and 2008 in Key Stage 2 were broadly average in all subjects. In 2007, contrary to the national picture, boys did better than girls. The current Year 6 pupils started in Year 3 with standards that were below national averages, and are now on track to meet targets which show that their attainment remains below national averages.

The school's data show that, given their starting points, pupils make progress in line with that expected. No particular group at the school significantly underperforms. The work seen in lessons and in pupils' books confirms satisfactory progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress according to the individual targets that they are set as a result of specific individual and group programmes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils throughout the school are polite and courteous. Their good social and moral skills are seen in the way they play harmoniously together and in their good relationships with adults.

Pupils welcome new adults and pupils into their community, and are sensitive toward individuals from different cultures and supportive toward those with learning difficulties.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. They report little bullying and are aware of the strategies to combat it. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe on the internet. They are generally very confident about sharing any concerns with adults. Pupils play energetically at break times. There is good participation in physical education and school sports clubs, and a good knowledge of diet means that they have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. The small number of prefects and pupils on the school council are very proud of their role, their contribution to the school, and the money the school has raised for charities.

Despite the school's efforts in this area, attendance remains stubbornly slightly below the national average. Every day a number of pupils, from Reception to Year 6, are late for school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall. In the majority of lessons there are positive relationships with pupils, clear behaviour management, and explanations and discussions which prepare pupils for acquiring new knowledge. In a French lesson, for example, that took place in an atmosphere with explicit behaviour expectations and a mixture of collaborative and competitive work, all pupils quickly acquired new vocabulary. There were quickly paced activities and well-prepared resources, including effective use of the interactive whiteboard. Pupils with learning difficulties were well supported by the sensitive and active support of teaching assistants.

In some lessons there is a lack of specific learning objectives that are based on ongoing assessments of the pupils. The lack of clear success criteria for individuals or groups makes it difficult to assess the learning that has taken place. It also reduces opportunities for teachers to put plans in place to further pupils' progress. Consequently, the level of challenge is insufficient for some pupils. The use of pupils' targets is inconsistent, and pupils who are aware of their targets are unsure of how they can meet them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets requirements. Literacy and numeracy follow national programmes. A recently revised creative curriculum is in the early stages of implementation. This is developing some good links across subjects in particular, involving the use of information and communications technology. Among the many examples were pupils in Key Stage 2 using it as an effective research tool to support history lessons, and, in Key Stage 1, to confidently edit and highlight work. There are opportunities for pupils' creative expression through art, during which pupils make beautiful clay pots and jars and realistic African masks, which develops their awareness of other cultures. The curriculum is enhanced through purposeful visits and pupils' high rate of attendance at the range of clubs such as drama, sports, football and country dancing, which they greatly enjoy. The impact of the recently revised curriculum is not yet evident. There are inconsistent systems for evaluating the impact of the curriculum across the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There are established systems in place for ensuring the safety and good well-being of pupils. There is good supervision of pupils, and regular assessments are conducted to minimise risk. The school complies with statutory requirements for checking the suitability of staff to work with pupils and keeping them safe. Where pupils have behavioural or learning difficulties, the school works closely with parents and health and social care professionals, to help remove any barriers to learning. Teaching assistants are deployed to give pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those learning English as an additional language, additional support. This leads to pupils who may be vulnerable to underachievement making satisfactory progress in their learning. However, the impact of this support is not effectively monitored.

Pupils do not always receive sufficient guidance on how to improve their work. Teachers' comments do not clearly specify what they should do to move on to the next stage in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The current leadership team have an accurate view of the school and where improvement is needed. There are appropriate plans in place to bring this about. It is very early days, but the determined leadership by the acting headteacher is developing a whole-school team committed to improvement. Staff talk with a 'can do' attitude and enthusiasm. Practical changes to the environment and routines are already having an effect on learning and well-being. Children are taking more responsibility for their resources and their learning, and respond well to the consistent behavioural expectations that have been set.

Governors work hard for the school. They are disappointed the school was unable to attract a permanent headteacher earlier, but have made good interim arrangements. They know aspects of the school well, but have not always challenged the school with sufficient rigour. Middle leaders collect data and lead initiatives, but lack experience in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and taking responsibility for improvements. However, they are enthusiastic, and there are suitable steps already in place to give them the necessary knowledge and development opportunities. The school therefore has satisfactory capacity to improve. The school is at the early stages of strategically promoting community cohesion. Currently it has satisfactory links with partners and links with its local and wider communities, including local churches, charities, cultural groups and schools in other parts of the world.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

26 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thameside Primary School, Reading, RG4 8DB

I am writing to say thank you very much for giving us such a warm welcome during our recent visit to your school. We were impressed with the way you greeted and helped us throughout our two days with you. We enjoyed talking with you about your work and hearing what you think about your school.

It was clear to us that Thameside is a changing place at the moment, with a new headteacher and some new ways of doing things. You told us you liked some of the changes. You also told us how kind all the teachers and adults are. We saw that they care for you well. We also saw that your behaviour is good. We were impressed by the way you play together and make Thameside a friendly place to be.

Although there are good things about your school, we judged that the school is providing you with a satisfactory education overall. You are making satisfactory progress, and we feel that some of you could do better. We have asked the teachers and governors to make improvements to the way they check how well you are progressing. When they have done this, we have asked that they set you challenging targets for you to work towards in all lessons. We want them to find different ways to give you more advice on the kind of things you could do to improve your learning, so that you can learn at a faster pace.

There are things you can do to help. Continue to work and play hard. Make sure that you come to school every day and on time.

It was a real privilege to visit Thameside Primary School at such an exciting time. Many of the adults told us about their excitement in meeting the challenges ahead. We are certain that you will play your part to make sure that your school remains happy, friendly, caring, and that it is a place of good learning.

Best wishes for the future; we hope that you achieve great things!

Yours faithfully

Stephen McShane

Her Majesty's Inspector