

# Thomas Walling Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108480
<b>Local Authority</b>	Newcastle Upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	337087
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 December 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joy Frost HMI

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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	353
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr David Besford
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Julie Scott
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Lindfield Avenue Blakelaw Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE5 3PL
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 2860333
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 2860333
<b>Email address</b>	admin@walling.newcastle.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons, and held meetings with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), staff, governors, and three groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, visited clubs and nurture groups and looked at the school improvement plan, conducted a scrutiny of the work in pupils' books, and looked at minutes of meetings and documents relating to monitoring and evaluation. Inspectors also scrutinised the 100 parent, 89 pupil and 16 staff questionnaires which were returned.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress and attainment of pupils in lessons to assess if teaching and learning are sufficiently challenging for all pupils, but especially more-able pupils, those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils in Key Stage 1
- the school's work to improve progress and attainment in mathematics
- how effectively teachers use assessment information to plan lessons which meet the needs of all pupils
- how well the curriculum, including information and communication technology (ICT), contributes to improved pupil outcomes
- how effectively leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, embed ambition and drive improvement leading to sustained improved outcomes for all pupils.

## Information about the school

Thomas Walling is an above average sized primary school situated in an urban residential area on the outskirts of Newcastle. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is above average and is increasing. The majority of pupils are from a White British heritage and there is a small proportion from minority ethnic, asylum seeker and refugee backgrounds. Around a tenth of pupils are at the early stages of learning to speak English. Over half of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is well above the national average. The number on roll is increasing due to the closure of a local school and through increased numbers of children in the Nursery. The proportion of pupils who enter or leave the school during the year is higher than nationally and many pupils enter the school during the year or half way through a Key Stage.

The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Nursery and two Reception classes. The school is housed in two separate buildings with a key stage in each. The school has achieved many national awards including the Healthy Schools Award, the Basic Skills Award, Sports Activemark, Enviro School award and the Business Enterprise Challenge award. The headteacher was new to the post in September 2008 and two other senior staff members have recently retired. At the time of the inspection, the deputy headteacher had not taken up post and this was being covered by an internal appointment.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

### Main findings

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Many aspects of the schools' provision are good, including the care, guidance and support given to all pupils, especially vulnerable pupils, the promotion of community cohesion and the schools' partnerships with parents. The extent to which pupils in the school feel safe is outstanding. The school community is calm and caring with excellent relationships between pupils and staff. All pupils were seen to get along well together and behaviour is well managed at all times so that in lessons pupils behave well and listen attentively to their teachers and enjoy their learning.

When pupils enter Year 1 their skills and knowledge are below, and often well below that expected of five-year-olds. They make satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics and at the end of Key Stage 1 attainment is below national expectations. The unvalidated test results for 2009 show that attainment improved significantly in English and science to be in line with national averages. In mathematics, however, attainment dipped after rising for a number of years. This represents satisfactory progress in mathematics and good progress in English, especially in writing. This pattern was mirrored during the inspection where the teaching and learning observed in English lessons was stronger than in mathematics. A scrutiny of pupils' books showed that pupils make less progress in mathematics than they do in English. This is due to a lack of opportunities in lessons for pupils to practise their quick recall of number facts and in some lessons a poor match of work to pupils' abilities, especially for younger pupils. There is no difference in the attainment of different groups of pupils across the school. Pupils who have a special educational need and/or disability generally make good progress because of the targeted interventions they receive and the good support from teaching assistants which accelerates their learning.

The curriculum has been revised to group subjects together under a themed approach and ICT is incorporated well across the curriculum. The school is aware that the curriculum needs further revision to better meet the needs of all groups of pupils, especially for pupils who enter Key Stage 1 working below national expectations and those who are not quite ready for formal learning.

The new leadership team work well together and in a short space of time they have made improvements across the school. Their work has been hampered to some extent by the retirement of senior staff. All of the team are new to the school or new to the role, some since September. Nevertheless, they have correctly identified strengths and areas for improvement to move the school forward. The headteacher has been successful in developing systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school which involve all staff. These have resulted in improvements in achievement in writing.

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Senior leaders have clear roles and responsibilities and leaders are given appropriate time and support to carry out their roles. Their skills in monitoring learning across the school, although carried out regularly, are still developing and the school improvement plan is not yet focused on measurable actions which will bring about rapid improvement. Consequently, the capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise attainment in mathematics across the school to nearer national expectations by:
  - improving pupils' ability to develop quick instant recall of number facts in mathematics lessons
  - developing a consistent approach to the teaching of number and calculations
  - accelerating pupils' progress through ensuring there is an accurate match of activities to pupils' abilities.
- Ensure transition arrangements are revised so that the curriculum better meets the needs of children who transfer to Key Stage 1 still working below National Curriculum levels.
- Develop the skills of the new leadership team so that they are able to focus their monitoring and evaluation on the impact of their work on pupils' learning to improve outcomes.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. As they progress through the school pupils make mainly satisfactory and some good progress from very low starting points. They reach standards at the end of Year 6 which are improving and are nearer the national average, especially in English. The work in pupils' books shows that in mathematics progress is slower than English because there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise their basic number skills and, therefore, they do not develop their number and calculation skills quickly enough. Pupils who have an identified special educational need and/or disability receive short, focused interventions in reading, writing and mathematics which ensure that they make good progress in these areas.

Pupils' knowledge of how to lead a healthy lifestyle is good. Even the very youngest pupils were observed discussing the need to wash their hands before setting out the role play area for a picnic. Pupils talk confidently about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and how they make choices and develop this with their parents at home. One pupil told inspectors how she had encouraged her parents to give up smoking. Pupils run a Fair Trade tuck shop at lunchtimes and are involved in all aspects of managing this provision. They also grow their own vegetables on site which are served in the school

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kitchens. On the playground and around school pupils are courteous and kind to each other; they have a good moral code and cooperate well. Older pupils help younger pupils at lunchtimes as buddies. Pupils told inspectors they feel very safe and secure in school because they knew someone who would help them if they had a problem and that any bullying was dealt with promptly. Pupils were also extremely knowledgeable about keeping themselves safe in a range of situations. They had a good understanding and awareness of fire and the dangers of drugs, alcohol abuse and smoking. They make informed choices in the dining hall and in the breakfast club about choosing healthy options.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Through assemblies, support groups and charity fundraising events pupils develop an awareness of other religions and faiths. Pupils were less knowledgeable about other cultures and this is an area that the school is developing through links with a school in China. Pupils are developing pen pals and exchanging information about their lives and learning about life in that country. The links with the local church and with the high school are very good. Pupils in Year 6, who are transferring to high school, make many visits, and staff regularly come into school to teach and to meet and work with vulnerable pupils, so that by the time pupils transfer they are confident and eager to go to their new schools. The extent to which pupils develop the skills to contribute to their own future economic well-being is currently satisfactory. Pupils' knowledge of number facts is not secure enough to enable them to apply them in every day life.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b> Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	<b>3</b>  3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with an increasing amount of good teaching. In the lessons observed during the inspection, teachers gave very clear instructions to pupils and shared with them what they were going to learn. In the good lessons, there was a lively pace and teachers used assessment information well to plan activities which matched pupils' abilities. Talk partners enable pupils to discuss their learning, reflect on their work and engage more fully with the lesson. Some teachers' questioning skills are very good. They skilfully plan questions which make pupils think about what other pupils have said and extend or develop their answers. In satisfactory lessons, the pace is slow and teachers talk for too much of the time. In mathematics lessons there are too few opportunities for pupils to count and develop their number skills at the beginning of the lesson. Also, assessment information is not used to plan activities which meet the needs of different pupils in the lesson. Too often the whole class do the same work which can be too hard or too easy. Teachers' marking is good in patches across the school. There are whole-school systems for marking in English which have brought about improvements to pupils' writing across the school. All pupils have individual targets to improve their work. Pupils know these well, but the systems to share these with pupils are inconsistently used across the school and across year groups.

The recent revisions to the curriculum have enabled pupils to practise their writing skills across different subjects. This has had an impact on writing standards but mathematics skills are not developing at the same rate. The school is aware that the curriculum for pupils in Key Stage 1 needs further revision to ensure that time is given to develop mathematical skills in other subject areas in order to accelerate progress and raise attainment. ICT is used well in most classes to engage pupils in learning and the ICT suite is used well to develop work in English. The curriculum is enriched with visits and visitors and older pupils attend a residential visit every year to develop their team building skills.

The care, guidance and support that pupils receive are good, and outstanding for vulnerable pupils. The school places a high priority on ensuring that the school is a lively and safe environment in which pupils are happy and confident. There is harmony between all groups of pupils within the school because of the many systems in place to nurture and support individual pupils. For example, the Buster Club where pupils can opt out of playing on the yard is well attended. Teachers and teaching assistants take every opportunity to counsel pupils which helps to raise their self-esteem. As a consequence, pupils show a heightened awareness of their own safety and that of others within and beyond the school.

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The family support worker and the education welfare officer work closely together to support vulnerable families. Their good work has resulted in improving attendance to satisfactory levels. The school is vigilant in the strategies it deploys to ensure pupils attend school regularly. The breakfast club is well attended and parents are encouraged to stay, have a free breakfast and read with their children. One working parent remarked that it was an excellent facility which ensured her child had a good start to the day and enabled her to spend quality time with him before school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher has set a clear direction for the school since her appointment in September 2008. She has been hampered in embedding some of the procedures to raise attainment by the constant changes to the leadership team. Leaders and managers have developed systems for monitoring pupils' progress across the school through rigorous tracking of individuals and cohorts, scrutiny of work and lesson observations. This data is shared with staff and the headteacher holds regular meetings with staff and outside agencies about individual pupils' progress and how best to support them.

Communication across the school and with parents has improved and the whole school is aware of the focus on raising attainment, achievement and attendance. Weekly newsletters inform parents of all school events, praise individual pupils' achievements and highlight attendance issues. This improved communication is much appreciated by parents who say they feel much more involved in their child's learning. Parents have opportunities to attend frequent coffee mornings, assemblies, breakfast club and family learning workshops.

The school's work is monitored by the governing body who are fully involved in the life of the school. Governors carry out their statutory duties well, they visit the school and some work alongside the children or take assemblies. The governing body's audit for community cohesion is comprehensive, as is their understanding of safeguarding and these aspects are given a high priority within the school. However, their ability to challenge the school's work and hold them to account is still developing.

The school is satisfactory in improving the life chances for all pupils and the family support worker has excellent links with local families who may be new to the area. A recent initiative to improve pupils' awareness of refugee and asylum seekers in the school and the local community has also added to the good community cohesion within



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the school. The school is aware of the different groups of pupils within the school and data shows that there is no difference in the attainment of different groups. Strategies to identify pupils who have a special educational need and/or disability are currently being revised by the new SENCO to ensure that teachers know what each child's specific learning difficulty is.

The school building is well maintained and there is a high staff to pupil ratio across the school. Pupils' achievement is improving and value for money is satisfactory.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

**Early Years Foundation Stage**

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been very recently revised with the appointment of a new Early Years manager. She has taken a firm lead in the development of the staff and in being a good role model for teaching and learning. The development of rigorous assessment data for each individual child shows that pupils currently in the Nursery class are making good progress from their low starting points. There is a good mix of child-initiated and teacher directed learning with many opportunities for pupils to play and learn in a safe and supportive atmosphere. All staff work together closely with a common purpose and relationships between staff and children are good. Children settle into school quickly, they follow school procedures and their behaviour is good. The school's data shows that previous slow progress is being eradicated and children are now developing their social and mathematical skills well. However, children's language skills are not yet developing quickly enough because pupils in the Reception class are not given enough opportunities to write independently. There are a lack of prompts and opportunities for teachers to develop language

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incidentally across the day. This has been identified by the school and plans are in place to improve this area of work this year. When pupils leave the key stage their attainment is still below national expectations, especially in communication, language and literacy and in their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Partnerships with parents and carers are good. Teachers give good feedback to parents about their child's progress and parents appreciate this. All welfare regulations are met. Children are involved in developing an awareness of their own safety by carrying out daily risk assessments of the outdoor area. Alongside teachers, they check that all equipment is safe to use and any possible hazards are recorded by the children on the daily sheet. Management of the unit is currently satisfactory but improving rapidly.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

**Views of parents and carers**

Inspectors received returned questionnaires from over a third of the parents and carers at the school. The parental questionnaire responses were overwhelmingly supportive. They were particularly pleased with the support their children receive for their learning, with the way the school takes account of their views and how safe their child is in school. Parents who took the time to write comments were also positive in their support for the schools' work with children who are learning to speak English, who have special educational needs and/ or disabilities and for the improved communication with parents in general.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thomas Walling Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 100 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 353 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	61	53	52	45	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	65	57	45	39	5	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	60	52	52	45	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	55	48	54	47	4	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	60	52	52	45	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	50	54	47	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	43	63	55	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	50	43	57	50	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	52	45	57	50	5	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	39	58	50	10	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	35	71	62	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	49	43	64	56	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	66	57	46	40	2	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



4 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thomas Walling Primary School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE5 3PL

I would like to thank you for your very warm welcome when I visited you recently to see how well you were doing. I was very impressed with your behaviour in and around the school. You get along together very well. You told my colleagues that there was always someone in school to help and support you if you have a problem. We could see for ourselves how knowledgeable you all are about leading a healthy lifestyle and keeping yourself safe from harm. You work hard in lessons and listen to your teachers because you have very good relationships with them. We found that you are making good progress in your reading and writing because these are the most interesting lessons. Those of you who need extra help are getting it in the many intervention groups you attend. We think that you could be making the same progress in your mathematics lessons as you do in English and so we have asked the headteacher and governors to make some changes to make your school even better because at the moment it is giving you a satisfactory education. We have asked them to improve the teaching of mathematics by:

- increasing opportunities for you to practise your number skills and counting
- making sure that all the teachers are teaching you the same methods for calculations across the school
- making sure that activities are not too hard or too easy.

We also think that teachers should look at the curriculum for the youngest pupils in Key Stage 1 to make sure that it is not too different from the Early Years Foundation Stage. Your headteacher and the senior leaders are going to improve the way they check on your progress and attainment by focusing on what you are learning in lessons.

You can help your teachers by telling them if work is too hard or too easy and by attending school regularly. I wish you every success in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Joy Frost

Her Majesty's Inspector

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