

Thomas Bullock Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121127
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	339874
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carolyn Lawrence
Headteacher	Mr David Saunders
Date of previous school inspection	16 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 21 lessons, observed all seven class teachers and spent the majority of the time observing learning. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a selection of documentation, including planning, evidence of monitoring such as lesson observations and analysis of pupils' work, and other assessment information. Inspectors scrutinised inspection questionnaires returned by 41 parents and carers.

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

- the reasons why attainment is not better by the end of Year 2 and how the school is ensuring more pupils attain higher levels for their age
- how effectively teachers use assessment to set targets
- the impact of the curriculum on progress and pupils' attitudes to learning
- the sustainability of improvement following senior leaders' long-term absence.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average sized school serving a rural area. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high. Among others, the school has the International School Award and the Bronze Eco-Schools award. The school benefits from the Thomas Bullock Trust, which provides funding for music lessons, school trips and other activities. At the time of the inspection an acting headteacher was running the school. In the previous term, both the headteacher and the deputy headteacher had been on long-term absence.

The school shares its site with a Day Centre and an independently run playgroup. The playgroup is subject to a separate inspection report.

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

Thomas Bullock Primary has been through a turbulent time with the absence of its senior leaders, but the acting headteacher has brought stability and is supported well by the staff team. As a pupil put it, 'The acting headteacher is pulling the school together again.' Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start, because of consistently good provision. Elsewhere in the school, pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points, although the pace of progress varies according to the quality of teaching. More-able pupils are sometimes insufficiently challenged and do not always do as well as they could in national tests and assessments.

Pupils' behaviour is good and they are considerate to one another. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is good. One of the reasons for this is excellent curriculum enrichment, with a wide variety of clubs and many visits and visitors. About 80 pupils learn a musical instrument, and art is a strength of the school. Pupils develop good personal qualities and grow in confidence, even though standards are a little below average when they leave. They say that they feel safe and secure in school, and they have a good understanding about making healthy choices. Pupils have good links with the local community, helping to serve lunches to elderly people at the adjacent Day Centre, and contributing to church services, such as the one for Mothering Sunday. They are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Teaching is satisfactory. There are good elements in Key Stage 2, where a lively pace and teachers' good subject knowledge enable pupils in these lessons to progress well. Teachers make good use of technology to engage and interest pupils. Generally satisfactory teaching in Key Stage 1 means that pupils make reasonable progress, but assessment information is not always used to plan work that challenges all pupils. Throughout the school, there is inconsistency in how pupils are guided to know what to do next to improve. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory. There is a good level of care for pupils who may be vulnerable. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution when working with groups, but are not always deployed effectively at the start of lessons.

The acting headteacher has been 'a good shepherd to the school flock' this term, ensuring everybody is going in the same direction and taking care of individual needs. He has set out a very clear vision for improvement with a focus on raising standards and achievement. He is building a strong team of middle leaders, who are taking a key role in monitoring the quality of provision. Since September, the local authority has provided good additional support from consultants in literacy and numeracy through the Improving Schools Programme. The impact of this work is being seen in improving attainment and faster progress especially for pupils in Key Stage 2, helping to ensure

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that the school has a sound capacity for further improvement. Governors bring support and commitment to the school but have only recently begun to give a clear strategic lead through holding leaders to account.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing and mathematics across the school, particularly for more-able pupils by:
 - using assessment information more effectively to provide sufficient challenge.
- Ensure teaching is consistently good or better, especially in Key Stage 1, by:
 - giving pupils clear guidance about the next steps in their learning
 - enhancing the role of teaching assistants during lesson introductions
 - sharing existing good practice across the school.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring governors give renewed strategic direction to the school
 - strengthening further the roles of all leaders in rapidly driving forward improvement.
- 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 have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy making use of technology, such as interactive calculation games. Year 5 pupils concentrated hard in creating stop-gap animations of myths and legends, manipulating figures made out of modelling clay against their own backdrops. Pupils take particular pride in art and design, such as the battery operated 'jitterbugs' created by Year 6 pupils that shake all over the table. Year 3 pupils took delight in thinking up 'bossy' words to give instructions for making a cup of tea. All groups of pupils make at least satisfactory progress, but more-able pupils do not always do better than expected for their age, especially at the end of Year 2, because tasks are not consistently challenging for them. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make sound progress from their starting points to meet their individual targets. There has been greater structure in the way literacy and numeracy have been taught this year, which has helped attainment and achievement to rise more rapidly.

Pupils are safety conscious and point out where improvements can be made. They understand about keeping safe when cycling. Awards for keeping active recognise the fact that the majority of pupils take part in sports clubs including judo, basketball and football. They take part in a scheme that promotes walking and cycling to school. Pupils take responsibility around the school as school councillors and prefects. They were involved in interviewing prospective headteachers. Pupils have exhibited artwork at the

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Sainsbury Centre in Norwich and made excellent models of Shipdham sheep for the Royal Norfolk Show. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They get on well together and worship enthusiastically in assemblies. Pupils do not have enough direct experience of meeting children from other backgrounds and cultures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The good practice that goes on in the school is not shared widely enough, especially with Key Stage 1. Some lessons are lively and motivate pupils well, as teachers use assessment information to plan work and set targets that challenge pupils. This is not consistent across the school. All teaching has clear objectives, but sometimes the steps necessary to achieve these are not defined precisely enough. Guidance varies. Marking shows pupils how to improve in some classes but is less helpful in others. Teaching assistants support learning well when working with groups and individuals, but sometimes have little to do when a lesson is being introduced. The good curriculum develops pupils' personal qualities well, especially through a wealth of enrichment activities such as residential visits. Pupils have opportunities to extend their learning

¹ 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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across different subjects. For example, Year 2 pupils wrote about Grace Darling and Year 6 pupils considered the arguments for and against evacuating children during World War II. Good use of the extensive grounds and wildlife areas enhance the curriculum and give pupils an understanding of the environment about them, something that has won them their Eco Bronze award.

Satisfactory care, guidance and support enable all pupils to make at least satisfactory progress, whatever their level of need. The parent support worker gives good support to families and helps the school ensure that attendance remains above average. Good pastoral care means new pupils settle quickly, as staff and pupils promote the school's family atmosphere.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Good use of tracking data and detailed strategic planning have enabled the acting headteacher and his team to monitor closely the impact of initiatives to drive forward improvement. Following a period of uncertainty earlier in the year, when both the headteacher and deputy headteacher were on extended absence, the new leadership team has given the school community a united vision for improvement. This is seen in rising attainment and achievement and a greater focus on improved outcomes for all pupils. At the same time, leaders and governors have ensured that the school's strengths, including its very positive ethos, have continued to grow.

The school promotes equal opportunity satisfactorily. It is an inclusive place where all pupils feel valued, but their academic progress is variable, with more-able pupils, in particular, not always doing as well as they could. All safeguarding arrangements are in place with a few minor recording amendments. Leaders and governors promote community cohesion well, both locally, where pupils are fully involved in village life, and globally. The school has won an International Award for its work with other schools abroad, particularly in France and Spain, and pupils benefit from their links with pupils in other countries. Where cohesion is not quite so strong is in pupils' understanding of the diverse cultures and backgrounds of people in Britain, although links with an inner city gospel choir have afforded some insight. Governors support the school in practical ways, for example in going on trips, and they keep careful records of their monitoring visits. They have not given a sufficient strategic lead to the school in the past which resulted in their having to act swiftly when senior leaders were absent for extended periods. They

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are now more aware of their roles and responsibilities, particularly in being a 'critical friend' to the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the Reception class with a range of skills and abilities broadly typical of those usually found. They make good progress because of consistently good teaching and a rich curriculum that draws on children's own interests. For example, children were making their own pop-up books because of their curiosity over how they were put together. Staff have a very good knowledge of the children through detailed observations. However, the records they keep do not place sufficient emphasis on the next steps for individual children based on their interests and aspirations, even though staff are aware of what these may be. The children's 'learning journeys' use photographs and comments to show how they are developing over time in the different areas of learning and build up a comprehensive picture of their achievements. The classroom and the outdoor areas are attractive spaces with plenty for the children to do and enjoy, and activities are planned carefully to encourage learning to take place. A striking 'tiger corner' celebrates the fact that children have adopted a tiger in India. By the end of the Reception Year, most pupils are reaching or exceeding the expected early learning goals. There is good leadership and management, with a strong staff team working effectively together. There are positive links with parents but staff do not conduct home visits before children join the Reception class.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are positive about the school and support its work. They have been sympathetic during its recent difficulties. One summed up their feelings by saying, 'Overall I feel the school has handled a difficult period of time well.' A few are unhappy about the way behaviour is managed, although inspection findings are that pupils' behaviour is good. Some feel their children could make better progress, and inspectors agree that some more-able pupils are not challenged enough. A small number say that the school could deal with their children's particular needs better. Inspectors found that the care, guidance and support for pupils is satisfactory, but that pupils do not always receive clear guidance about how to improve their work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thomas Bullock 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 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 172 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	59	14	34	1	2	2	5
The school keeps my child safe	28	68	10	24	3	7	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	56	12	29	5	12	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	41	18	44	4	10	2	5
The teaching is good at this school	21	51	17	41	2	5	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	39	22	54	2	5	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	37	24	59	2	5	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)	19	46	18	44	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	39	18	44	4	10	2	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	32	19	46	4	10	3	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	41	19	46	2	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	14	34	19	46	5	12	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	49	15	37	5	12	1	2

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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



15 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thomas Bullock Primary School, Thetford, IP25 7LF

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited. We enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school. The school provides you with a satisfactory education. These are some of the things it does well.

You feel safe at school and make healthy choices, taking plenty of exercise.

You behave well and are considerate towards one another.

You take on responsibilities around the school sensibly, and help out in the local community, for example by serving elderly people their lunch.

You enjoy assemblies and get involved with the local church.

There are plenty of clubs and visits for you to enjoy.

Many of you learn musical instruments and produce good artwork.

You know a lot about how children live in France and Spain because of your links with schools in those countries.

The youngest children get off to a good start in Reception.

We think you could do better in writing and mathematics and have asked your teachers to make sure the lessons challenge you, especially if you find work easy. We have asked them to show you clearly what you need to do to improve and to involve teaching assistants in helping you at the start as well as in the middle of lessons. You can help by telling your teachers what you enjoy about your learning and what interests you.

We have asked governors to keep a closer eye on how the school is doing and to ask searching questions.

Thank you once again for your help. Our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt

Lead inspector

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