

Thomas Eaton Community Primary School

Church Street, Wimblington, March, Cambridgeshire PE15 0QS

Inspection dates

16–17 June 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Until recently, leaders have not done enough to halt the decline in pupils' attainment and the quality of teaching which started soon after the previous inspection.
- Pupils do not make enough progress over time. While there have been some improvements in pupils' attainment in the current year, their attainment by the end of Year 6 has been too low over time. Writing skills are particularly weak.
- Children get off to a poor start in early years provision. In the Reception Year, teaching does not help children to improve skills quickly and there are weaknesses in the curriculum.
- In key stages 1 and 2, teachers' expectations are not always high enough and work is too hard or too easy for some pupils.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment, especially in writing, are not always accurate.
- Some pupils do not take enough pride in their work or develop a sufficiently strong desire to learn. They are sometimes inattentive in lessons when work does not engage them fully.
- Middle leaders are having too little impact on securing improvement across the school.
- Additional government funding is not helping to close the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others.

The school has the following strengths

- The determined new headteacher is providing strong leadership. Until recently he has had to take on too much. Nonetheless, he has made a good start to improving provision.
- The new senior leadership team and the re-energised governing body are doing the right things to deal with the main priorities.
- Pupils are kept safe. They conduct themselves well around school. They are friendly, polite and courteous.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress, especially in writing, and the quality of teaching in key stages 1 and 2, by:
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations of pupils are high enough and that they give their pupils work that is not too hard or too easy, particularly for the most able and pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities
 - ensuring that assessments of pupils' attainment, especially in writing, are accurate
 - ensuring that teaching focuses more strongly on teaching basic skills in spelling, grammar and punctuation
 - strengthening links between subjects so that pupils have more opportunities to write.

- Improve provision for children in the early years by:
 - ensuring that adults' expectations of children are sufficiently high, and that they provide the children with work that is purposeful and helps to improve their skills more quickly
 - improving assessment procedures so that they give a clearer picture of progress over time and are more helpful in identifying children's starting points
 - improving the curriculum so that all of the areas of learning are covered in sufficient detail
 - developing the outdoor area so that it can be used to support work in the different areas of learning
 - improving transition arrangements between the playgroup and the Reception Year.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the new leadership uses their monitoring to identify and then deal with inconsistencies across the school so that improvements are sustained over time
 - developing the role of middle leaders in supporting the headteacher to improve outcomes for pupils and the quality of teaching
 - ensuring that pupil premium funding is directed specifically and effectively to improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - ensuring that work provided for pupils is engaging and that they learn the importance of taking pride in their work and always doing their best.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not secured necessary school improvement since the previous inspection. Until recently, the dip in pupils' attainment that emerged shortly after the school was last inspected has not been tackled with enough rigour. The pace of change has been too slow. It has been adversely affected by staffing turnover and numerous changes in leadership. Consequently, despite some good recent improvements, pupils' attainment remains too low and their progress over time is inadequate.
- Middle leaders such as those in charge of subjects do not play a big enough part in securing improvement. They have too little involvement in checking provision for themselves. Not all middle leaders are good role models in their own practice.
- Additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils has too little impact on their attainment. While provision in this area has been improved by the new headteacher, the progress of disadvantaged pupils remains slow and they are not benefiting fully from available funding. For this reason, a review of the pupil premium is recommended.
- The new headteacher is now providing strong and decisive leadership but there has been too little time for him to eradicate the numerous weaknesses that quickly became evident to him when he took up post. Until recently, the headteacher has had to take on too much for one person to reasonably achieve. With a newly arrived deputy headteacher, who is a skilled practitioner, the load for securing school improvement is now being spread more widely. Monitoring is beginning to focus more sharply on ensuring that all initiatives are being sustained and are having the desired impact.
- Since arrival, the determined headteacher has worked tirelessly to raise the aspirations of staff. He has established a culture where it is now understood that provision is not yet good enough. Through coaching, support and challenge he has made a good start to dealing with weaknesses in teaching, especially in areas such as phonics and mathematics where there have been good improvements in the current year. Performance management arrangements are much more rigorous than in the past. They set teachers challenging targets that are closely linked to improving outcomes for pupils.
- Across the school, a recent focus on improving the feedback given to pupils has been effective. Most staff follow the new marking policy well. This is helping pupils to improve their work. As one said, 'We are clearer now about what we need to do better'.
- The headteacher has improved pupils' behaviour by making expectations clearer. There is a wider curriculum than in the past, with visits being used especially well to bring subjects to life. This has helped to increase pupils' enjoyment of school. The school's curriculum has a clear focus on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and provides them with opportunities to understand life in modern Britain. Pupils understand the school's core values and develop a secure awareness of fundamental British values.
- The school makes effective use of additional government funding for sport. Specialist teaching has enriched the range of sports pupils experience and is providing valuable training for staff. Pupils' skills in sports such as cricket are developed well, and they greatly enjoy coaching sessions.
- The headteacher is working increasingly closely with other local schools to share good practice. The partnership with parents is also greatly improved. They are positive about recent changes, typically making comments such as, 'The headteacher had a massive job and he is tackling the tasks that were needed', and 'Since the new leadership, the school has come on amazingly'.
- The local authority has provided suitable support to the headteacher since September 2015, when it identified very significant concerns with many aspects of the school's work. Prior to this, support had not been effective in ensuring good outcomes for all pupils.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Until recently, governors had not responded quickly enough to halt the decline in pupils' attainment. They have recognised this shortcoming and over the last 18 months have greatly improved the quality of the support and challenge they give to the school.
 - A new chair of governors commissioned an external review of governance which helped to identify how their work could be improved. Following this, they have developed a good range of strategies for checking the school's performance for themselves. This, along with a good amount of information from the new headteacher, has helped them to get a clear and realistic picture of what is going well

and what still needs improving. Although they know that much more remains to be done, they have been relentless this academic year in supporting the new headteacher to improve provision.

- Governors know where teaching is stronger or weaker. They support the headteacher through effective performance management to ensure that only good teaching is rewarded financially.
- In the past, governors have had too little involvement in deciding how the pupil premium should be spent or on checking its impact. While this is allocated better than previously, governors do not yet do enough to ensure that the pupil premium is being used to best effect and that it is having a positive impact on the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Improving safeguarding arrangements was a key early focus of the new headteacher. This has been done exceptionally well and omissions in paperwork, systems and procedures have been rectified. Vetting arrangements of staff are now very thorough and site security has been greatly improved. The school has improved its work with external agencies, parents and the local community to ensure that pupils are kept safe. School leaders have undergone the necessary government training to help them protect pupils from radicalisation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- Weaknesses in teaching and assessment, together with a high turnover of teaching staff, have detrimentally affected pupils' achievement over time.
- Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low and they do not meet their pupils' needs well enough. Work is sometimes too hard for the least able, including pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities. The work given to the most able does not always provide the right level of challenge. As one pupil commented, 'Our work is sometimes too easy'.
- Teachers do not consistently assess pupils' learning accurately so that they can identify the right starting point on which to judge their pupils' progress. This is especially evident in writing where some teacher assessments overestimate pupils' attainment, making it difficult to pinpoint gaps in learning so that they can be rectified.
- The teaching of writing is not systematic enough. Although attainment in phonics has improved in the current year, teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunity to apply these skills in their writing to ensure that spelling improves more quickly. There is too little focus on the teaching of grammar and punctuation. Teachers do not always promote good writing by, for example, making links between subjects so that pupils can write purposefully in a range of subjects.
- Too much teaching does not engage and inspire pupils to do well, resulting in some losing concentration. This is not evident in all classes. For example, in the Year 4/5 class, there was a delightful buzz as pupils worked together on a task related to a visit to see a show in London. Pupils improved their skills at measuring capacity because the task of making a 'magic potion' inspired them to do so well.
- The new headteacher has already made some good improvements to teaching. In some classes, aspirations are greatly raised and pupils are now learning more quickly. For example, pupils rapidly improved their literacy skills in Year 2 when the teacher had high expectations and helped them understand the key components of writing a narrative about sea creatures.
- Parents feel that teaching is improving, and they recognise the good efforts of the headteacher in this area. They feel that homework is better than in the past, and they support the school well by ensuring that it is completed.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The school has been working hard to promote its relaunched mission statement: 'All for learning, learning for all'. There is an increased focus on developing basic literacy and numeracy skills, but too many pupils lack confidence in these areas. They do not always do their best and do not always take enough pride in their work. Consequently, not enough pupils have the aptitudes and skills they need to be successful learners so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

- Pupils and parents confirm that pupils are cared for well in school. Pupils told the inspectors that they trust the adults in school. Supervision at breaktimes is good, first aid is readily available, and supervisors or play leaders join in readily with pupils' games, to encourage fair play.
- Pupils confirm that there is very little bullying in the school. They are confident that when it does happen adults will sort it out promptly. Pupils are taught well about different types of bullying and how to respond to dangers they may face outside school. For example, recent work on developing an understanding of e-safety has been effective. Pupils talk confidently about how to stay safe online; they know that cyber bullying is wrong and should be reported.
- Pupils keenly take responsibility. They feel that the new headteacher listens to them and they say that 'he really cares'. They like the fact that they are able to contribute to school development through the school council.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- In lessons, pupils do not always concentrate. When work does not engage them fully, some become quietly inattentive and do not work hard enough. When this happens, the pace of learning is too slow.
- Historically, pupils' attendance has been low. In 2015 it was in the lowest 10% for all primary schools nationally. The good efforts of the headteacher are already securing improvements in rates of attendance in the current year and it is now close to the national average, with the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, in particular, greatly improved. Leaders work closely with outside agencies and families to improve the attendance of the increasingly small number of pupils who are persistently absent.
- Inspectors found that the school is a calm and happy place. Pupils are polite and courteous and are very friendly to visitors. They play together sensibly at lunch and play times, following the instructions of supervising staff. They line up respectfully and enter the building in a sensible way.
- Recent significant improvement to the school environment, together with the consistent care and attention that staff pay to pupils, is helping to raise pupils' expectations of themselves and for the school.
- Pupils are very clear that behaviour is 'much better' since the arrival of the new headteacher. Pupils like the school's new rewards and sanctions system and think it is fair. They say that incidents of poor behaviour are becoming less common and are dealt with quickly. This is confirmed by school records and by the decrease in the number of exclusions in the current academic year.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Pupils do not make enough progress as they get older. Progress is inadequate in the early years provision and does not improve sufficiently in the rest of the school.
- Attainment has been falling in both key stages and was below average overall in 2015 at the end of Year 6. Although there have been some important improvements in the current year, too few pupils make sufficient progress over time.
- Pupils' attainment in writing is especially weak. Writing is not always well presented. Too few pupils have learned a neat handwriting style. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are often not accurate in written work. The teaching of these aspects of writing is not systematic enough to help pupils improve skills quickly.
- The progress of different groups across the school is too uneven. The most able pupils make inadequate progress over time because some of their work does not challenge them well enough. Similarly, work is sometimes too hard for pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities, slowing their progress.
- The new headteacher has worked hard to ensure that the pupil premium is being used to support disadvantaged pupils rather than being subsumed into general school funds. This means that support is more focused than in the past, but the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others remains too large and is not closing quickly enough, especially in key stage 1.
- There have been some important improvements in the current year. The new headteacher quickly identified that pupils' attainment in phonics was too low. He dealt with this by changing how phonics was taught and by raising the expectations of staff. Consequently, outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check in the current year are the best ever, reflecting the positive impact of recent initiatives.
- Pupils' books show that there are more pockets of good progress than in the past, particularly in the current term in Year 2 and across the whole year in Years 4 and 5. This is especially evident in

mathematics, where more pupils are working at the expected levels for their age than in the past because skills are being taught more systematically.

Early years provision

is inadequate

- Children's attainment by the end of the Reception Year has been falling, and in 2015 the proportion reaching a good level of development was below average. Attainment is even lower in the current year, with too few children working at the expected level for their age. Children's progress over the year has been inadequate and they are not being prepared well enough for life in Year 1.
- Teaching takes too little account of children's starting points. Work is too hard for some and too easy for others, especially the most able. Activities are often purposeless, which leads to children flitting between activities without learning anything. Adults miss opportunities to move learning on more quickly by, for example, asking questions or talking to children about their work. Consequently, adults have a limited understanding of what children already know. As a result, they cannot always identify the next steps children need to take in their learning.
- Children in the Reception class comply well with instructions, but their levels of engagement are often low. They do not always understand what they are expected to learn from their work and they lack concentration.
- The curriculum in the Reception Year is uninspiring and does not encourage children to flourish. Not all aspects of the early years curriculum are covered in sufficient detail. For example, children do not attain well in areas such as 'expressive art and design' because they are given too few opportunities to develop skills. The outdoor area is poorly resourced and is not used effectively to support learning.
- Systems for assessing children's learning lack rigour. Records of achievement were completed diligently at the start of the year, but this has petered out. There is too little evidence in these records of children's progress over time.
- The youngest children in the early years are taught in the playgroup that is managed by the school. In the playgroup, children's levels of engagement are better, and while teaching is not yet good, it is stronger than in the Reception Year. This is because adults give children more focused support when they are working with them in small groups or independently. For example, good support was given to two children who were working with a construction kit to make a model, helping them to learn to cooperate and improving their speaking skills. There is a good focus on children's personal, social and emotional development in the playgroup. Children in the playgroup learn to behave well and become increasingly confident and independent.
- The headteacher has taken on responsibility for managing the early years provision. He ensures that funding, such as that for disadvantaged children, is being used appropriately. There is a good understanding of the priorities, but the pace of improvement has been greatly hindered by staff absence. This means that where improvements have been secured, they have not always been sustained. Support from the local authority has not been sufficient to help the headteacher secure the needed improvements.
- Playgroup leaders are enthusiastic and talk knowledgably about their children. They keep clear records of children's attainment by the end of the year, but this information is not used well enough in the Reception Year to identify starting points. Leaders do not do enough to ensure there is a match between end of playgroup assessments and what is being identified as attainment at the start of the Reception Year.
- The headteacher has greatly improved the rigour of safeguarding procedures across the early years provision. Risk assessments are thorough and site security has been increased. Consequently, children are kept safe and there are no breaches of welfare requirements.

School details

Unique reference number	110648
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10001949

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rebecca Sussex
Headteacher	Steve West
Telephone number	01354 740 392
Website	http://www.thomaseatonschool.co.uk
Email address	office@thomaseaton.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 November 2013

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average sized primary school with six classes.
- Children in the early years are taught in a Reception class and a playgroup that is managed by the school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for children who are looked after.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2015, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Since the previous inspection there have been several headteachers. A new permanent headteacher took up post in September 2015. The deputy headteacher joined the school in April 2016.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 11 lessons, three of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made some short visits to observe learning at other times.
- Discussions were held with pupils, staff, a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 24 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also talked with parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors heard pupils read and looked at a number of documents, including: the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress; planning and monitoring documents; the school development plan; records relating to behaviour and attendance; safeguarding information; and health and safety documentation.
- The inspectors analysed responses to an inspection questionnaire from 10 members of staff and 12 responses from pupils.

Inspection team

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