

Thomas Buxton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	100930
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	385880
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2012
Lead inspector	Nasim Butt

This inspection of the school 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	417
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sajjad Miah
Headteacher	Lorraine Flanagan
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Nasim Butt

Additional Inspector

Sandra Teacher

Additional Inspector

Anthony Mundy

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching by 16 teachers in 25 lessons or part lessons. In addition, meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body and school staff, including senior and middle leaders. Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's improvement plan, safeguarding documents and assessment tracking information. Inspectors analysed questionnaire responses from 150 parents and carers, and others completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

The school is the result of an amalgamation of an infant school and a junior school on the same site in April 2011. The new primary school is above average in size compared with schools of this type, and this is its first section 5 inspection. Almost all pupils have minority ethnic heritage, and there is a very large majority of Bangladeshi pupils. A small minority of pupils are at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average, and many of these have speech and communication difficulties or moderate learning difficulties. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises morning and afternoon Nursery provision and two Reception classes. The majority of children in the Nursery attend for the full day. There is a breakfast and after-school club managed by the governing body.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is led by a strong and dynamic leadership team with clear and focused vision. The school's commitment to improvement is reflected in the impressive advances made in key areas since the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools. The school is not outstanding because teaching is not always fully effective in ensuring rapid progress and achievement.
- From below expected starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils achieve well and attain average levels by the end of Year 6. Some inconsistencies remain. For example, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is relatively slower in Years 1 and 3 compared to all other year groups. School leaders have introduced effective strategies to combat this.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils underpin the purposeful climate for learning. Teachers are resourceful and use a variety of strategies to motivate pupils. The marking of pupils' work is mostly good, particularly in literacy, and gives pupils useful guidance on how to improve, but they do not always have opportunity to respond to the advice given.
- Pupils behave well and show admirable attitudes to learning. They are polite and courteous to visitors and their actions show that they care about their school. Pupils' attendance is average, but improving rapidly. Their punctuality is good.
- The headteacher and the senior leadership team are ambitious and communicate high aspirations for pupils' achievement. Teaching and performance management are led and managed effectively. The curriculum is inclusive and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Since the amalgamation, robust monitoring and evaluation, coupled with well-targeted curricular initiatives have raised the quality of teaching and accelerated pupils' achievement. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By September 2013, accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment further in reading, writing and mathematics so that the very large majority in all year groups at least reach, and often exceed, national expectations by:
 - drawing on and extending good practice so that more teaching is outstanding
 - providing greater opportunities in lessons for more-able pupils to extend their thinking and make stronger progress
 - providing opportunities for all pupils to respond to teachers' feedback in marking and to improve their work
 - embedding numeracy skills across all areas of the curriculum.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children join the school with knowledge and skills below those expected for their age and make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average, and pupils' progress accelerates in Year 2. Reliable school data show that the school has met its challenging targets for Key Stage 2. As a result, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is average by the end of Year 6 and this accelerated progress shows every sign of being sustained.

Inspection findings, that the quality of learning seen in lessons and the progress pupils make over time are good, are endorsed by the very large majority of parents and carers. Parents and carers say that their children make good progress, whatever their individual needs. Because pupils' learning is well planned and tasks are engaging, pupils typically make good progress most of the time. For example, Year 2 pupils rose to the challenge of using speech punctuation and made good progress in writing their imaginative story. Year 6 pupils were totally absorbed when they used causal connectives to construct arguments for and against, based on a scene from Michael Morpugo's novel *Dear Olly*. Pupils at the early stages of English language acquisition are successful because of the provision of good visual resources and bespoke support by teaching assistants.

All groups of pupils achieve equally well, as shown by the rise in attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, as well as the overwhelming majority of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school's detailed tracking information shows that gaps in attainment between these groups and the national average have narrowed significantly because of better teaching and closer monitoring of progress against individual targets.

Attainment in reading by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is broadly average. Pupils

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enjoy their reading both in and out of the classroom. The parents and carers of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are encouraged to use actions which represent specific sounds to consolidate their children's knowledge and understanding of phonics (sounds and letters). Most pupils in Key Stage 1 are developing strategies to move their reading forward and have a secure knowledge of phonics. This continues across Key Stage 2, and most pupils are confident fluent readers by Year 6. They have a good knowledge of different genres and authors and enjoy discussing the characters from their favourite books.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers consider that the quality of teaching is effective. Inspection evidence confirms this view. Good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is based on good knowledge of the children's interests and then planning activities to capture their enthusiasm for learning. As a result, children make good progress in their speaking, listening and thinking skills. Across the school, pupils have made the strongest progress in reading because agreed strategies are being implemented effectively.

In the main, teachers set work that challenges pupils to think for themselves, and so they approach it with enthusiasm and curiosity, and make good progress. For example, Year 6 pupils were challenged to think about the operations needed to solve a two-step number puzzle involving function machines. Misconceptions were picked up early through frequent mini-plenaries and the pace and direction of the lesson adjusted accordingly. Consequently, pupils were able to apply their mathematical skills to solve a challenging problem. Occasionally, the pace of learning slows because too much time is spent by teachers in introducing new learning rather than developing it. For example, Year 3 pupils describing objects and shadows in a science lesson did not deepen their learning about the science of shadows until very late into the lesson.

The purpose of the learning is made very clear by teachers, and marking, particularly in literacy, makes good use of individual targets to identify the next steps for pupils. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are taught well, as seen, for example, in a mathematics lesson for pupils with additional needs. Effective modelling and prompting, coupled with good visual resources, enabled many of these pupils to generate and then answer questions about a bar chart showing Year 4's favourite sports. The teacher and adults were skilful in stimulating pupils' thinking and eliciting responses to create new learning experiences.

Although teaching is good overall, not all aspects are equally strong. For example, pupils are not always given sufficient opportunities to respond to teachers' feedback to improve their work. More-able pupils are not always given the maximum opportunity to extend their thinking and make stronger progress in lessons. Nevertheless, over time, good teaching enables pupils to make good progress and achieve well, as indicated by the school's tracking data and the impressive work in pupils' books.

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Strong relationships with adults support pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by giving them the confidence to self-correct and take risks in their learning. This is further enhanced by teaching that explores issues of moral and cultural significance.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is good. Pupils endorse this evaluation and say that they enjoy school, feel safe and confirm that behaviour is typically good. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaires believe that their children are kept safe at school and that behaviour is good. Pupils say that bullying is restricted to a few instances of name-calling in their home language, but there is no racist intent. On the rare occasions when incidents occur, pupils say that the school deals with them effectively. Inspectors found that pupils have a good understanding of how to minimise risks to their personal safety, enhancing their sense of security. Attendance has a high profile in the school, with every classroom door displaying the weekly attendance figure and aspirational target. Consequently, average attendance is improving rapidly.

Pupils' positive attitudes to work and keenness to learn are important factors in their good achievement. In lessons, most pupils concentrate fully and are eager to have the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned. Pupils respond well to praise and to their teachers' high expectations of their behaviour. Pupils really like the school's rewards system, which motivates them to show maturity beyond their age. Good relationships and courteous behaviour prevail in the daily breakfast and after-school clubs. A few parents and carers suggested that learning is sometimes disrupted by the behaviour of a small minority of pupils. Inspectors found behaviour to be consistently good and records show that this reflects pupils' behaviour over time.

Leadership and management

An exciting vision and strong ambition underpin the work of the headteacher and the governing body. They are supported by a very dynamic and competent group of senior leaders strongly focused on raising standards. Since the amalgamation of the two schools, leaders have accelerated pupils' progress, improved the quality of teaching and successfully implemented a range of measures to strengthen pupils' literacy skills. Behaviour is consistently good. Performance data are analysed rigorously and used to identify any pupils who require extra support and to implement effective interventions. Very effective leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage has considerably strengthened parental engagement and transformed children's learning experiences. These successes demonstrate that the school has strong capacity for further improvement.

The school's leaders undertake a range of monitoring and evaluation activities to improve the quality of teaching. For example, the outcomes from the scrutiny of

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pupils' books have resulted in clear improvements in teachers' day-to-day planning of learning, as it now makes much better use of assessment information on pupils' achievement. The development needs of individual teachers are identified accurately and addressed with bespoke support and training. The impact of new strategies, for example the whole-school calculation policy, is monitored through a range of activities, including performance management. However, some variation in the quality of teaching prevents pupils from making outstanding progress.

The curriculum provides imaginative and creative opportunities for learning and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are stimulated throughout the day as a result of the wide variety of well-planned learning activities. Older pupils are confident in taking assemblies and presenting awards to their peers. Although numeracy is promoted through a 'Mathematics Week' and 'Buzz Days', opportunities to promote it routinely through all areas of the curriculum are missed.

The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination successfully, as evidenced by the significant narrowing of gaps over the past 15 months in achievement between different groups of pupils. School leaders, including the governing body, ensure that arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils meet statutory requirements and that careful attention is paid to all aspects of pupils' safety.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.