

Inspection of Thaxted Primary School

Bardfield Road, Thaxted, Dunmow, Essex CM6 2LW

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 May 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy the friendly, family feel at this school. Older and younger pupils readily mix and help each other. Pupils know how to be good friends. They look out for anyone who needs a helping hand in lessons or at breaktimes. Pupils are confident that staff will listen to their concerns and help them to make things better. As a result, pupils feel safe here.

Most pupils work hard to meet the high expectations of their teachers. Pupils are proud of their work and talk confidently about what they learn. They achieve well in most subjects.

Most pupils settle quickly to the tasks that are set for them. From the early years, teachers kindly encourage pupils to follow the rules and routines. Occasionally, in lessons, a few pupils need an extra prompt to follow these rules and to consistently show the high standards of behaviour that the school would like to see.

Pupils have positive attitudes to difference. They learn to work as a team through sports clubs such as netball. Pupils enjoy being part of the local community, for example visiting older residents or learning from the astronomy club.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

In recent years, the school has had several changes in leadership. New ways of working have been underway at pace. The school is mindful of the impact of this work on staff workload and well-being. It is developing a strong, shared commitment to improvement at all levels. Leaders are now ready to review the effectiveness of their changes and to identify the most important next steps. Sometimes leaders do this well, but they do not always have the right information or systems in place.

The school has prioritised the teaching of reading. In the early years, well-trained staff help children to swiftly start learning to read. Children practise their skills with highly engaging games and well-matched books. Pupils become fluent, confident readers through regular practice and the teaching of new skills. Teachers inspire pupils to enjoy reading with carefully selected, high-quality texts read aloud each day. Older pupils discerningly select authors and genres from the well-stocked library.

The school has ensured that teachers introduce new learning in small steps from the early years. This enables pupils to build and consolidate their skills. Across the school, teachers introduce new vocabulary clearly. Teachers use debates and practical investigations in lessons to help pupils understand and remember what they learn. Teachers provide plenty of purposeful written tasks for pupils. In reading and mathematics, most pupils achieve outcomes close to those found nationally. Teachers check what pupils know at the start and end of units of work. However, teachers' checks of how well pupils are faring in lessons are less consistent. As a

result, sometimes the work for a few pupils is not matched well with what they need to learn next.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is developing. Leaders are strengthening work with families and developing the expertise of staff. The school has established effective links with local nurseries so that additional needs are spotted quickly and the right support is put in place straight away. In lessons, pupils with SEND learn alongside their peers. The school provides extra adult help and resources so pupils with SEND can understand tricky new concepts. Staff put extra interventions in place so pupils with SEND get the extra practice they need.

The school day gets off to a smooth start. Pupils arrive promptly and happily. The school is vigilant for any pupils missing school. Checks ensure they are safe and effective action is taken to promote regular attendance. Pupils follow appropriate routines. They move into school calmly, ready to start lessons promptly. In lessons, pupils share their ideas readily in groups and pairs. Most pupils listen carefully and join in with the tasks that are set for them.

The school ensures that provision supports the wider development of pupils. Pupils learn about the '6Rs' such as responsibility and resourcefulness. They learn about right and wrong and are confident to resist peer pressure. Pupils demonstrate fundamental British values such as tolerance and respect. The school parliament is making improvements around the school such as restoring the 'friendship bench'. The school provides a wide range of clubs for pupils to develop their talents and interests. Older pupils readily help around the school, for example as play leaders, librarians and house captains.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes leaders have not established consistently effective approaches to evaluating the impact of their actions on outcomes for pupils. This makes it hard for them to know when to adjust or strengthen their actions to make things better for pupils. The school should continue to develop the skills of leaders, so they regularly review how well their actions are improving outcomes for pupils and act swiftly to bring about improvements when required.
- In a few subjects, teachers do not always check what pupils know during lessons. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their understanding or do not have tasks which sufficiently challenge them. The school should ensure that teachers have the expertise to routinely use assessment to adjust the curriculum to ensure all pupils are accessing and securing the most important learning.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 115288 |
| Local authority | Essex |
| Inspection number | 10294952 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 255 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Jon Spencer |
| Headteacher | Caroline Crompton |
| Website | www.thaxted.essex.sch.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 2 and 3 February 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The headteacher and chair of governors took up their posts in September 2022.
- The school provides before- and after-school care for pupils.
- The school does not use any alternative education provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders, including the headteacher, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the

curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.

- The inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation and policies, including curriculum documentation, development planning and the minutes of governors' meetings.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took into account the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which leaders have created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents through responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors gathered the views of staff and pupils through Ofsted's surveys and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

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|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Lynne Williams, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Charlotte Martin | Ofsted Inspector |
| Nicola Shadbolt | Ofsted Inspector |

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