

Thomas's London Day Schools

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	212/6401
Early Years Registration	EY240247
Unique Reference Number	100530
Inspection number	329562
Inspection dates	5 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Thomas's Battersea is a selective co-educational preparatory school located in the London Borough of Wandsworth. It is part of Thomas's London Day Schools and is one of four schools and two kindergartens owned by the proprietors. The extended Grade II listed property provides accommodation for 503 pupils from Reception to Year 8 taught in classes of no more than 21 pupils. Pupils are taught in three departments. The lower school has pupils from Reception to Year 2, the middle school pupils from Year 3 to Year 5, and the upper school pupils from Year 6 to Year 8. Of the 126 pupils identified as having English as an additional language, most are bilingual and one is at a very early stage of learning English. There are 56 children attending full-time in the three Reception classes and all receive public funding under the Nursery Scheme. A number of pupils have moderate learning difficulties but none have a statement of educational needs. This is a Christian school open to pupils of all faiths and it aims to 'create an ethos of kindness and understanding in which pupils' strengths are identified and developed whilst their weaknesses are identified and supported.' Within a framework of 'enjoyment, learning and performance', it seeks to offer a broad curriculum so as to 'prepare pupils not only for their senior schools but also for the life that lies beyond them.' The most important school rule is: 'Be kind'. The school was last inspected in January 2005.

Evaluation of the school

Thomas's Battersea provides an outstanding quality of education, meets its aims fully and so enjoys the support of the vast majority of parents. The senior leaders, middle managers and teachers work very effectively together to ensure that the very broad and rich curriculum enables pupils to make outstanding progress and to become well rounded individuals. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is also outstanding. The school has improved its management structure and systems since the last inspection and appointed a head of the upper school. The leadership's rigorous self-review reflects the school's capacity to make further improvements. The school complies with all the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. It is very broad and well balanced to ensure that all pupils can develop a very wide knowledge base as well as a very broad range of intellectual, physical and creative skills. It is monitored very effectively by the senior leadership to ensure that it is well planned and constantly reviewed to meet the needs of all pupils and raise standards further. In the upper school, it is designed to provide two main pathways leading to either the various entry examinations set by individual senior schools or the Common Entrance examination set by the Independent Schools Examination Board. 'Provision maps' show how the specific learning or linguistic needs of individual pupils are met. The lower school managers have made a very good start in addressing the requirements of the recently introduced EYFS framework. The subject leaders work together within the Thomas's schools to develop best practice in planning and assessment. Good links with a range of senior schools ensure smooth transition to Year 9. Pupils' progress is most rapid in reading and writing in the lower school, reading and mathematics in the middle school, and religious education (RE), chemistry and physics in the upper school. Provision for the aesthetic and creative subjects and for sports is very strong and makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' personal development. Cross-curricular links are well established and make learning a more coherent experience. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively and frequently as a learning tool. Most pupils participate in a full extra-curricular programme that includes 46 weekly clubs, numerous events and a wide variety of day and residential educational visits which enrich their learning experiences.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding. They are monitored very closely by the leadership and supported by continuous professional development. The creation of a head of upper school post has ensured closer monitoring of the quality of education from Years 6 to 8. Staff establish excellent relationships based on mutual respect and very high expectations of work, behaviour and presentation, thus creating a working atmosphere that encourages pupils to excel. Lessons are very well planned to match the needs of pupils closely and provide a good level of challenge to pupils of varying abilities. The use of specialist teaching in an increasing number of subjects from the lower school has a significant impact on pupils' learning. Excellent knowledge of subject areas and of pupils' prior attainment lends confidence to teaching styles. Pupils say, 'teachers are enthusiastic, have unique styles, so you do not get bored' and the inspectors support this view. Teachers employ a wide range of methods and make very good use of resources, particularly of interactive white boards, to sustain pupils' interest and promote active learning. They provide many opportunities for pupils to develop excellent speaking and thinking skills and confidence through class and group discussions, verbal feedback to the class and role play. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. In outstanding lessons, teachers combine a consistently high level of challenge with techniques that involve pupils totally in the assessment of their learning. For example, in a French lesson, Year 6 pupils had to work out what the learning objectives might be and how the outcomes might be assessed after watching a video clip that was pitched at a very high level and demanded a very good understanding of the underlying theme. This

helped them focus on using very high standards of pronunciation, vocabulary and structure when preparing their role plays.

There is a good assessment framework in place that enables the school to compare pupils' attainment with national norms and expectations. The tracking of individual pupils' progress is rigorous and it informs the level of support or extension required to ensure pupils reach their full potential. Marking shows pupils how to improve and the best comments are sharply related to specific success criteria. The leadership has correctly identified that the consistent implementation of strategies to involve pupils in the assessment of their learning and the use of challenging learning targets in all subjects are priorities for improvement.

As a result of the outstanding curriculum and teaching, pupils in all year groups attain exceptionally high standards compared with national averages and other independent schools. Their achievement is outstanding in relation to their starting points. Most pupils gain top grades in the 11+ and 13+ examinations and all move on to a school of their parents' choice.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's strong moral values are promoted very effectively by the staff and several areas of the curriculum including RE, personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), assemblies and a weekly service and so permeate everyday life. Consequently, pupils respond positively to the caring and calm environment and show kindness and courtesy to others. They show high levels of self-discipline and their behaviour is outstanding. They speak of their achievements with pride but also humility. They appreciate what the school offers them, saying, 'this is a welcoming and inclusive school; everyone is made to feel unique; the school is very supportive, especially for new pupils.' They value the excellent staff-pupil relationships the most, but also greatly appreciate the efficient organisation of the school, the enrichment curriculum and the school's commitment to sustainable development. Pupils' enjoyment is reflected in their outstanding attendance, their lively responses in lessons and their high participation in extra-curricular activities.

Every care has been taken to provide each pupil with an opportunity to find something they can excel at and their individual gifts and talents are nurtured by the specialist teaching. For example, every year group is involved in annual drama performances and about half the upper school pupils learn a musical instrument. The more able artists have one extra weekly lesson in which they compile a portfolio of work. In addition to these wide cultural experiences that foster their self-knowledge and self-confidence, pupils are well prepared for life in a multicultural society through RE, PSHCE, assemblies and visits to places of worship. Among the numerous opportunities they have to improve their school, local and global communities, pupils speak with enthusiasm of their roles as 'green unicorns,' saving energy around the school. The elected school council initiated the 'green unicorn project' and recently received the London Schools Environment Award with distinction from the Mayor of London. Pupils show a keen sense of social responsibility when they talk about their

fund-raising for a local multi-purpose community centre and for the Child Aid in Rural Nepal (CAIRN) Trust. The very high standards reached in academic subjects, coupled with self-confidence and highly developed skills in public speaking, ICT, team work, problem-solving and decision-making prepare pupils extremely well for their future life.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding, supported by the consistent implementation of robust policies that are reviewed annually. The safeguarding arrangements comply fully with the latest guidance and inform rigorous recruitment procedures that are recorded on a centralized register. Staff receive the appropriate level of child protection training at the required intervals. Many staff have first aid training, including paediatric qualifications, and the school employs a registered nurse. Meticulous records are kept of any medical needs and accidents, and of the required range of health and safety checks. The staff create a welcoming atmosphere that engenders a positive sense of well-being amongst the pupils. Consequently, pupils feel very safe and well cared for. They say that bullying is rare and that the school deals effectively with it, especially through the pupil-led 'anti-bullying committee.' Pupils know how to keep themselves and each other safe around the school and in practical lessons. The older pupils receive training in first aid, safe travel and urban safety before they leave. The catering department provides an exceptionally wide selection of healthy and interesting foods which promotes pupils' commitment to healthy eating very effectively and complements the curriculum. Pupils enjoy the numerous physical activities on offer. They are encouraged to walk, cycle or scoot to school.

The school fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are cared for very well and teachers are very well informed about their learning needs. Consequently, children settle in quickly and enjoy the time they spend at school and with each other. A notable strength of the provision is the mutually supportive partnership that has been established with children and their parents since the start of the school year. Parents are delighted with the way the school looks after their children and feel very well informed about, and involved with, their education. The six areas of learning form the foundation of all planning and assessment is regular and accurate. Good use is made of the limited outdoor space, although there is no shelter from the sun and rain. Adults closely observe children during sessions and use this information to plan relevant and challenging activities for each child, giving close consideration to children's individual learning styles and abilities. They develop children's basic reading skills through the incremental and systematic introduction of increasingly demanding words and their speaking and listening by involving them in discussion around practical activities, such as completing the day's weather chart or reading a story. Children thoroughly enjoy these opportunities and a very high standard of teaching and learning results in

children making outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered extremely well and their independence and confidence are encouraged, for example by taking part in drama performances such as 'Cinderella.'

The leadership and management of the EYFS are outstanding. Children's progress is tracked rigorously and self review is used very effectively to improve the provision further.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- as identified by the school, improve the way pupils are involved in the assessment of their learning and develop the setting of challenging learning targets in all subjects so that pupils can progress at an even faster rate
- provide a way of sheltering EYFS children from the sun and the rain so they can use the outdoor area in most weathers.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
--	---	--	--	--

The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	✓			
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?	✓			
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	✓			
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	✓			
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	✓			
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?	✓			

School details

Name of school	Thomas's London Day Schools - Thomas's Battersea
DCSF number	212/6401
Unique reference number	100530
Type of school	Day preparatory school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1977
Age range of pupils	4-13 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 285 Girls: 218 Total: 503
Annual fees	£12,480 to £14,085
Address of school	28-40 Battersea High Street London SW11 3JB
Telephone number	020 7978 0900
Fax number	020 7978 0901
Email address	battersea@thomas-s.co.uk
Headteacher	Ben Thomas
Proprietors	Tobyn, Ben, David and Joanna Thomas
Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi
Date of inspection	5 December 2008