

Thurlstone Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106588
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	355977
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Roger Gill

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	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Crowther
Headteacher	Charlotte Gibbins
Date of previous school inspection	November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The team observed five lessons taught by four teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence including the school's documents for self-evaluation, the tracking system used to monitor pupils' progress and the work pupils were doing in their books. Inspectors studied the 65 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well as those from pupils and staff.

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

- Additional information about year groups and groups of pupils to support the view that learning and progress are good rather than satisfactory as previous statistical data suggest.
- Whether the school's evaluation of outcomes for pupils is accurate.
- Methods of self-evaluation used by the school to justify its judgements.
- Clarifying an apparent discrepancy between the good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and satisfactory learning for children, as judged by the school.

Information about the school

Thurlstone is a small school compared to a typical primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. There are few pupils from minority ethnic heritages or those learning English as an additional language. An above average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is well above that which is typical nationally. The number of pupils in the school has risen dramatically recently. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. This starts in the Early Years Foundation Stage class, which includes some Year 1 pupils. Since the school's last inspection it has experienced some significant changes in staff, including the headteacher. The current headteacher and assistant headteacher, who are established senior staff, have been in an acting capacity for one year. There is a childcare facility on site. This provision is not managed by the governing body and as such was not part of this inspection.

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

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Thurlstone is a good school. In the vast majority of cases, pupils learn well and make good progress, despite the many changes since 2007. A central factor in the school's success is the strong continuity provided by the current headteacher and assistant headteacher, ably supported by the governing body. New staff are inducted well and a dip in the progress of pupils with special educational needs/and or disabilities has been tackled effectively. Weaknesses in the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have been addressed positively, despite more work being needed to ensure that children learn as well as others in the school.

Some aspects of the school are as outstanding, as they were three years ago. Care, guidance and support, and the school's rigorous system of safeguarding, are overriding strengths, which lead to pupils feeling extremely safe. Moreover, they are guided into ways of contributing superbly to the school and local community. Pupils speak with pride about helping to look after the school chickens and growing vegetables alongside members of the local community. The school engages outstandingly with parents and carers and forms very productive partnerships with a wide range of organisations, which have a beneficial effect on pupils' learning and well-being. A local biodiversity trust, for example, has helped enormously in giving pupils a deep understanding of the natural world and sustainability.

Good teaching ensures that attainment is average by the end of Year 6, which represents good progress. Results vary from year to year, owing to the small number of pupils involved and the degree of special educational needs. So progress data are satisfactory statistically but, at this school, are good in practice. There are some minor differences in the rates of progress between subjects. Progress in reading and mathematics is often better than in writing. The school has identified this as an area for improvement and implemented some measures to tackle it, but attainment in writing, by comparison, could be higher still.

Leaders and managers, including governors, have a secure knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. Successful self-evaluation has produced good plans to raise attainment even further. Improved standards in mathematics and better marking since 2007, advances in learning for pupils with special educational needs and initial improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage demonstrate a good capacity to sustain and improve on the school's good and occasionally outstanding characteristics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing by making sure that all boys and higher attainers progress well, and pupils know how to reach the next level of attainment.
- Improve provision and children's outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring accurate assessments guide the daily planning of activities and that appropriate challenges exist for all children, including those who spend Year 1 in the same class.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy learning and achieve well from nationally typical starting points. Ripples of excitement often run through the class when pupils are presented with interesting and challenging tasks. The oldest pupils showed great enthusiasm when playing an energetic game of mental arithmetic against the clock. Pupils in a lesson for Years 1 and 2 grasped eagerly the challenge of using large numbers in their mathematics. Moreover, pupils in Years 3 and 4 were delighted to gather ideas and vocabulary for poetry while touring the school grounds in their English lesson.

Some learning and progress are outstanding but they are predominantly good because sometimes lessons lack additional challenges for pupils who can achieve above average levels. Furthermore, some boys become disengaged occasionally and lose the motivation to succeed. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well owing to the well-tailored teaching they receive as a result of a clear-sighted plan of action taken by staff and governors. Overall, most groups, including boys, girls and higher attainers progress well. Current standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are rising because pupils in Year 6 often progress at a very fast rate. Learning gathers pace to a good level from the beginning of Key Stage 1. However, there is a trend for the Year 1 pupils who spend time in the Early Years Foundation Stage to only progress satisfactorily; they could do better. The school is aware of this and has taken steps to improve matters but there has not been time to see the full impact of measures taken.

Some first-rate personal qualities help pupils to enjoy and achieve well. Their excellent participation in school life is typified by the mentoring of younger pupils by their older counterparts. The school council is very proud of its decision to spend money on the school nature area including a pond, bat boxes and hedgehog hotels. Behaviour is good. Pupils are rightly proud of how safe they all feel. They know about how to lead healthy lives and try hard to practise what they have learnt. They use basic skills of English and mathematics well, particularly in the special theme weeks but could use their writing in even more polished ways. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although pupils' cultural development is limited slightly by a lack of first-hand learning alongside pupils of different ethnic heritages and the fact that their international links have lapsed of late.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Good teaching provides well-planned learning that is well pitched for different groups of pupils. Pupils are provided with practical activities that appeal at all levels whether they are thinking hard about how to write a shape poem or learning Spanish in a hands-on fashion. Those who need extra help owing to a special need receive good support from well-trained teaching assistants. By comparison, it is sometimes higher attainers who are not sufficiently helped to progress as rapidly as befits their capabilities. Moreover, some boys lack the motivation to make the best use of teachers' comments in marking, for example or respond to challenges in lessons. Assessment is generally good. For example, in writing, pupils are given good advice about how to improve particular pieces of work. However, they are not so confident about what they need to do to raise their achievement to the next level overall.

The curriculum is good in that the promotion of basic skills and personal qualities across the whole timetable has a positive effect on pupils' achievements. Moreover, there are many clubs and other extra-curricular activities to motivate pupils. For example, pupils speak eloquently about growing their own carrots because they, 'taste so fresh compared to those from the supermarket'. The excellent care, guidance and support provided for pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable and their families ensure that everyone has a chance to reach their potential.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where	2

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

relevant, through partnerships	
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and the new team of senior leaders, with good ambition and drive, have tackled the issues arising from significant changes within the school in a relatively short time. Governors work well in partnership providing just the right balance of support and challenge to make sure strengths are maintained. The pattern of average standards at the end of Year 6 is beginning to change with current levels that are already above average. Nevertheless, throughout the school there are some differences in progress in writing by groups of higher attainers and boys. Notwithstanding, equality of opportunity is promoted well and discrimination is not tolerated. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and their families receive top-quality care, guidance and support. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils are excellent. For example, the procedures for safety in the school grounds, which contain a wide range of opportunities for learning, are extremely well considered. The school's family ethos, its strong links within the local community and the way national issues are woven into the curriculum make community cohesion good. International and global issues are debated well but links with the partner school in Ghana have lapsed of late.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall, most children make satisfactory progress from broadly typical levels on entry to reach nationally expected levels by the end of the year. The school has worked hard recently to improve the provision inside and outside to make sure that children's play is more purposeful, learning is based on accurate assessments and higher expectations are placed on the Year 1 pupils. However, it is too soon to see any substantial results from these initiatives. Nevertheless, the balance between being taught knowledge and skills directly and developing these skills through freely chosen play is provided for soundly. The governors are rightly pleased with their efforts to extend the outside space for learning. It allows children to develop their imaginative skills more effectively by building camps around a willow structure, for

example.

Provision for the different needs of individuals is beginning to be considered carefully. Teaching has recently established an individual record for each child that contains a helpful indication of ongoing achievement in all six aspects of the curriculum.

Satisfactory leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage make sure that children are settling in well and progressing soundly. They are making good gains in personal development owing to the calm, purposeful and welcoming atmosphere in the classroom. Self-evaluation is effective. The school knows exactly what needs to be done in the way of accurate assessment, planning for individual children and additional challenge for the pupils in Year 1. A good start has been made already in planning for and implementing developments in these respects.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The inspection questionnaires show that most parents and carers hold positive views about the school. Furthermore, a large majority strongly agree that the school is doing a good job for their children. A very small minority of parents have concerns about issues related to their children's progress and methods of dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that uncertainty in the recent past affected the progress of some children, the behaviour of a few children and the speed at which the school has responded to concerns and suggestions. However, inspectors judge that school leaders have dealt very successfully with concerns and have established first-rate measures with which to communicate with parents and carers. Issues of progress have been addressed successfully and methods to maintain good behaviour are in place and constantly under review.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thurlstone 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 inspector received **63** completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 108 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	51	30	48	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	60	24	38	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	48	30	48	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	49	26	41	4	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	37	59	24	38	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	38	36	57	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	52	26	41	3	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)	30	48	28	44	4	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	43	32	51	2	3	2	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	40	30	48	3	5	3	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	54	21	33	7	11	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	37	59	21	33	1	2	5	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	68	15	24	3	5	0	0

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 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring term 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thurlstone Primary School, Sheffield, S36 9RD

Thank you for your help when my colleague and I visited your school.

I thoroughly enjoyed my two days with you. What struck me most was the wide range of activities that are available to you beyond lessons – such as looking after the chickens, checking on the hedgehog hotels and pond dipping. Furthermore, I heard about the Enterprise Weeks in which you develop solutions to fascinating projects: for example, how to become the Queen's official monster catcher.

Your questionnaires revealed how very positive you are about school life, particularly how safe you feel and how all the adults do such a good job. Even in areas where a few of you have concerns, such as behaviour and knowing how well you are doing, a large majority of you have very positive views of the school. Those of you I spoke to were very positive as well and showed wisdom in helping to find solutions for the one or two things that do not please you so much.

You go to a good school. Your progress in lessons combined with some excellent features in your personal development ensures that you enjoy school a lot. For example, the way that you join in with everything is first-rate. Everyone has coped well with all the recent changes to help the school maintain its strengths.

I know everyone wants to do even better, so I have asked your school to do two things to improve. Your teachers need to help you do even better in writing by making sure that you all know how to reach the next level and getting some boys and higher attainers to do their very best at all times. The school also needs to improve children's learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that children in Reception and Year 1 progress as well as most of you in other classes. Meanwhile, continue to enjoy learning in such a friendly and popular school.

Yours sincerely

Roger Gill
Lead inspector

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