

Thurlton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	120860
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	380121
Inspection dates	23–24 February 2012
Lead inspector	John Mason

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	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Harriett Lincoln
Headteacher	Simon Cornish
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2008
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Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	23–24 February 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Mason

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Eight lessons or parts of lessons were observed, including lessons of all four teachers in school during the inspection, as well as some classes and sessions led by teaching assistants or instructors. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and senior staff. A group of pupils were interviewed and pupils from Key Stage 1 were heard reading. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, they observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation, development planning, documents associated with safeguarding procedures, the data the school has collected on pupils' progress and other documentation. The inspection also took account of the 69 responses to questionnaires submitted by parents and carers, together with those from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Thurlton is small primary school mainly serving the village of Thurlton. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and all have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils arriving or leaving the school during their primary education is above average and its roll has increased in each of the last three years. The proportion of pupils entitled to additional support for disability and/or special educational needs is above average. Most of this support is for children with speech, language and communication needs or with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties.

The provision includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum in the Reception class. The school provides no out-of-hours childcare. It holds the Activemark award at the basic level. The school currently meets the government's floor standards.

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. Since the previous inspection it has sustained pupils' good achievement. The quality of pupils' reading and writing has improved and the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness with growing effectiveness. Adults understand pupils' individual needs very well and the positive climate for learning helps all to succeed.
- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress in their reading during the Reception and Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 6, attainment in English is above average and average in mathematics. Pupils who join the school from other schools make good progress from their starting points.
- Teaching is consistently good in all classes. Teachers' subject knowledge and planning is good, motivating and engaging pupils to learn well. Although the teaching of literacy is good, the quality of pupils' handwriting is inconsistent. Recently introduced setting arrangements and intervention sessions have begun to address the slower progress made in mathematics, but inconsistencies between classes in the teaching of calculation, the irregular or undemanding setting of targets for improvement and limited opportunities for pupils to act upon comments for improvement holds back the pace of pupils' progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They enjoy school, get on well and feel safe. They respond well to the roles and responsibilities which they are encouraged to take within the school and take full advantage of the wide range of activities offered by the school.
- Senior leaders, including the governing body, have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Middle leaders are highly effective, contributing well to the good leadership of teaching and management of performance. Learning benefits from well-gauged curricular initiatives. Governors have instigated a surgery to facilitate better information between school and home about homework expectations, curricular topics and the flow of information.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress in mathematics by ensuring:
 - greater consistency across the school in the teaching of calculation
 - pupils have targets for improvement which they can clearly understand and articulate
 - pupils are provided with greater and prompt opportunities to rectify misconceptions identified through teachers' assessment practice.
- Improve the quality of pupils' handwriting by providing and consistently applying a whole school handwriting policy.
- Improve communication with parents and/or carers by:
 - using home-school books more regularly to clarify homework expectations
 - giving clearer notice of events and any alterations to schedules
 - supplementing the regular newsletters with timely information about forthcoming topic planning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Although the small cohorts can vary markedly from year to year, children enter school in the Reception class with well developed social skills, but their skills in literacy and numeracy are below national expectations. Good teaching and progress was observed in all classes. In the mixed-age classes of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 pupils soon make up lost ground in literacy and reading skills and are broadly average by the end of Year 2. Pupils enjoy the success of forming words as they develop an accurate understanding of their phonic structure and of relating the stories they have read. They gleefully consolidate their counting skills by measuring the different heights of Goldilocks' three bears. Pupils continue to progress well through Key Stage 2 and by the end of Year 6 standards in reading and writing are above average, but average in mathematics. Pupils enjoy writing in particular, fired to create exciting stories on the adventures of 'Blodden', a successful initiative in the Year 5/6 class which uses blogging between different schools to exchange ideas on how to develop stories and to increase pupils' ambition to do well. While pupils take care to write well, too few use good joined script.

In mathematics, pupils work well individually and in groups. They are responding well to the new setting arrangements which give them a sharper sense of learning together. Year 5/6 understand well the differences between mean, median and range, but inconsistencies in their methods of calculation and applying these, lead to some difficulties, for example, in working out the area of two-dimensional shapes. Where specific support is being given to pupils who have difficulty with basic number work, these pupils are making good progress.

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Pupils with disabilities, those who have special educational needs and those who transfer from other schools also make good progress. The school is able to point to many instances where they have promptly identified needs and implemented support and interventions to facilitate these pupils making accelerated progress.

Approximately two thirds of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Most agreed and half strongly agreed that their children are making good progress and that the school helps their children develop confident skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. This is endorsed by inspection findings.

Quality of teaching

Teachers know pupils and their individual learning needs very well. Relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils are strong and ensure a very positive climate for learning. Teachers' good subject knowledge and consistent careful planning engage all pupils in their learning. Tasks are well matched to ability, helping pupils to learn in a focused way and to work responsibly in groups and pairs to extend their knowledge. Teachers' skilled questioning elicits good responses from individual pupils, but they do not always engage all pupils in paired discussion, to think about their learning.

Teachers use a good range of strategies to gain feedback as to how well pupils understand their learning and they adapt the pace of their lessons well. Marking is regular and includes helpful comments for improvement, especially in English. In mathematics, pupils do not always get the opportunity to work through their corrections before moving on to new work. Pupils can clearly articulate targets for improvement in English, but this is not the case in mathematics.

Teaching assistants are well deployed to support pupils' needs and several take on roles of responsibility, such as leading the school's music or physical education. Their areas of expertise complement each other very well. The support for more able pupils is less explicit. While well planned topic work, science and interesting curricular innovation, such the blogging project, provide these pupils with opportunity to extend individual interests in wider contexts, in mathematics they do not have sufficient additional challenge of applying mathematical concepts in practical problem solving.

The vast majority of parents feel that their children are well taught, although some expressed concern that lessons are disrupted by bad behaviour. Pupils felt that they were occasionally distracted by others in class, but that behaviour was well managed by staff and that disruption to learning is rare. Inspection findings concurred with the pupils' views. Teachers make clear their expectations for good collaboration, conduct and social interaction.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils harmoniously learn and play in mixed age groups. They show respect and

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courtesy for adults and readily respond to school expectations and routines. Pupils develop a good sense of responsibility by enthusiastically taking on tasks around the school. For example, several Year 6 pupils support younger pupils in their reading. Others are buddies in the playground, ensuring the welfare of their peers, or take photographs of award winners in the celebration assembly to boost their sense of pride. The school carefully records all incidents which upset pupils and these are thoroughly investigated.

Pupils feel safe in school. They understand risk, know well what is meant by bullying and feel confident in distinguishing between different forms, knowing, for example, how to avoid cyber-bullying by using social networking sites responsibly. Pupils understand risk. Most parents agree that there is a good standard of behaviour in the school, although a few have concerns about name-calling and disruptive behaviour. Inspection findings show these to be the exception rather than the rule.

Attendance is high and has improved; the few pupils with more frequent patterns of absence respond well to reach the targets the school sets. Punctuality is good. There have been no recent permanent exclusions and when, very occasionally, a fixed-term exclusion has been considered appropriate, the reintegration of pupils has been managed very successfully.

The care for vulnerable pupils is very good. All staff are trained to recognise signs of neglect and care needs. The school efficiently implements support strategies to ensure external agencies and the school successfully counter any disadvantage from circumstance, disability or special education need.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior leaders have successfully addressed the areas for development identified at the last inspection. Pupils enjoy the wide variety of opportunities to develop writing and literacy across the curriculum; the school's good use of assessment ensures that interventions are put in place for any pupils identified as falling behind; pupils have many more opportunities to understand different cultures, for example through the blogging with schools in different parts of the UK and the USA or by using ICT links to correspond with a school in Kenya. The provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage has also improved with more space for child-initiated learning both indoors and outdoors.

The governors and headteacher have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school; the professional support and commitment of the whole staff ensures the successful implementation of all programmes for improvement. For example, in response to feedback from staff, initial difficulties with setting pupils in mathematics have been promptly addressed, and now standards are rising. In particular, senior leaders have identified that, by enriching the curriculum, they widen the scope of pupils' learning and improve the quality of teaching. The Forest School project and other initiatives, such as residential study weeks, help pupils to understand and marvel at nature and also to develop their confidence and

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independent learning skills. The good promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development also underpins much of the curriculum. Pupils have many good opportunities to be involved in athletic pursuits, dance and drama, and the excellent art work on display is testimony to pupils' in-depth enjoyment of this subject.

The school promotes equality well and actively tackles discrimination. The governing body actively supports and challenges the school to raise standards and include opportunities for all. Members have identified the need to improve channels of communication; they have recently instigated regular 'surgeries' for parents and carers. Nonetheless, responses from the parent questionnaires indicate parents and carers would like more information about homework through the home-school books, more timely information about forthcoming topic planning and clearer notice of events and any alterations to schedules.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and give no cause for concern. The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	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 2010 to 31 August 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.
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.

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.

27 February 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Thurlton Primary School, Thurlton, NR14 6RN

Thank you very much for being so welcoming when I recently inspected your school. I very much enjoyed talking with you, listening to you read and seeing you at your learning in lessons. Your opinions and responses to the questionnaire were very helpful to the inspection. Please also thank your parents and carers for completing their questionnaires.

I agreed with Mr Cornish and his staff that Thurlton is a good school. In particular you told us and showed us that:

- you work hard in class and make good progress,
- you enjoy learning and playing together, so that your behaviour in lessons and around the school is good,
- you respect one another and adults,
- you get involved well in all of the exciting activities which staff organise for you,
- you feel safe in school because the staff and governors pay careful attention to your needs.

Your literacy is coming on in leaps and bounds. Some of the adventure stories from the blogging project in Ash class are quite gripping. In mathematics you have settled in well to the new setting and support system, but your progress is not yet as fast as in English. My report asks teachers to help you to improve aspects of your mathematics and your English and recommends that you:

- make sure your skills in calculating improve
- use targets for improvement in mathematics as well as you do in English
- understand corrections in your books before moving on to new work
- have more opportunities to improve the quality of your handwriting

The report also asks the school to improve some of the ways it communicates with your parents and carers, so that they know more about what you are learning and doing in school. You can help by making sure that you keep your home-school book up to date every day.

Yours sincerely

John Mason
Lead inspector

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