

Thorney Close Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 108828 |
| Local authority | Sunderland |
| Inspection number | 377822 |
| Inspection dates | 22–23 February 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Susan Brown HMI |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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|--|---|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 243 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | C Short |
| Headteacher | Catherine Jones |
| Date of previous school inspection | 18 November 2008 |
| School address | Torquay Road Sunderland SR3 4BB |
| Telephone number | 0191 5536093 |
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Introduction

Inspection team

Susan Brown
Frank Cain

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 18 lessons taught by 10 teachers. Two observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the senior and middle leadership teams, and representatives from the governing body. There were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) at the time of the inspection. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the self-evaluation documentation, assessment and tracking information and development plans. A scrutiny of pupils' work was also undertaken. Inspectors heard six pupils in Key Stage 1 and three in Key Stage 2 read. They analysed the 67 inspection questionnaires returned by parents and carers and others submitted by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups or who are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportions of disabled pupils and of those with special educational needs are above average. There are 11 pupils with hearing and/or visual impairments who travel from other areas within the local authority to attend the school's specialist unit. In 2011, the school did not meet the government's floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress, although it did do so in 2009 and 2010. The Early Years Foundation Stage provides nursery education for children aged three before they move into the Reception class. The school holds several accreditations including Active Mark, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Healthy Schools status.

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 | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 3 |

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school because most pupils make the progress that is expected of them and reach standards that are broadly average. Despite a dip in attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2011, achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils, parents, carers and staff are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress from their very low starting points. Pupils with hearing and/or visual impairments and those with special educational needs make good progress academically and socially. They are integrated fully into the life of the school and benefit from good teaching and support from specialist staff.
- Teaching in Key Stage 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall. Teachers, generally, plan activities that match the pupils' learning needs. Occasionally, pupils spend too much time listening to the teacher or practising skills previously acquired instead of tackling new learning. Where teaching is good, the pace of learning is brisk, activities are more challenging, and pupils make good progress. Pupils know what they need to do to improve their latest piece of work, but do not always understand what they need to learn next.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They work very well together in pairs and small groups to enhance their speaking and listening skills. In turn, this generates ideas for and confidence about writing. Older pupils are developing an appreciation of different points of view and the ability to empathise with others. Pupils feel safe and say that bullying is rare.
- Since the last inspection, the school's leaders have monitored systematically the quality of teaching and implemented a series of actions that have brought about improvements in achievement, teaching and the curriculum. Under the effective leadership of the headteacher, they have identified accurately where further improvement is required to secure good progress for all pupils.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rate of progress made by pupils so that it is consistently good by ensuring that, in all lessons:
 - pupils have opportunities to apply and develop, as well as practise, their basic skills
 - the pace of learning is brisk
 - the length and complexity of teachers' explanations are always well-matched to pupils' concentration levels.
- Provide pupils with personalised, easily understood medium-term targets for improvement so that they know the next steps in their learning and what they must do to achieve them.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' learning and progress in lessons is at least satisfactory. It is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge levels that are well below those expected for their age and leave the Reception Year below, but not significantly below, national expectations. Pupils with hearing and/or visual impairments, those with disabilities and those with special educational needs also make good progress. This is because of the good and, occasionally, outstanding teaching, support and guidance provided by specialist teachers and skilled teaching assistants.

Pupils' progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics has improved steadily and is now broadly average. At the end of Key Stage 2, attainment in both English and mathematics improved in 2009 and again in 2010 so that both were close to average, but fell back in 2011 to significantly below average. The school identified several factors specific to the small cohort of pupils that contributed to this decline including: pupil mobility; the proportion of pupils with special educational needs; and inconsistency in the quality of teaching earlier in Key Stage 2. The school took decisive action to tackle the decline and this resulted in some improvement in pupil progress, but not enough for them to reach age-related expectations. The school's effective assessment and tracking systems, together with the quality of work seen in books and in lessons, indicate that pupils currently in Key Stage 2 are on track to reach at least average standards.

Almost all parents and carers state that their children enjoy school and that the school helps them to develop skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. The inspection found that pupils' achievement in reading at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is broadly average. Daily phonics lessons provide pupils with regular, interesting and often fun opportunities to acquire and develop knowledge of the sounds that letters make. During lessons, pupils use the knowledge to produce writing in which simple words are spelt correctly and harder words are recognisable, even when they are not spelt correctly. Many

children write independently, with confidence, and are willing to 'have a go' with spellings. Adults support those who are less confident writers and encourage them to use their knowledge of sounds. Older pupils have positive attitudes to reading and use a range of strategies when they encounter an unfamiliar word. They choose to read a range of texts including short stories and non-fiction. They use appropriate expression and intonation when they read aloud. They read with understanding, but not with total accuracy. In lessons, most pupils are confident to share their thoughts and ideas with a 'talk partner' or the whole class.

Quality of teaching

A very large majority of parents and carers think that their children are taught well. Inspection evidence found that teaching is satisfactory, with some that is good. Assessment is regular and accurate and, in the best lessons, is used very effectively to plan well-matched, challenging and interesting activities which motivate and engage pupils of different abilities. In lessons that are satisfactory, the pace of learning is slower or activities are less challenging or pupils spend too much time consolidating skills they have already acquired. Occasionally, teachers keep the whole class together for too long and less-able pupils find it difficult to maintain their concentration.

Teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff have created a rich, welcoming and stimulating environment for learning and provide activities well-matched to the children's interests and learning needs. The setting's leader has a very good understanding of how young children learn and all members of staff have high expectations of children's learning and behaviour. In a short phonics lesson, pupils enjoyed a number of different activities well-matched to their levels of concentration, in which they practised and developed their sounding out and blending of three-letter words. Pupils with hearing or visual impairment are taught both in the special resource base and in mainstream classes. They benefit from the expertise of specialist staff, who also provide much-valued support and advice to class teachers.

The school's curriculum ensures that pupils are able to practise and extend their communication and mathematical skills in other subjects such as history and geography. Teaching makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. In good lessons, the pupils' enjoyment is obvious, particularly when working in pairs or small groups. Teachers take time to praise pupils' work and their attitudes to learning. Marking is regular and includes clear feedback to pupils about how they can improve a particular piece of work. However, pupils are not developing a sufficiently clear understanding of how they can improve their work in the medium term. They do not all understand the purpose of the list of targets included at the front of their workbooks, which are not sufficiently related to their own personal needs.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Good behaviour was observed in lessons and around the school at lunchtime and during breaks. Pupils are keen to learn, listen attentively to teachers and show pride in the presentation of their work. Pupils' relationships with adults are positive and they are considerate and supportive of the needs of other pupils. Most pupils feel safe in school and most parents and carers agree. School records show that incidents of any form of bullying are rare, that they are resolved quickly and that parents and carers are kept well-informed. Almost all of them believe that the school deals well with any cases of

bullying. Pupils are well-informed about various types of bullying including the risks associated with social networking sites.

Throughout the school, there is an emphasis on pupils reflecting on their experiences, considering different points of view, and working productively with partners and in small groups. For example, older pupils watched very attentively an animation of an old man playing the piano while remembering events in his past. The teacher's sensitive yet challenging questioning helped them to empathise with the player and use visual cues such as his facial expressions to suggest how he might be feeling. In Key Stage 1, a teacher used a well-chosen story to help pupils explore the different points of view of the country mouse and the town mouse. They were engrossed in the task and discussed and wrote down what the characters might think, feel and say, using a good range of vocabulary such as 'terrified' 'anxious' and 'overjoyed'.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body is well-informed and provides both effective support and challenge. All staff share the headteacher's strong commitment to meeting the needs and enhancing the life chances of pupils in the school. Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching regularly and assess and track pupil performance effectively. This has resulted in well-targeted professional development that, in turn, has improved teaching. Middle leaders are increasingly involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and are developing their mentoring and coaching skills.

Since the last inspection, there is clear evidence of planned actions leading to improvements in attendance and in the standards reached by pupils. The curriculum is good because it is broad and planned carefully to meet the pupils' interests and identified learning needs. It makes good use of local people, places and events to extend pupils' experiences, while ensuring that they come into contact with others further afield. It makes a strong contribution to the development of pupils' communication and mathematical skills and successfully promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

The school's commitment to equality of opportunity is strong. Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs participate fully in the life of the school and achieve well. Procedures to safeguard children are secure. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school.

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 up exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

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| 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. |
| 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.



24 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thorney Close Primary School, Sunderland, SR3 4BB

I want to thank you for the very warm welcome that you gave us when we visited you recently. We enjoyed our time with you. You were keen to talk with us, read to us and explain how things work in your school. I would also like to thank you and your parents and carers for returning our questionnaire.

This is what we found. You go to a satisfactory school which provides you with an interesting and challenging curriculum. You are all making at least satisfactory progress and some of you are making good progress with your learning. By the end of Year 6 you are reaching standards that are in line with national averages. You and your parents and carers told us that you feel safe in school and that bullying and harassment are rare. You get on very well together! Your good behaviour and positive attitudes make an important contribution to the success of your school.

We have asked the headteacher, the governing body and the staff to make sure that:

- you all make good progress
- all lessons are as interesting and challenging as the best that we saw during our visit
- you all understand what your targets are and what you need to do to improve your work.

Please accept our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Brown

Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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