

Throston Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111612
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	378324
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2012
Lead inspector	Barbara Hudson

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	457
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amanda O'Connelley
Headteacher	Mark Atkinson
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Barbara Hudson
Kate Pringle
Carole Snee

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 26 lessons or parts of lessons, including some where the links between sounds and letters were being taught. Fifteen teachers were observed and approximately 23 hours were spent in direct observation of teaching and learning. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and school staff. The inspectors observed the school's work in and out of the classroom and looked at documentation relating to pupils' achievement, safeguarding pupils, school improvement planning and the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors analysed parents' and carers' responses expressed in the 265 questionnaires returned and the responses in questionnaires completed by the staff and pupils.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average size primary school. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. A few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. The school meets the current floor standard. The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.

The school holds numerous awards including Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark, Activemark, Artsmark, National Healthy School status, Eco-school Green Flag Award, International School Award and Investors in People.

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. It is not outstanding because teaching is not yet consistently good or better. Pupils, parents, carers and staff are overwhelmingly positive about all the school has to offer. They value the way that, by leaders responding to pupils' changing needs, it is constantly improving.
- Children receive a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage because the staff know the children exceptionally well and provide interesting and challenging activities for them to do. All groups of pupils make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils' attitudes to work are excellent. Pupils achieve well and overall attainment is above average and improving quickly in writing and mathematics.
- The strength in the good teaching lies in the excellent relationships between the teaching staff and pupils. Teachers effectively praise and support pupils in lessons, but the marking of pupils' work is not consistent. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to use their basic skills across the curriculum but the application is through highly-structured tasks and not in a practical, investigative and creative way.
- Pupils' behaviour is consistently good and often outstanding. All staff are vigilant about pupils' safety and pupils say they feel very safe in school.
- The headteacher motivates staff and pupils to give of their best. The drive, ambition and passion of the governing body and staff to make this school the best are evident in everything that they do. The leadership of teaching and the management of performance are good and highly focused on individual staff needs. However, leaders' evaluations of the school's work are not yet sufficiently precise to be of optimum use in identifying the progress of different groups of pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - providing work that is even more closely matched to what pupils of differing abilities can do
 - improving the consistency with which teachers mark pupils' work and provide feedback
 - developing a more practical, investigative and creative approach to the way writing and mathematical skills are applied across the curriculum.
- Ensure leaders provide more precise evaluations of the impact of the school's work on outcomes for different groups of pupils.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The overall achievement of pupils, whatever their starting points, is good and this aligns with the positive views of parents and carers. Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons because they learn lots of new things. They are enthusiastic, motivated to learn, cooperate extremely well and want to do their best. Pupils listen attentively and follow instructions carefully. They carefully apply their writing and mathematical targets to their work. Pupils' good reading skills make a significant contribution to the pace of learning. Pupils apply themselves well to the tasks that they are given to do. They make particularly good progress in developing their skills during practical tasks. This was very evident when Year 4 pupils were animating a history topic for the school's website.

Children join the Nursery class with skills that are broadly typical for their age, except for aspects of their communication skills which are below expectations. In the Early Years Foundation Stage children make good gains in all areas of learning, especially in their use of language. They effectively take part in well-planned group activities led by a member of staff. They also have the appropriate opportunities to make decisions and choices to direct their own learning. By the end of the Reception Year, almost all children reach the levels expected for their age in all areas of learning and many exceed these.

All groups of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 make good gains in their learning. Pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs are effectively supported. A rigorous analysis of each pupil's needs ensures interventions are appropriate and well-planned, enabling them to make good progress. Pupils' attainment in reading is above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. A dip in Year 6 pupils' writing attainment in 2011 has been rigorously addressed and the current Year 6 pupils are well on track to attain above average standards in this area. At the end of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils' attainment is above average and improving quickly. This is because of a high focus on teachers providing pupils with appropriate targets which pupils are applying well in their writing and mathematical tasks.

Quality of teaching

The good quality of teaching is recognised and greatly appreciated by parents and carers. As one parent commented, 'all staff take considerable care, going that extra step to ensure the children and parents are happy'. Although the majority of teaching observed during the inspection was good there was a very small minority of satisfactory teaching. In such lessons, the pace of learning slows and pupils become a little restless. All the teaching staff are ambitious for each pupil to achieve their best. They demonstrate this by carefully monitoring how well pupils are learning during a lesson so that the level of support can be altered quickly. Teaching staff are adept at helping pupils to become more confident in their abilities by well-timed and focused verbal praise. This means that by the end of the lesson each pupil feels proud of their efforts. Pupils say that learning is fun and their work is 'either just right or a little bit hard, but rarely too easy'. Teachers' good quality questioning and leading of discussions ensures that pupils are actively engaged in learning. This was very evident in a Year 5 lesson when pupils were asked to work out equivalent fractions. Usually, the teaching matches tasks well to the different ability groups in the class, but sometimes the activities do not sufficiently challenge all pupils, particularly the more able.

Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum. However, they tend to do this through highly-structured activities where pupils are not required to use practical, investigative and creative skills independently. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is variable. Where it is excellent it highlights the strengths in a piece of work, what needs to be done next to make it better and pupils are given the time to respond to the teachers' feedback. Where it is satisfactory it provides praise and only occasional areas for improvement. Teachers effectively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through carefully planned activities. This was evident in Year 6 pupils' work on Africa where they were working with a partner and given time to reflect on what it would be like to live without clean water.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage progress well because of the wide range of good quality learning experiences that adults provide, both indoors and outdoors. Activities are planned so that there is good challenge for most groups of children when they work independently although, sometimes, the most able children are not challenged enough in their independent activities. Reading is taught well. Parents and carers are given good support to help their children at home through high quality reading diaries.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils understand that good behaviour and consideration of others is the foundation of their happy and caring community. From the time they join the school in the nursery class, children learn to adapt themselves to the needs of others. Their behaviour is courteous and thoughtful, showing a real awareness of the need to care for each other and respect each other's rights. A calm and purposeful atmosphere pervades all areas of the school. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and often outstanding. Occasionally, when the pace of lessons slows, some pupils

become restless. The staff have created a positive, supportive environment in which all can thrive and do their best. Pupils, parents and carers confirm that this is the norm.

Pupils report that bullying in any form is rare and that when it does occur staff deal with it quickly and effectively. This is confirmed in pupils' and parents' and carers' questionnaires responses and discussions. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe in school and in their community. They feel very safe and secure at school, form excellent relationships with each other and their teachers and thrive in an environment that nurtures and celebrates success. Pupils' attendance is now well above average, reflecting their enjoyment of school.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers at all levels demonstrate the ambition, determination and expertise to improve the school continually, showing a good capacity for improvement. The headteacher shares his clear, ambitious vision by leading through example. Roles and responsibilities are well delegated. High levels of communication, teamwork, professional dialogue and sharing good practice from within and beyond the school, are the norm. This has produced good improvement since the last inspection. Teaching has developed through careful identification of needs, targeted opportunities for professional development and a focus on teacher accountability for the progress of the pupils in their class. Teachers are vigilant about ensuring every child has equal access to all that the school has to offer and that all are achieving well. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the learning environment has been transformed.

Relationships with parents, carers and the community are exceptionally positive. This is very evident in the very high number and positive returns of the parents' and carers' questionnaires. Parents and carers are highly appreciative of the good quality breakfast- and after-school club that is provided for pupils. Pupils' progress in writing has been rigorously addressed and inspection evidence shows that this is having a positive impact on pupils' attainment across the school. Attendance has also improved through school actions and also because the pupils gain great enjoyment from coming to their school. The leaders have developed a good curriculum that meets pupils' needs and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Senior leaders and the governing body have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and where it needs to improve. Although leaders gather very detailed information and data about pupils' individual progress, it is not always evaluated closely enough to identify the progress of different groups. The governing body holds the school to account well. Its members bring a wide range of expertise and experience to the service of the school and community. The governing body ensures that policies are understood and implemented effectively by all staff, including those for safeguarding and tackling discrimination. Members of the governing body and staff make excellent links with parents and carers who, in turn, are high in their praise of how well their children are taught and cared for in 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 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.
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.



8 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Throston Primary School, Hartlepool, TS26 0TJ

Thank you very much for the friendly welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you and appreciated the open way in which you answered our questions. I am sure you will be delighted to know that we judge your school to be a good school. This means that the school has lots of good things and some that need improving.

Some of the good things about your school are:

- the excellent relationships that the staff have with pupils, parents and carers
- the good start that children receive in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the good teaching that motivates you to learn and behave well
- the good progress you make, particularly in reading
- all the staff and governing body are determined to make the school even better.

Even in good schools there are still things that can be improved. We have asked your headteacher to work with staff to look at more ways to:

- provide you with work that is even more closely matched to your ability
- ensure all teachers provide you with good feedback when they mark your work and give you time to work on the improvement points
- develop more practical, investigative and creative ways in which you can practise your writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum
- provide very focused evaluations of the impact of the school's work on different groups of pupils.

You can help the school become even better by continuing to work as hard as you do now in your lessons. I would like to wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Hudson
Lead inspector

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