

Thornton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103268
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	355351
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Judith Tolley

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	660
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derek Cowley
Headteacher	Linda Webster
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed 24 lessons; 21 teachers were seen; meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement planning, and the school's analysis of pupils' progress. They also analysed 241 parental questionnaires and 100 pupil questionnaires.

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

- Whether achievement is outstanding for all pupils as the school asserts and how well teaching, assessment and the curriculum support this.
- Whether the attributes and attitudes demonstrated by pupils in their personal development are outstanding as the school's evaluation indicates.
- Whether the school can support its evaluation that care, guidance and support are excellent by providing examples of very well targeted support for and excellent attention to its pupils.
- How well leaders, managers and governors ensure the best possible outcomes for the pupils, given the radically changed circumstances over the last 18 months.

Information about the school

The school is a much larger primary school than average. Formerly a junior school, it has increased significantly in size since December 2009, from a roll of 490 to 660, in response to local need. It now takes children from four years old and as such caters for the full primary age range. As a result the number of staff has also increased significantly and there has been a large building programme over the last 18 months to accommodate the changes.

Almost all pupils come from minority ethnic groups, mainly Pakistani, and speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. While the proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, the proportion that has a statement of such need is above average. The school caters for eight pupils with emotional and behavioural needs in its specialist unit on site.

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

This is a good and improving school. Pupils' achievement has improved consistently over the last three years and is outstanding. They display good attributes and attitudes in their personal development. The school has many strengths, not least the outstanding levels of pastoral care and support given to its pupils and the outstanding provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It also benefits from the excellent leadership of the headteacher which has ensured the school has continued to improve despite the radical changes which have taken place over the last 18 months. The result of this strong leadership and care is that pupils in Key Stage 2 have not been disadvantaged while these changes have been taking place and pupils new to the school in Key Stage 1 have settled quickly and are now, too, making good progress. The determination and success of leaders and the governing body to ensure a 'business as usual' approach has galvanised the school and, together with the accurate identification of strengths and areas for development, is an indication of the school's good capacity to improve further. Although children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress, coordinators do not have a clear enough understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. Children's progress is slowed in the Reception class because opportunities are missed to enable them to learn through their play. Governors are well informed, very supportive and fully involved in the life of the school.

The school provides well targeted academic and pastoral support. In addition, pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, benefit from a good broad and balanced curriculum which meets their different needs and interests well. These are key factors in enabling pupils to make good and sometimes outstanding progress from their broadly average starting points and, as a result, attain high standards by the end of Year 6. Also key is the good quality of teaching. In the best lessons, pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress in their learning. This is because in these lessons they are suitably challenged and enjoy opportunities to collaborate with each other. Where teaching is satisfactory pupils' progress is slowed because their differing needs, particularly of the more-able, are not fully met and collaboration is more limited.

Pupils contribute well to the community, being involved for example in caring for the youngest children, and helping the school to make decisions through the School Council and the Eco Group. In addition pupils have a good understanding of the importance of being safe and well. All-in-all they are well prepared for the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen further pupils' improving progress, particularly in Key Stage 1, and build on the best practice in lessons to ensure:

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- appropriate levels of challenge to all pupils, particularly the more-able
- pupils are provided with more opportunities to collaborate with each other.
- Improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring leaders have a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement and by increasing opportunities for children to learn through their play.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The outcomes for pupils in terms of their achievement and personal development have improved since the previous inspection and are outstanding overall. Pupils enjoy school and appreciate the support and attention given to them. Pupils were polite and well-mannered during the inspection, although on a few occasions some were not always as engaged in their learning as they might have been had opportunities for collaboration been afforded them. Nonetheless, their enjoyment and commitment to school is clear as demonstrated by their above average attendance.

Pupils were keen to tell inspectors how safe they were. They say that they are confident that the school deals with any rare instances of poor behaviour effectively and know who they can talk to if they have any problems. In addition they have a clear understanding of how to stay healthy. Pupils demonstrate their own commitment to the promotion of healthy lifestyles through good participation rates in extra-curricular activity and their healthy choices of food at lunchtime and break. Pupils clearly enjoy the opportunities they have to help and take their responsibilities seriously. The impact of their efforts is strongly felt whether through whole-school fundraising for a range of charitable causes, or in helping younger children to settle in. Pupils display respect for one another and their teachers and have a good sense of right and wrong. They take time to reflect on their own actions and regularly help one another in class and around the school. Discussions with pupils highlighted a commitment to promote similarities and celebrate diversity.

The pupils' positive attitudes towards learning and their good behaviour have impacted positively on their achievement. In lessons they respond enthusiastically when they are given the opportunities to work together to solve problems. They usually display high levels of concentration which occasionally lapses when they are not fully involved in teacher-led activities or are unsure about how to complete a task. For instance Year 5 pupils worked with enthusiasm and organised themselves well when they were challenged to make up stories in small groups for a 'Royal Story Telling Competition'. By the end of Year 6 they achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science. Results in tests have risen year on year and, according to provisional results in 2010, continue to do so. Attainment the end of Year 2 is below average overall in reading, writing and mathematics but not significantly so. These pupils have only been at the school since December 2009 and in that time have made good progress from their starting points. The results and the improving trend represent good progress. For some pupils, for example those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for some more-able pupils, there are examples of outstanding progress as a result of high quality additional support and teaching. Pupils in the specialist unit make outstanding progress as a result of the excellent provision and the very effective support they receive. Generally though, the level of challenge for more-able pupils in mixed ability classes is variable. Similarly, opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively and independently and the opportunities to use computers also vary across

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the school. Nonetheless, pupils' basic skills are developing well. As a result, they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers usually present new ideas clearly and use interactive whiteboards to engage pupils' interest. They use questioning to good effect to support and challenge pupils both in whole-class discussions and during class work. When pupils are given the opportunity to discuss ideas with a partner, their confidence increases and they are keen to share their ideas in whole class discussion. The pace of learning slows when teacher-led activities are too lengthy or when pupils are not given an appropriate level of challenge, so that they find tasks too easy or too difficult.

Assessment information is usually used effectively in planning to meet the varying needs of pupils, and teaching assistants are skilful in supporting individuals and small groups in lessons. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to check the understanding of all pupils during teacher-led activities. Marking is regular and encouraging and usually gives clear guidance, so that pupils know how to improve their work.

The curriculum meets pupils' needs and interests well. Pupils regularly practise their reading, writing and mathematics. Nonetheless opportunities are missed to allow pupils to practise these skills across other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils' experience is enriched

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by learning French, German and by a variety of visitors and visits. Strong links with local secondary schools not only ensure a smooth transition from one stage to the next but also enable pupils to further develop their science through workshops. The care, guidance and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those who speak English as an additional language, is of high quality. Focused support enables these pupils to participate fully in activities alongside their classmates. Carefully planned support for these pupils has resulted in significant improvement in their attitudes, behaviour, achievement and attendance. Well thought-out induction procedures ensure that children settle quickly when they join the school. The school works very effectively with a range of external agencies as well as parents and carers, to remove barriers to learning for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

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 relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's thorough analysis of the school's performance and the very clear direction for development that she and the senior leadership team have set are very effective in raising standards, eliminating weaknesses, and providing an atmosphere where achievement is valued and celebrated. Pupils' progress is tracked closely and this informs school improvement planning. Middle leaders play a full part in evaluating the school's performance and in school improvement planning, but because of the recent changes and the consequent changed structure of the leadership and management of the school, many are still adjusting to their new roles. The senior leadership team has acted swiftly to eliminate relative weaknesses in writing and mathematics. Its success in doing this, in ensuring standards continue to rise year on year as well as ensuring all pupils can benefit from the varied activities it provides, are indications of its good commitment to promoting equality of opportunity. The school is aware of the weaknesses in the Early Years Foundation Stage and has plans in place to improve the provision. All senior and middle leaders participate in school self-evaluation and improvement planning. Training and mentoring has been effective in improving the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Nonetheless, there is some variation across the school as a result of the significant and recent increase in staff. The management structure has been adapted accordingly and plans are in place to address this, but it is as yet too early to see the impact. The school works closely with other institutions such as high schools and Warwick University to enhance pupils' experience. It also works hard to inform parents and carers and to involve them in their children's learning, for example, through newsletters, parents' evenings and workshops. Safeguarding procedures are rigorously applied and are kept under constant review. The school's work with parents and carers, partner institutions and

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the local community is promoting community cohesion well. Pupils increase their understanding of the wider community through, for instance, their study of French and German, the celebration of religious festivals, and a variety of visits and visitors.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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

Children enter the Reception class with skills, knowledge and understanding that are broadly in line with those typically expected for their age. All children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are at the early stages of learning to speak English, make satisfactory progress overall. Children make particularly good progress in their personal development and their communication and language skills. Behaviour is good and children respond positively to adults and play well with their classmates.

High importance is placed on caring for children and they enjoy learning in a safe environment. Relationships with parents and carers are strong. There is good liaison with feeder nurseries and other settings so that children settle quickly. Similarly liaison between the Reception class and Year 1 ensures a smooth transition to the next stage of their education. Small group activities are planned well to engage children's interest and to meet their needs, for instance in enabling them to develop their language skills and independence in carrying out simple routine tasks for themselves.

Although teaching is satisfactory, opportunities are missed to engage children's enthusiasm and promote their learning through play and interaction with adults. Assessment information is not always used effectively, especially in providing support in child-initiated activities, so that children are often left to their own devices to explore the world around them. This results in some children doing the same activities for lengthy periods so that the pace of their learning slows.

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The Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator has put systems in place to track individual progress and plan next steps. Although teachers and teaching assistants know individuals well, the use of assessment is at the very early stages of development, lacks detail and does not always feed effectively into day-to-day planning. At present, systems to analyse performance do not provide a clear enough picture for effective improvement planning.

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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

A higher than average proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The large majority have positive views of the school. They are pleased with the progress their children make and say their children enjoy school. A small minority of those who responded expressed concerns about the help the school gives them to support their children's learning and the extent to which the school takes account of parents' and carers' suggestions and concerns. There were few written comments but in these were testimonials from parents about the high levels of support given both to parents and to their children. On the whole parents' and carers' views matched those of the inspectors.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thornton 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 inspection team received 241 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 660 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	127	53	107	45	2	1	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	135	56	99	41	1	0	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	110	46	112	47	11	5	4	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	105	44	115	48	10	4	6	3
The teaching is good at this school	119	50	110	46	10	4	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	88	37	121	50	20	8	6	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	115	48	117	49	4	2	2	1
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)	93	39	125	52	8	3	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	95	40	124	52	12	5	4	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	109	45	113	47	13	5	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	81	34	125	52	23	10	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	100	42	125	52	6	3	4	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	122	51	105	44	9	4	4	2

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 terms 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.



27 September 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Thornton Primary School, Birmingham, B8 2LQ

On behalf of all the inspectors, I would like to thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking with you all. I expect you would like to know what we think. You told us that yours is a good school and we agree. Teachers and adults in your school look after you well. Your behaviour is good. You do a good job in improving your school through, for instance, the school council, the Eco Group and your work as playground leaders. You feel safe at school and know that if you have a problem, there is always an adult to talk to. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and particularly like the range of clubs and other activities on offer. We can see why. Teaching is good and it is helping you to make good progress. You are going through an exciting time as your school is getting much bigger and there have been lots of changes. We were particularly impressed with how you are making pupils new to your school welcome and helping them to settle in.

You reach high standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. We noticed that in some lessons you made better progress than in others. We have asked the school to make them all lessons as good as the best by making sure you are all given the right amount of challenge so that you can do even better. We also noticed how well you got on when you have the opportunity to work in pairs and small groups, so we have asked the school to make sure you have more opportunities to work this way. We think that younger children in the Early Years Foundation Stage should make better progress. We have asked the school to make sure that teachers identify what works well so that they can plan improvements. We have also asked them to provide more opportunities for the children to learn through their play so that children can make the most of the activities provided to help them learn.

The headteacher and staff are working very hard to make your school even better.

You can all help by continuing to work hard and by continuing to come to school regularly. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Tolley

Lead inspector

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