

Thornhill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132117
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	360368
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Helena Evans

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	284
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Duncan Jennings
Headteacher	Ellen Humphries
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 24 lessons and 16 teachers were observed. Discussions were held with groups of pupils, including school councillors as well as staff with key responsibilities, and representatives of the governing body. Additionally, inspectors met a small number of parents and carers in the morning before the start of the school day, and at the request of a few parents, at the end of the first day of the inspection. In addition to observing the school's work, the inspectors evaluated documentation such as those relating to safeguarding, school policies, the school improvement plan, pupils' work and records of their learning and progress.

Parents' and carers' responses, as recorded in 104 questionnaires, were analysed, as well as those from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress made by pupils throughout each year and by the time they leave school at the end of Year 6.
- The impact of strategies to address poor behaviour and attendance.
- The extent to which teaching and the curriculum meet the needs of different groups.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in reviewing the quality of provision and evaluating the success of the actions being taken to accelerate progress.

Information about the school

Thornhill Primary School is situated on an estate which includes mainly social housing. It is larger than most primary schools. Most pupils are of White British heritage and currently there are fewer girls than boys. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well over twice the national average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities are much higher than the national average. There are a higher proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs than is usually found because the school has a special unit for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. There is a high level of mobility with significant numbers of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times. The Early Years Foundation Stage has two Reception classes but children are often taught as part of a single-age group. All other classes include mixed-age pupils, except Year 5 and Year 6 classes, which are taught in single-year groups. The school has Healthy Schools and Activemark awards.

The headteacher was appointed in September 2008 and the deputy headteacher took up her post at the start of this academic year.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This school provides pupils with a satisfactory and improving education. There are a variety of important strengths, especially in the way staff care for the emotional and social needs of each pupil. The headteacher has brought about significant and rapid change since she took up her post in September 2008. Rigorous self-evaluation by the headteacher and senior leadership team has resulted in the school having an extremely clear picture of what is required to improve. Systems are in place to ensure raising standards and these are central to the work of the school. The Early Years Foundation Stage has well-established initiatives that are raising levels of achievement and consequently children make good progress in Reception. Staff and governors' morale is high and there is a unanimous enthusiasm and drive for further improvement. Good leadership and management with a strong focus on effectively monitoring teaching and learning, the staff team spirit and the school's positive ethos are all central to the school's improved performance and its good capacity to sustain further improvement.

Children's skills on entry to Early Years Foundation Stage are exceptionally low. The trend in attainment at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics has been significantly below average for many years. Currently, progress has been accelerated across the school, and especially so in Year 6, because of the good teaching in this year group. As a result, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making the same satisfactory progress as the rest of the school. However, the learning of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs is sometimes restricted through lack of resources, gaps in staff training and insufficient use of information and communication technology (ICT). The recently appointed coordinator is establishing pupil tracking for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities but the information held by the school is not always used sufficiently well enough in pupils' individual education plans.

Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good examples, especially in Reception and Year 6. The school is sharing this good practice to help increase the amount of consistently good teaching in the different year groups.

The headteacher has raised expectations of what pupils can achieve and this has led to improvements in attainment and the behaviour of pupils, significantly reducing the number of exclusions and incidents in the school. Attendance is average but there are a minority of pupils who are persistently absent. This is hindering pupils in gaining the skills that they need for their future well-being.

The curriculum contributes satisfactorily to pupils' learning and progress. A strong feature of the school's provision is the wide range of interesting extra-curricular opportunities. This contributes well to the improving profile of achievement and enjoyment. Breakfast club supports pupils well and provides a safe and purposeful start to the school day.

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Parents and carers are appreciative of the school, especially of the way it keeps their children safe, and the positive caring atmosphere in the school. There were many written comments from parents, for example: 'My son loves coming to school' and 'I think the after-school clubs are outstanding, providing a great range of activities.' Care and support are strengths of the school and result in increased self-esteem and confidence. This enhances pupils' ability to engage with their learning. Pupils in the unit are sensitively integrated into mainstream classes. Nurture groups and emotional literacy programmes are effective in helping pupils adjust well to school. All staff pay clear attention to the equality of opportunity of all. This is an inclusive school where children are very successfully encouraged and supported to play their full part.

While pupils show good spiritual, moral, social and local cultural awareness, the school is aware that it has not developed sufficient opportunities to enhance pupils' appreciation of those with differing backgrounds and cultures at a national level.

Up to 40% of the 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 ♦ pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics, making sure pupils do not underachieve, by:
 - applying ongoing rigorous monitoring and evaluation, focusing on eliminating inconsistencies
 - ensuring that teaching is consistently good
 - developing the use made of assessment information so that pupils are given more effective written and oral feedback from teachers which clearly informs them what they need to do to improve.
- Improve provision for pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities, by:
 - developing systems to monitor, evaluate and report pupils' progress
 - ensuring that individual educational plans show precise steps for pupils to take
 - providing more opportunities for ongoing professional development and training for staff
 - updating resources, especially for ICT, appropriate to pupils' needs.
- Improve provision for community cohesion so that pupils develop an appropriate knowledge and understanding of diversity within the United Kingdom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Effective routines ensure that pupils settle well and in the majority of lessons there is an eagerness to learn and actively participate. In a good Year 6 mathematics lesson, there was a high level of engagement because the task was practical, and pupils were well supported by appropriate resources which enabled them to apply the skills they had learned in previous lessons.

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Whole-school improvements in work scrutiny and planning that better meet the needs of pupils are helping to improve progress. Standards of attainment are rising but, despite clear signs that currently they have improved, they have been well below the national average over a period of years. The school's national test results are negatively affected considerably by the movement of pupils in and out of the school at other than normal times as well as pupils' low starting points.

Improvements to the teaching of mathematics and English, and the focus given to developing basic skills, in particular, the systematic teaching of reading, writing and spelling across the school, are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress. Pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties are successfully helped through the well-targeted support of the nurture team, and a specialist team devoted to supporting pupils identified with these needs. The highly effective family liaison officer has made an important contribution to raising attendance rates, helping to remove the barriers to learning for many pupils.

The way pupils are being shown how to apply their basic skills prepares them satisfactorily for future life. Pupils are well mannered and respectful of each other. This is as a result of a clearly understood behaviour policy which is consistently applied by all staff. Pupils clearly feel safe in school and are well aware of how to stay fit and healthy. A minority of pupils present challenging behaviour but this is dealt with calmly and does not hinder the learning of other pupils in the class.

Very good relationships have led to the pupils' increased self-confidence and esteem, which particularly helps pupils attending the unit, and the few pupils who speak English as an additional language integrate well into mainstream classes.

Pupils have the opportunity to contribute to the day-to-day running of the school, for example through playtime buddies and the school council, and they make a positive contribution to their local community where there are good links with the church.

Opportunities to engage in sports provision is a strong and popular tradition of the school. The school currently holds the championship for the city football tournament. Extra-curricular provision is good and effectively promotes healthy lifestyles, another strength of the school. The school provides opportunity for all pupils to engage in a range of activities which have a good take-up and make a positive contribution to learning and their enjoyment of school. For example, to their great delight, a good number of pupils from across all age ranges and staff took part in a lunchtime activity to try and beat the national non-stop dance rock record attempt.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

Teaching is satisfactory overall. Consistently good relationships between adults and pupils, teachers' enthusiasm and effective behaviour management are strengths and clear indications that pupils are well cared for. As a result of effective use of assessment data, planning now meets most pupils' needs, although work is not always presented to cover the full range of abilities in mixed-age classes. Marking is variable and not well focused on the pupils' targets. At times, written feedback given by teachers does not adequately provide guidance to show pupils what they have to do to improve their work and this sometimes limits progress.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, and is increasingly relevant for all pupils because of recent improvements in planning and the use of assessment. The school has identified that the curriculum should be reviewed, and is already beginning to take account of the good practice in the Reception classes.

The unit provides a calm and purposeful learning environment where the ratio of adults to pupils is good, enabling individual attention. Behaviour and attitudes are usually good which further aids pupils' progress. The curriculum is satisfactory for their needs but learning and progress is sometimes hindered by a lack of resources, including ICT, which do not always meet pupils' specific needs.

The school motto 'working together to be the best we can' illustrates the value placed by the school on developing partnerships with other schools and external agencies in order to

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enhance pupils' educational experiences. For example, pupils new to the school who are at the early stages of learning English are well catered for through links with support services, and so they settle quickly and acquire English successfully, making at least satisfactory progress. The strong links with a local special school provide a rich resource for staff to share and develop good practice regarding provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear vision of the strategic direction of the school, and this is shared and understood by the staff team and the governing body who are all equally committed to implementing planned action in order to raise standards of attainment.

Her approach to bringing about change through enabling all staff, and the staff's willingness to respond with hard work and enthusiasm, are important factors in driving improvements, especially to teaching, learning and progress. The headteacher has successfully developed robust procedures and processes for accurate self-evaluation and taken swift action to address underachievement. Challenging targets have been set and the school improvement plan focuses on raising achievement. Members of the senior leadership team play a full part in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The school is good at ensuring all pupils have equal opportunities and that there is no discrimination.

Governors have given their full support to the astute appointment of the deputy headteacher, and adjustments to the structure of the leadership team, and this has had a very positive impact on the school's good capacity to sustain improvement. Staff keep the governing body well informed, and with increasing opportunities for involvement in the school, governors are now beginning to hold the school to account. There is a structure in place for link governors to work closely with staff. Governors take effective responsibility for safeguarding issues. They know the arrangements well and, with the designated staff and headteacher, review policy and practice frequently. Governors ensure that the vetting of statutory requirements for risk assessment and child protection are fully met. As a result of good management procedures, pupils are well safeguarded.

Community cohesion, although satisfactory overall, is an area for development. The school has worked well to promote this within the school community and there are satisfactory and growing international links, but more work is required to promote this beyond the school in the United Kingdom.

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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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children have a good start to their education. They settle well into Reception class because of very effective induction procedures and the exceptional care provided by the staff. Their attainment on entry is well below what might be expected at this age. This is especially the case with communication, language and literacy and personal development. It is a tribute to the staff team that the youngest children are making exceptional progress in personal, social and emotional development. This is laying a good foundation for their continued success as they move through the school. The quality of teaching is consistently good and outstanding leadership ensures that the curriculum is well planned and effectively meets the different needs of the children. Teachers know children well as a result of effective assessment opportunities which result in very good personalised plans being developed for the next day's activities. Children respond with enthusiasm to the range of learning opportunities provided for them. Adults have high expectations, provide clear routines and enable children to build positive relationships. Behaviour is good. The classroom provides a vibrant and interesting environment in which to learn. The school has plans to develop the outside learning environment, which is not so well developed and restricted by lack of shelter and shade.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents' and carers' responses to the Ofsted questionnaire were largely positive. A large majority of parents and carers say that their children enjoy school, feel safe and are given opportunities to develop a healthy lifestyle. Inspection evidence confirms this. A small minority expressed concern that the school does not always adequately prepare their child for the future. The inspectors found during this inspection that induction procedures and transition from one class to another or at the end of Year 6 are very effective, and that the school supports the children well. A very small minority also expressed concern that the school does not always deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that there are effective strategies in place to deal with challenging behaviour and that behaviour is at least satisfactory and often good .

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thornhill 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 104 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 284 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	56	44	42	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	67	64	34	33	2	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	52	50	44	42	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	58	56	38	37	6	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	61	59	41	39	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	56	36	35	7	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	53	51	45	43	4	4	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)	42	40	44	42	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	43	48	46	6	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	40	38	52	50	7	7	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	39	48	43	12	12	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	49	47	48	46	4	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	60	35	34	5	5	1	1

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



20 January 2011



Dear Pupils,



Inspection of Thornhill Primary School, Thornhill, Southampton S019 6FH



Thank you for being so welcoming and friendly when we visited your school. We enjoyed speaking to you, visiting your lessons and looking at your work. The reason for our visit was to decide what kind of education you are receiving. As well as watching your lessons and looking at your books, we looked at the information the school has about your learning and progress.

You told us that you feel safe in school, and that the adults in school care well for you. You also told us that your headteacher and senior staff do a good job, and that you learn a lot in lessons. Many of you said how much you enjoy all the sports and other opportunities available to you after school. We are pleased to see how you are doing so well developing healthy lifestyles, and how some of you are taking increased responsibility in school. We were delighted to join in with your memorable 'dance rock challenge'!

We found that your school is satisfactorily meeting your needs, and that there are some parts of the school that are good. We have asked your headteacher and governing body to concentrate on:



- improving how well teachers use what they know about how you are getting on to set targets that will help you make better progress and reach higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics
- ensuring resources and equipment for those of you with special educational needs are appropriate and are updated regularly so that they help you learn well
- providing you with more opportunity to learn about other areas of the United Kingdom so that you have a better understanding of how different people live.



All of you can help by continuing to work hard. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely



Helena Evans
Lead inspector

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