

Thornton Watlass Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121521
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	339962
Inspection dates	14–15 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Andrew Swallow

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Liz Smith-Dodsworth
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Dudman
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited six lessons and observed four teachers. The inspector held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. He observed the school's work and looked at the school's improvement plans, self-evaluation, policies, assessment and tracking systems, safeguarding procedures and pupils' work. The inspector examined questionnaires from 24 parents and carers, as well as those from pupils and staff.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The rates of progress made by children across the Early Years Foundation Stage, given increasing numbers joining the Reception Year from outside the school's normal catchment area.
- The effectiveness of the school's strategies to raise standards in writing and in mathematics.
- The quality of teaching and its impact on children's learning, given so many mixed-age classes.
- The rigour of self-evaluation procedures, and the ambition of all teachers, given the school's interim leadership and imminent federation arrangements.

Information about the school

Thornton Watlass is a very small rural primary school, with two separate mixed-age classes, one for Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1–2 pupils, and one for Years 3–6 pupils. All pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than that seen nationally. Among the school's awards is the Healthy Schools status.

Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has fallen and an increasing proportion joins the school at other than the normal time. There have been significant changes in staffing, including the appointment of an interim acting headteacher, prior to the school's formal federation with a local primary school.

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

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school which provides a warm and friendly environment in which to learn. Good quality care, guidance and support ensure that pupils' overall personal development is good. Pupils are fiercely proud of their school, attend exceptionally well, and make outstanding contributions to the school and wider community. Parents are highly supportive of the school's work and fully appreciate the 'extra mile' that staff go to ensure excellent links between home and school. Pupils feel safe and well cared for, especially those who join at other than the usual time.

Children get off to a good start. From entry points that are below those seen nationally, they make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where they are encouraged to cooperate and learn together. As a result, they begin Year 1 with skills that are broadly in line with expectations. Across Years 1 to 6 teaching is satisfactory, with some good practice. This means that many pupils achieve as expected, reaching broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Standards in writing have particularly improved since the last inspection. However, the rates of progress made by some pupils in mathematics are uneven, predominantly across Years 3 to 6. Pupils' mental calculation skills are not well developed, and opportunities for investigative work are limited. Not all teachers are successful in meeting the increasingly varying needs of pupils, and support provided by adults other than teachers is not as effective as it might be.

Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory. While there is a wide range of enhancement and extra-curricular activities, there are fewer opportunities to reinforce and extend pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects.

The interim acting headteacher provides a clear steer for the work of the school, and has recently refined arrangements to check the progress of all pupils. This information is not being used systematically by all teachers to pinpoint certain pupils' underperformance early enough, and to intervene accordingly. While self-evaluation is a little over-generous, the school improvement plan identifies the right priorities for moving the school forwards, and staff are wholeheartedly committed to the very best outcomes for all pupils. This approach has already brought about a rise in writing standards. As a consequence, there is satisfactory capacity for future improvement. Governors are highly supportive, and make strong contributions to the school's strategic direction. Nonetheless, they have insufficient regular information about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress with which to hold teachers to account for the school's overall performance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase pupils' rates of progress in mathematics by:

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- ensuring more opportunities for pupils to practise mental calculation skills
- enabling pupils to apply mathematical skills more widely in investigative and problem-solving experiences linked to 'real-life' scenarios
- pinpointing underperformance earlier and refining activities to meet better the needs of individual pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is at least good across the school by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to share ideas with each other and to develop their own thinking
 - matching activities more carefully to challenge and meet the needs of all pupils
 - ensuring adults other than teachers support more effectively pupils' learning.
- Ensure governors are involved fully in evaluating the performance of the school, by providing them with regular information about the effect of teaching on pupils' learning, and the rates of progress that all groups of pupils are making across all years.
- 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.

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

Pupils achieve satisfactorily and enjoy their learning. When provided with the opportunities, they collaborate effectively to pool ideas and develop each other's thinking. For example, Year 5 and 6 pupils worked well together to create suitable adjectives to describe the 'ghost of Christmas,' stimulated by their initial consideration of characterisation in the 'Harry Potter' novels. Year 2 pupils took turns in programming a 'roamer turtle,' sharing patiently their individually produced directions, and evaluating collectively whether the planned route was achieved. Pupils of all abilities engage equally enthusiastically in such tasks.

By the time they leave Year 6, pupils attain average standards in English, mathematics and science. In English pupils' writing skills, particularly their use of language and sentence construction, have improved considerably since the previous inspection. Standards attained by the more able have especially risen. These improvements are largely due to the use of storytelling and drama to stimulate pupils' imagination and more opportunities to practise writing for practical purposes. Attainment is more variable in mathematics throughout the school. This is because opportunities for pupils to work in small groups, to challenge each other's understanding of new mathematical skills, then to apply them to solve problems, are not consistent enough. As a consequence, in English most pupils learn well and make increasingly good progress from their Year 1 starting points. However, in mathematics progress is less secure for some pupils who do not achieve as well as they might. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the majority of those who join the school during the year, make satisfactory progress. This is because their needs are appropriately catered for by targeted activities.

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Pupils develop good personal skills and qualities. Attendance is high. Most pupils show a good understanding of how to eat healthily and stay fit. They say they feel very safe in school and know who to turn to if they have problems. Pupils are exceptionally proud of their school and make outstanding contributions to school and village life. Through their work on the school council, involvement in the village activities, local church activities, regional sporting competitions and extensive charity fund raising, pupils develop good spiritual, moral and social qualities. Links with a school in Sierra Leone, multi-cultural weeks and visits to communities not represented locally, foster a good appreciation of the different lifestyles and priorities of people from diverse countries and religious backgrounds. Pupils take full advantage of the many opportunities to advance their financial awareness and entrepreneurial skills, making and selling cakes, marketing homemade garden produce and taking part in local schools' enterprise challenges.

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	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	1
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?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some good practice. Teachers create a supportive environment that ensures all pupils feel cared for and involved. Where learning is at its most effective, stimulating opportunities for pupils to talk and work together develop good understanding. This is because pupils are engrossed in practical tasks that are relevant to everyday experiences. Teachers assess frequently the developing levels of pupils' understanding and knowledge, using a range of questioning techniques so that

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pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and explore alternatives. However, in some lessons teachers talk for too long, provide too much information and do not challenge pupils sufficiently to work things out for themselves. Consequently, pupils' attention wanders and the pace of learning slows. The school has improved the quality of marking and assessment since the previous inspection. The information gathered about individual pupils is used well by some, but not all teachers, to match activities more closely to the wide range of pupils' needs, and share what they need to do next in their learning. The contribution made by adults, other than teachers, in supporting pupils' learning is less well developed.

The curriculum is satisfactory, with a wide range of visits and visitors into school to extend what is on offer. For example, all children benefit from visits by artists, storytellers and theatre companies, and experiences such as Japanese silk painting, African art work and worldwide music making. These opportunities are enhanced further by many out-of-school activities, such as sport, drama and gymnastics. The curriculum to promote pupils' social and emotional development is particularly strong. However, clear links across all topics for pupils to practise literacy and numeracy skills are not fully embedded. While provision for English, especially writing, is improving, opportunities for pupils to improve calculation and problem-solving skills, in everyday scenarios, are not sufficiently developed.

Pupils receive good pastoral care and support. Staff are vigilant in ensuring high levels of welfare. Good partnerships between local schools and specialist agencies impact positively on pupils from all backgrounds. As a result, the well-being of individual pupils facing the most challenging circumstances is sustained. Good partnerships with local nurseries and secondary schools ensure effective induction and transition arrangements. All adults have high expectations of pupils, resulting in good behaviour and excellent attendance.

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 acting headteacher has high aspirations for all learners and ensures efficient day-to-day management of the school. Staff work effectively as a team and morale is good. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and there are appropriate procedures in place to keep the school's work in check. These include recently refined and more rigorous arrangements to assess the progress of all pupils, both during and across years. These processes have not had sufficient time to pinpoint some underachievement early enough, deploy resources accordingly, and make a real difference to the rates of some pupils' learning. Consequently, although adults promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination,

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not all groups of pupils reach their potential. The school therefore provides satisfactory value for money.

Procedures to safeguard pupils are good. They include rigorous arrangements for recruiting all staff, and for assessing and eliminating risks. Support provided by key agencies is of a good quality. Governors and staff receive regular and good quality training, in particular on child protection issues. The school integrates issues about safety into the curriculum well, so that pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The good links with local schools and outside agencies enhance the quality of learning experiences for all pupils. Links with parents and carers are outstanding. They are kept exceptionally well informed about pupils' progress and well-being through regular meetings, questionnaires and newsletters.

The governing body carries out its statutory duties satisfactorily and meets the school's needs. Governors are supportive of the acting headteacher and staff. Nevertheless, their role in challenging the school to ensure that all pupils make the expected rates of progress is less well developed. The strong sense of community within the school is extended by charity fund raising, work to support fair trade, and a link with a school in Sierra Leone. These opportunities enable the school to draw on the rich and divergent backgrounds of people, nationally and internationally, to promote well an understanding of the importance of community cohesion.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The vast majority enter school with skills below those typical for their age, particularly in reading, writing and calculation. From the outset, teachers provide strong support for children's welfare, learning and development. As a result, children settle quickly and begin to relate well to

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one another. Staff place strong emphasis on children cooperating, taking turns and sharing. Well-known routines underpin these positive relationships and help to establish close links with parents and carers, and with local playgroups and nurseries. Children are well behaved and respond positively to clear expectations and appropriate levels of praise and encouragement.

Consequently, the vast majority makes good progress, reaching overall expected standards for their age, and some beyond, at the end of the Reception year. This is primarily due to good observations and detailed planning by teachers that meet increasingly well children's needs. Planning generally incorporates regular opportunities for children to investigate, explore and interpret for themselves. Strong leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that teachers work as a team, with a common sense of purpose to ensure that all groups of children have the opportunity to achieve as well as they can. However, because there are no qualified early years practitioners to support the work of the teachers, this results in a reduced amount of purposeful interactions with some children, often limiting the benefits they derive from small group and outdoor experiences.

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	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. An overwhelming majority was highly supportive of the school. They typically commented, 'A fantastic little school. The staff are so caring and dedicated,' and 'A wonderful, warm and encouraging school.' These comments reflect the positive feedback from the school's own surveys. The inspection shares the many positive views expressed by parents and carers, but finds the quality of teaching to be satisfactory, rather than good, largely because some children not making enough progress and particularly in mathematics.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thornton Watlass Church of England 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 inspector received 24 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 35 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	67	7	29	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	20	83	4	17	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	67	7	29	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	63	7	29	2	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	71	7	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	67	8	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	79	5	21	0	0	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)	16	67	7	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	67	7	29	0	0	1	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	58	9	38	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	63	8	33	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	71	6	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	75	5	21	1	4	0	0

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.



16 December 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Thornton Watlass Church of England Primary School, Ripon, HG4 4AH

Thank you for your very warm welcome when I inspected your school. I really appreciated your help and enjoyed chatting with you and listening to your views. This letter is to let you know what I found out.

Thornton Watlass is a satisfactory school that enables you to reach similar results that other children achieve in the country. You get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage where you learn well. There are many other good features. In particular, I agree with many of you and your parents and carers who told me how kind the adults are and how much you enjoy school. You behave well and get on really well together. Many of you set a good example by attending daily, keeping active and looking after each other at break and lunchtimes. I was really impressed by the work of the school council and how well you all share responsibilities, such as organising fund raising and contributing to village and local church activities. All the adults take good care of you, including those of you who need extra help. These things happen because your acting headteacher and governors work hard to improve what is happening in school.

One reason for my visit was to see what your school could do better. I have asked your acting headteacher, governors and teachers to work on the following things:

- to ensure that all pupils make consistent rates of progress in mathematics
- to make sure that all teaching is good by providing challenging activities for you all
- to ensure that governors have the necessary information to check how well the school is doing.

You can all help by working hard to reach your targets and continuing to support each other.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Swallow

Lead inspector

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