

# Thorpe Acre Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119957
<b>Local Authority</b>	Leicestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	358656
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 May 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Doris Bell

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	148
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Hallett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jo Beaumont
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 January 2010
<b>School address</b>	Alan Moss Road Loughborough LE11 4SQ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They visited 14 lessons and observed six teachers. They also met with parents and carers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body, staff and two representatives of the local authority. They observed the school's work, checked arrangements and policies for safeguarding, and looked at a range of documentation including teachers' planning, the school improvement plan, assessment, monitoring and evaluation records, and records for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Inspectors also analysed the responses to the questionnaires for pupils and staff, and the 90 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- What is the rate of pupils' progress since September, and is teaching good enough to accelerate it further?
- Does the curriculum support teaching and learning well enough in ensuring that basic skills are promoted at every opportunity?
- Has behaviour improved enough to ensure learning is not disrupted for any pupil?
- Are targets challenging enough, and are the steps leaders and managers have taken to ensure they are met robust enough to accelerate improvement?

## Information about the school

This school is smaller than the average-sized school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average, as is the proportion of pupils who join or leave the school in different year groups. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and who speak English as an additional language, is above average, although most are fluent in English. There has been a 50% turnover of staff since the previous inspection, which was just over a year ago. At that inspection the school was judged to require significant improvement and was given a notice to improve. The school holds a Healthy Schools award and an Activemark.

**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

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

This is a satisfactory school. It set itself ambitious targets to help all pupils catch up with their learning as quickly as possible after the previous inspection, and it is well on the way to doing this. New staffing appointments have brought good teaching to the whole school, and good learning and progress in lessons this year. Data, supported by work in pupils' books and in lessons, show that progress has accelerated considerably for all groups of pupils, from the least to the most able, since last September. Nevertheless, the legacy of past underachievement means that attainment is still below average in Year 6.

Achievement is satisfactory, given the Year 6 pupils' low starting points on entry to school, and the considerable proportion of pupils who joined the school after Year 3. Attainment is improving strongly in Years 3 to 5. It is now broadly as expected for pupils' ages in those year groups. The school has used the support from the local authority well to bring about the improvement. It also uses its good partnerships with external agencies well, particularly to help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress with their learning and behaviour.

The school has begun to improve its currently satisfactory curriculum by linking subjects together to ensure basic skills are promoted as much as possible. The actions taken so far ensure pupils use and apply their writing skills in different subjects and contexts. Marking is usually thorough in English and mathematics, but writing is not marked to the same good standard when it occurs in other subjects. Therefore, opportunities are missed to show pupils how to reach their writing targets faster, and weaknesses persist, particularly in spelling and punctuation. Also, mental calculation skills, although improving fast, are not always sharp enough to help pupils work quickly through mathematical problems. Numeracy skills are not promoted well in different subjects but plans are in hand to remedy this as the curriculum evolves.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and its priorities are the right ones. The governing body is very supportive of the school but not sufficiently involved in holding it to account. Senior leaders are vigilant in checking pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are made accountable for pupils' progress, and areas for improvement are followed up rigorously. Taken alongside the good progress the school has made in meeting the recommendations from the previous inspection, all of the above demonstrates that it now has good capacity for further improvement.

All parents and carers say the school keeps their children safe, and pupils say they feel safe and well cared for in school. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy. They behave well, and say behaviour is 'much better than before'. They appreciate what the school has done to improve it, and recognise the

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impact this has had on their learning. All of this contributes to their improved progress and is the outcome of the good care, guidance and support provided for them. Pupils leave the school adequately prepared for their future.

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?**

- Accelerate achievement further by:
  - improving pupils' spelling, referring pupils to their targets when they write in different subjects, and ensuring the marking of their writing, wherever it occurs, is of a consistently high quality
  - sharpening pupils' mental calculation skills and giving them more opportunities to use their numeracy skills in different subjects.
- Ensure the governing body fulfils its duty to check that pupils are making the best possible progress at all times.

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

**3**

Pupils, especially in Years 5 and 6, have caught up significantly on learning they missed in previous years. They demonstrate an increasing ability to write in different styles to suit different audiences and purposes, although simple spelling errors and the continued misuse of punctuation still cause problems. Nevertheless, the lively exchange of ideas in one lesson in Year 6, facilitated by well-targeted questioning from the teacher, showed pupils have a good understanding of the features of the different kinds of texts they could use to persuade others to their points of view. The good focus on preparing for writing is a key feature in the better progress pupils have made this year.

In mathematics, pupils in Year 6 demonstrate a good understanding of mathematical vocabulary relating to number. In one lesson, challenging questioning by the teacher helped less able pupils to consolidate their understanding of prime numbers, factors and multiples, and enabled them to continue number sequences. At the same time, more able pupils had to work out whether much larger numbers would be in a sequence or not, and why. This work is beyond the level expected for their age and they coped with it well. Some pupils struggled to calculate quickly enough to give answers but, assisted by talking to a partner to clarify their thinking, they made good progress in the lesson.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as other pupils. This is because they are supported well in lessons, sometimes by the class teacher, and sometimes by a well-briefed teaching assistant. Their work is well matched to their different learning and/or behavioural needs. Pupils for whom English is an additional language also make good progress in their learning.

Pupils' positive attitudes to learning ensure they listen carefully, help each other, and persevere with challenging tasks. Pupils are proud of their achievements. They recognise that their learning has improved, and they know how to move it on. They readily explain, for example, how they double-check the target sheets to ensure they have 'ticked all the boxes', although they forget to carry out the same checks when writing in different subjects.

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Pupils are reflective and caring. They praise staff for being willing to listen and help 'if we feel a bit down', and say they feel 'very valued' in school. They learn to deal with difficult situations, to make informed choices, and to accept that actions have consequences. An example of this was when pupils in Year 3 explored a moral dilemma and discussed how the characters involved might deal with it. It was evident, too, in discussions with pupils, all of whom demonstrated a good understanding of right and wrong, and the need to respect others.

Pupils accept responsibility well, for example, as school councillors, and make a good contribution to the school community. Having improved pupils' behaviour, the school is now looking at ways to extend that contribution to the community beyond the school. At present, it is mostly limited to raising money for different charities. Pupils' good understanding of why it is important to eat healthily and take regular exercise is evident in their healthy food choices and in their good participation in the wide range of sporting activities available to them. While overall attendance is satisfactory, it improved to good levels last term. This is indicative of the pupils' increasing enjoyment of school.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<sup>1</sup> 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 step-by-step approach teachers take in most lessons is steadily closing the gaps in pupils' learning because it is based securely on the good use of assessment information. Expectations are equally high for all groups of pupils, from the least to the most able. For

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example, while less able pupils in Years 3 and 4 were helped to understand the relationship between fractions and whole numbers, more able pupils forged ahead, learning about simple ratio in work beyond the expectation for their age. Similar good practice was evident in most lessons, including the challenge for pupils in Years 4 and 5 to consider the relationship between lines of symmetry and the number of sides in a polygon, and in Year 6 to turn the potentially negative connectives 'despite' and 'although' into positive sentences in their persuasive writing. This consistent challenge is a key factor in the accelerated progress pupils have made this year.

Another key factor is the pupils' involvement in assessing their own and each other's work, and determining some of the success criteria for it. Teachers' questioning usually helps in this, probing pupils' thinking and challenging them to respond fully by giving reasons for their answers. Occasionally, however, teachers accept simple answers too readily, or give pupils too much information, therefore over-directing their learning and preventing them from thinking for themselves. Most marking is helpful in showing pupils how to improve their work, and pupils respond well to it. They readily point out how they do corrections in a different colour so that the teacher can see them immediately and offer further guidance if needed.

Much attention is given to showing pupils why they need good basic skills in their adult and working lives. One example of this is the recent enterprise day. Another is the Year 3 work on instructions, where pupils learn that, in real life, instructions can be written in different ways, and it is important to understand and follow them, not least to ensure their own safety. A good range of visits, visitors and well-attended extra-curricular clubs and activities covering sport and the arts enrich the curriculum and also contribute to pupils' learning and personal development.

The school has successfully tackled the issue of disruptive behaviour reported at the previous inspection. In the past year, designated staff have assisted pupils and their parents and carers in bringing behaviour under control, reducing exclusions and supporting learning. Nurture provision is available for pupils who need it. Good provision is in place for pupils who may be vulnerable, for whatever reason, and for those for whom English is an additional language. This contributes to the good progress all of these pupils are making. Good links with the feeder infant school and with local high schools ease transition from one phase of education to the next.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

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## How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team has established a unity of purpose throughout the school that is successfully driving improvement and motivating staff to succeed in accelerating pupils' progress. There are good systems in place for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. Meetings to discuss pupils' progress ensure something will be done to get learning back on track quickly should it falter. The senior leadership team is well focused on sustaining the momentum for improvement, and the school development plan provides a clear strategy within which this can be achieved.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body supports the school well but it relies heavily on the headteacher for information. Only a small number of governors visit the school regularly to gain information at first hand. The school engages well with parents and carers. It works hard to find different ways to help those who are hard to reach, to become involved in their children's learning.

Safeguarding procedures, including those for child protection, are good. All checks are in place and all training is up to date, thus ensuring that pupils work and play in a safe, secure learning environment at all times. The school has a good understanding of its own context and that of the community it serves. It teaches pupils about different faiths and cultures through subjects such as religious education, geography and the arts, but this aspect of its work is relatively underdeveloped. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. All groups of pupils now make equally good progress, and pupils have a good understanding of the need to treat others equally, regardless of faith, ethnicity, gender or background.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>



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## **Views of parents and carers**

There was a good response to the questionnaires for parents and carers, and most are pleased with the school and what it does for their children. A few voiced concerns about their children's progress, the school not meeting their children's needs or helping them to support their children's learning, and the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team found nothing to support these views during this inspection. Pupils' progress and their behaviour are now good, and the school engages well with parents and carers, making every effort to involve them in their children's learning. Poorly supported workshops were replaced with alternatives such as 'tray days' and pupil workshops for parents and carers. A new approach to homework has been implemented, aimed at getting parents and carers more involved with their children's learning.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thorpe Acre Junior 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 90 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 148 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	52	40	44	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	51	44	49	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	34	38	51	57	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	39	47	52	7	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	34	38	49	54	5	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	32	48	53	13	14	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	31	55	61	4	4	1	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)	28	31	54	60	5	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	33	47	52	12	13	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	26	52	58	12	13	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	27	55	61	6	7	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	28	31	53	59	6	7	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	37	50	56	7	8	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



30 May 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Thorpe Acre Junior School, Loughborough, LE11 4SQ**

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. It was a pleasure to talk to you about what you do there. You told us that you feel very safe in school, and it was good to see that all of your parents and carers agree that the school keeps you safe. You said that you are pleased with what the school has done to improve behaviour, because it has helped you to make better progress, and you are right. You clearly trust staff to help you should you have any concerns, and the staff in turn look after you well. They help you to understand what you need to do to improve, and we very much enjoyed hearing how you learn to 'tick all the boxes' as you check your learning.

Your school has improved since its last inspection. It is now satisfactory overall and it is continuing to improve. The good progress you are now making is because you are taught well and those who lead and manage the school are very focused on helping you to achieve well. We have asked them to do the following things to help you make even better progress and reach higher standards.

Improve your spelling, encourage you to refer to your writing targets whenever you write, and mark your writing consistently well at all times.

Sharpen your calculation skills and give you more opportunities to use your numeracy skills in different subjects.

Make sure the governing body fulfils its duty to check that you all make the best possible progress.

You can help by remembering your writing targets when you write in different subjects, and by continuing to work hard and persevere with your challenging tasks. We hope that by doing so, you will continue to enjoy learning in the future as much as you have clearly started to do this year.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell

Lead inspector

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