

Thorn Grove Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106079
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	367373
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Carmen Markham

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Vera Moore
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Denford
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons and observed eight teachers. Inspectors spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at learning in lessons and in pupils' books. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils and spoke both formally and informally to parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at the school improvement plan, school policies, safeguarding documents and details of the progress made by pupils. The responses to 52 questionnaires from parents and carers, and those from pupils and staff were scrutinised.

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

- The progress children make during the Early Years Foundation Stage and whether this is maintained during in Key Stage 1.
- Variations in pupils' attainment and whether there are aspects of the provision that contribute to lower attainment in some year groups.
- The quality of the provision in supporting the needs of all groups of pupils.
- Whether the school examined carefully the impact of improvement initiatives before identifying the next steps to take in action planning.
- The effectiveness of the school's management of pupils' attendance and whether there are compelling reasons for what appears to be low attendance.

Information about the school

Thorn Grove is an average-sized primary school. It includes a deaf base resource provision run by the local authority. Many pupils from this unit are taught in the mainstream classes and some are on the roll of other schools. The school admits an increasing number of pupils with severe and complex needs. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average but the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is very high. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is a little below the national average. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school partway through their schooling (pupil mobility) is a little above average. The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is less than half the national average and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below that usually found.

There is currently one mixed-age class in school. Many of the children who attend the Nursery class move to other schools nearer to their homes for the remainder of their primary education. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2010. Staffing turbulence has been a feature of the school since 2008. The school has been awarded Healthy Schools status.

Elm Cottage Club, a privately run nursery, operates on the same site. It will receive a separate inspection and its report is available on the Ofsted website. Play Club Unlimited provides before- and after-school care for the children of Thorn Grove; this is managed off site by a separate provider.

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

Thorn Grove is a good school. It is highly inclusive and its outstanding care, guidance and support for all pupils reflect the underlying values and ethos of the school. This provides a safe and very welcoming environment for pupils to learn and to mature into caring and thoughtful young people. By the end of Year 6, attainment is above average in English and mathematics and the progress of all pupils is good. Pupils behave well, enjoy school and attendance is above average.

The senior leadership team has been effective in continuing to develop a previously successful school. This has been achieved by rigorous monitoring and accurate self-evaluation followed by good action planning and good support for staff to enable them to develop their skills. The team is rigorous in evaluating the impact of new initiatives before identifying the next steps in the improvement process. Expectations are high and targets are challenging and, as leadership and management responsibilities are increasingly shared between staff, the school is able to sustain its current rate of change. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is, therefore, good.

Teaching is good overall and contributes to pupils' good progress. However, the quality of teaching is a little variable as new teaching strategies are not fully embedded and new teachers are receiving support to implement the school's current practice and expectations. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the new curriculum has been very successful in stimulating pupils' interest and imagination and provided them with exciting writing opportunities. However, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, this is less well developed and there are fewer opportunities for children to develop their curiosity and imagination.

The school's promotion of equal opportunity and its effectiveness in tackling discrimination is outstanding. There is no difference between the progress of different groups of pupils. The school is a harmonious and cohesive community where all pupils thrive. However, the school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory and pupils have limited real experience of cultures and communities that are different from their own.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching so that all lessons are at least good by:
 - embedding the recent improvements in teaching
 - developing peer and self-assessment by pupils to give them more responsibility for their own learning.
- Develop the curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage to engage children fully in their learning and develop their curiosity and imagination.

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- Improve the promotion of community cohesion and raise pupils' awareness of cultures and communities that are different from their own by:
 - establishing links with a multi-cultural primary school
 - developing links with a school overseas.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' achievement is good throughout the school. They enjoy their learning as topics are interesting and they know that they can ask for help and make suggestions to improve the school. They appreciate the time teachers spend with them supporting their learning and have the confidence to take risks in order to learn. They make good use of homework clubs and other strategies to improve their work. Pupils know how well they are performing in English and mathematics and know their targets, as these are displayed on their work tables and in their books. Good marking ensures pupils know how to improve their work. They are at an early stage in learning how to assess their own work and that of their peers.

Most children start school in the Reception class with less developed skills than those typical for children of this age. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is above average in mathematics and English. There is a rising trend in pupils' performance with significant improvements in English, although mathematics continues to be stronger. An increasing proportion of pupils are attaining the higher levels in both subjects. In English, this is in line with the national average but in mathematics, it is significantly above. This represents good progress for all pupils. There is no difference between the performance of boys and girls; pupils in Key Stage 1 continue the good progress they make in Reception. More-able pupils attain and the very few pupils who speak English as an additional language progress, as well as their peers in school. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also good. In 2010, the vast majority of these pupils had made at least two levels progress from Year 3 to the end of Year 6, in line with the national average, but most had exceeded this. Lesson observations show this trend is continuing and that there are now no concerns about any group contributing to lower attainment or progress. This includes those pupils from the resource base whose learning and progress is equally good as all other pupils.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and contributes well to their personal development. The behaviour of all pupils is good in lessons and around school. They are very considerate of the needs of others and respect their feelings and values. Pupils work well independently and collaboratively; they lead and participate in enterprise projects and attend school regularly. They are developing good workplace skills. Pupils feel safe in this cohesive community where relationships are good and they are cared for well. They know how to stay safe and healthy and recognise their own responsibility for both. Pupils have a real voice in their school community through the good school council and comment boxes. They readily take on responsibilities in school and support local facilities like the community library and church. Their behaviour and attitudes are very well regarded by the local community. Pupils have good knowledge of different faith traditions and they are developing their awareness of the arts, particularly music.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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?

Teaching has improved this year as the progress of all pupils is systematically tracked and teachers use this information to plan lessons that meet the different needs of learners. Good planning is supported well by skilled teaching assistants, well-planned resources and good use of information and communication technology. Learning objectives are shared with pupils and marking reflects how effectively these objectives have been met. Many learning strategies are known and used regularly by pupils, including the good classroom displays that remind them of targets and how to ensure that these are met. Teachers model good practice well and are very skilful in their use of questioning to extend the understanding of pupils who are working at different levels. As improvements to teaching are relatively new, there is some inconsistency in their application by different teachers. While the quality of marking is good, the ability of pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers is underdeveloped.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and focuses on the development of basic skills within the context of exciting and relevant topics. Curriculum planning takes very good account of the needs of different groups of pupils to ensure that all can access it. This includes the school's nurture group that supports pupils well. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored across all curriculum areas. The personal development of pupils is addressed well by the curriculum and well supported by visitors and visits including residential experiences. Good partnerships support sporting and musical activities. Music contributes

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significantly to the curriculum for deaf pupils who participate with their hearing peers in national public performances. There is very high attendance at a range of after-school clubs.

Pastoral care is outstanding. Transition arrangements throughout school are meticulously planned and very effective as pupils settle quickly into their new environments. Very good strategies have improved attendance. Very well-targeted support ensures pupils feel valued and cared for in a family environment where they thrive. The care and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those from the resource base, are exemplary in relation to the effective systems to monitor their learning needs and in ensuring the adaptation of resources, physical environment, and training for the staff, parents and carers. Several case studies clearly demonstrate how the school meets the needs of pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable through the use of trained specialist staff in school and external agencies. The school uses a variety of media to communicate effectively with parents and carers and ensures that they are kept fully informed about their children's progress.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is the focus for the learning and well-being of pupils and their families because the headteacher's clear vision for the development of an inclusive community school is shared fully by the leadership and management team. Over the past year, rapid progress has been made towards this goal. This has been achieved through strong school self-evaluation, challenging but realistic action planning and the subsequent effectiveness of the management in supporting improvement in teaching and learning. This is supported by the introduction of an effective system to track the progress of pupils and by class teachers being made accountable for the progress of their pupils through regular reviews. Teachers subscribe to the vision and morale is high. The impact of this work is seen in the accelerating attainment and progress of pupils.

The governing body has a good understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas that require improvement. It is effective in its management of the premises and the budget, where it holds the school to account. Governors are becoming increasingly skilled in aspects of curriculum and staffing. They ensure that policies are regularly reviewed and safeguarding meets national requirements. Pupils are safe in school; the building and the school grounds are secure and safeguarding training for staff is up to date. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination in an exemplary manner. This is at the heart of its work and is exemplified in the way that pupils from the resource unit

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are fully integrated in all aspects of school life. There is no difference in the rate of progress of any group of pupils. Community cohesion is less well developed and has not been a priority for the first year of the new leadership team. However, a policy and an action plan have been compiled following an audit of the school's context. The school is a very cohesive community and has close involvement with the local area but pupils have limited real experience of communities that are different from their own. The next steps in the school's plans are to establish links with a multi-cultural primary school and links with a school overseas.

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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Many children start Nursery with skills that are below age-related expectations, especially in communication, language and literacy. All groups of children make good progress and, by the end of Nursery when many transfer to a different primary school, their skills are broadly in line with age-related expectations. The group of children who transfer to the Reception class is a different group. They are a little below age-related expectations, particularly in reading, writing, and knowledge and understanding of the world. They are stronger in personal and social development and in numbers and letters for counting. These children quickly develop good independent learning skills, play together and develop good relationships with other children and adults. The provision is well staffed. Children's needs are assessed accurately early on and effective planning and monitoring of their progress enable them to learn quickly. Children benefit from short, formally taught sessions and well-structured free-play activities, both in and out of doors that are skilfully supported by staff. There is an appropriate emphasis on speaking and listening but the use of topic work to inspire curiosity, imagination and interest is limited. Nonetheless, good teaching is ensuring that by the end of Reception almost all children exceed age-

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related expectations in communication, language and literacy, number skills, and personal and social development. This represents good progress from their starting points.

Children's safety is a high priority and they are cared for well. Their progress is effectively monitored and shared with parents and carers. Comprehensive induction arrangements ensure that new children settle quickly into the setting. Close working with Year 1 also eases the transition of pupils into the main school. The provision is led and managed well.

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

Overall, the responses of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive. A very small number of parents and carers wrote individual comments that did not wholly support these positive views; inspectors investigated these and the findings are reflected in the judgements and text of the main report.

Inspectors also spoke to parents and carers in a formal meeting and to many in the playground at the start of the school day to establish a wider range of views. They were very positive and cited the excellent care the school takes of pupils and their good progress. Typically, parents and carers comment that the school is, 'A wonderfully caring and stimulating environment where children thrive'. Those parents and carers with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities were full of praise for the specialist help and support that their children receive and the help they are given as a family. Inspectors found that the school uses different ways of communicating with parents and carers and seeks their views. Most parents and carers value the variety of methods used to keep them informed about the work of the school and the willingness of the school to listen to their views and to take action. The abolition of the school's one mixed-age class was given as an example of the school listening to parents and carers. Parents and carers also value the workshops that help them to support their child's learning more effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thorn Grove 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 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 220 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	71	13	25	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	63	16	31	3	6	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	28	54	20	38	1	2	3	6
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	54	20	38	3	6	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	26	50	24	46	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	62	18	35	1	2	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	60	17	33	2	4	1	2
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	54	18	35	3	6	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	56	18	35	2	4	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	54	20	38	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	52	18	35	5	10	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	23	44	24	46	3	6	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	62	17	33	3	6	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).

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">■ 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.



6 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thorn Grove Primary School, Cheadle, SK8 7LD

I would like to thank you for making my colleagues and me so welcome when we came to inspect your school. A special 'thank you' goes to the pupils who gave up some of their time to talk to us about their work and activities. We enjoyed your music assembly.

You attend a good school where the headteacher and all the staff ensure that you are extremely well cared for and safe. We think that they have made a lot of improvements in school to help you make better progress. We were very impressed by how well you understand how to improve your work and know what your targets are. Your targets are helping you to do better in English and mathematics. Most of you, including the children in the Nursery and Reception, make good progress in lessons. You enjoy school so your attendance and behaviour are good. You take good care of each other and know how to stay safe and healthy.

We have asked your school leaders to do the following three things to improve your school further:

- ensure that teaching in all lessons is at least good
- develop more imaginative work in the Nursery and Reception classes
- improve your knowledge and understanding of cultures and traditions in communities that are different from your own.

You can help to improve your school by learning to assess how well you are doing.

Yours sincerely

Carmen Markham

Lead inspector

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