

Thorntree Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100142
Local Authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	376352
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Gordon Ewing

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	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julia McDonald
Headteacher	Richenda Fenwick
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 19 lessons, observing 13 teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, members of the governing body, members of staff and groups of pupils. Informal discussions were conducted with some parents, carers and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, including the systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress, pupils' work and teachers' planning and marking. Policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils were verified. Inspectors took account of questionnaires completed by 60 parents and carers, 16 staff and 100 older pupils.

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

- The relative rates of progress through the school of all pupils in English and mathematics, and especially boys, higher attainers, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The breadth and depth of new cross-curricular approaches to the school's provision and how they are improving outcomes for all pupils.
- The quality of the care and support to pupils, particularly those with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities, and how the school's provision ensures that all pupils achieve and develop as well as they can.
- How effectively leaders at all levels monitor the quality of teaching and the impact of the strategies to improve the quality of teaching and to secure consistently good rates of learning, and ensure that assessment information is used effectively.

Information about the school

Thorn tree Primary is similar in size to the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritage is above average. The largest group of pupils (50%) is of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average; predominantly, these pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties. The school has recently been designated as a Dyslexia Friendly School.

The school hosts an after-school club, run privately by MJS Simply-Play@Thorn tree, which caters for up to 30 pupils. This provision is inspected separately.

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 tree Primary is a good and improving school where the development of the whole child is at the heart of all its work. Consequently, levels of care and support to all pupils are outstanding. The school strives unstintingly to support potentially vulnerable pupils, especially those with complex, special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they make consistently good, and sometimes outstanding, progress alongside their peers. An impressive range of intervention activities is having a clear and emphatic impact on improving pupils' confidence, self-esteem and basic skills. As a result, attendance is consistently above average, pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and behave well. One pupil's comment, 'Thorn tree is the place to be if you want to learn', reflects the views of the vast majority. The views of almost all parents and carers concur with those of their children. A typical comment is, 'We are incredibly happy with what seems to be an exceptional school'.

Children make good progress, overall, in the Nursery and Reception classes because they experience interesting and well-planned activities which are suitably matched to their broad range of needs. Their excellently planned move to Year 1 ensures that they are very well prepared for the next step. Rates of progress through to Year 6, though good overall, have varied in recent years. The concerted and determined action of the effective senior leadership to improve teaching is providing speedy dividends so that rates of progress are now more consistent and attainment is above average in reading and mathematics. Within this positive picture, however, pupils' attainment and rates of progress in writing, although strengthening in some classes, lag behind those levels achieved in reading and mathematics. All pupils, including boys, the many who speak English as an additional language and high-attaining pupils, make similar rates of progress from their varying starting points.

The quality of teaching is good. New systems to improve the assessment of pupils' progress are being established so that teachers' planning of work is becoming more astute in assessing pupils' learning in the classroom. That said, there is still more to do in improving the consistency of teachers' marking and the guidance they give to pupils to help them take the next step with greater independence. In some classes, teachers use assessment information well to adapt lessons to pupils' day-to-day needs, to accelerate learning and to increase challenge. This effective practice is not replicated consistently across the school, however. The curriculum is increasingly vibrant and stimulating as strategies to develop effective links across subjects bring added meaning and depth to the provision. The use of information and communication technology (ICT), music and sport are particular strengths.

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Partnerships to enhance the curriculum and improve the life opportunities for all pupils are outstanding.

The seamless and effective relationship across the senior leadership team ensures that the school is not complacent and significant improvements, for example in the quality of teaching, are having a clear impact on raising levels of attainment. Staff morale is strong and there are high expectations for the future. One teacher commented, 'I feel totally valued and very clear on where we are headed and the level of commitment in pushing forward achievement and enjoyment for children'. This statement reflects the impact of recent initiatives and training. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and strategies to monitor the work of the school, involving leaders at all levels, are rigorous and systematically programmed. Taking into account key improvements since the last inspection, including recent improvements in teaching, rising levels of attainment and the very strong support of all stakeholders, the school demonstrates good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teachers' marking and assessment by:
 - ensuring teachers confidently understand the components of good and outstanding marking and assessment for learning by giving them targeted training and support
 - developing more consistent strategies in marking pupils' work so that pupils know how to move their learning forward with greater confidence and independence
 - sharing existing good practice across all staff
 - seeking out and disseminating outstanding practice in assessment for learning gathered from local, outstanding schools
 - monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning to gauge the impact of the additional training and support.
- Improve levels of attainment and rates of progress in writing to those levels achieved in reading and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that staff confidently understand how to improve pupils' writing skills by providing a systematic programme of training and peer support
 - monitoring pupils' writing on a frequent and systematic basis so teachers ensure there is effective progression in developing writing skills
 - setting clear writing targets for each individual pupil and involving pupils in the evaluation of their writing and that of their peers so that they can assess the quality of their writing with increased independence.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well and really enjoy their school life. Levels of progress for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are good in most classes. Pupils of all abilities are well motivated and demonstrate very good attitudes to learning. They respond well in lessons, particularly when activities are well

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matched to their needs and they are given opportunities to discuss their learning with their talk partners. In an outstanding phonics (sounds and letters) lesson in Year 2, the teacher’s excellent knowledge ensured that activities were skilfully geared to individual needs so that all pupils were thoroughly engaged and challenged. Consequently, they developed a secure understanding of how to sound out, read and write complex words. Pupils are courteous, polite and socialise well. They report, unequivocally, that bullying is rare and acted upon swiftly by staff when it does occur. They evidently feel safe and outstandingly well cared for, and are justly proud of their school. Pupils understand with confidence the health risks linked with smoking, and drug and alcohol abuse.

Pupils take on responsibility with enthusiasm and vigour. The proactive school council is proud of its role in raising funds for various charities, supporting the local animal park and improving the range of playground equipment. Aspects of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. A particular strength is the way in which musical activities are used to help pupils reflect on the importance and meaning of various festivals, such as Advent. Pupils are well supported at all stages of transfer within the school and on to secondary education. Consequently, they look ahead to their educational experience with great expectation. Their basic skills are improving steadily and they show increasing proficiency in using ICT skills in their learning. Taking into account these factors alongside their positive attitudes and thirst for learning, the school prepares them well for the challenges ahead.

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

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How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good subject knowledge and often use questioning effectively to check understanding and move learning on. In the best lessons, activities are thoroughly planned, and the effective deployment of teaching assistants ensures that learning is well paced and active. The outstanding support to pupils with complex special educational needs, both in intervention activities and lessons, ensures that they make impressive gains in their learning, confidence and self-esteem. One parent wrote, 'My child has severe dyslexia and the diagnosis and support have really improved his literacy skills and helped to build his confidence as a learner'. The use of assessment data and marking to finely advance pupils' learning, though good overall, is inconsistent across the school. Consequently, pupils are not always provided with enough opportunities to advance their understanding confidently or to exercise more independence in their learning.

The colourful and effective curriculum, enriched well by extra-curricular clubs, visits and themed weeks, has a positive and sustained impact on pupils' personal development and progress. Musical, sporting and community activities are particularly strong. The use of ICT, for example in developing links across subjects, enables pupils to apply a range of skills in different contexts.

Pastoral care and support are outstanding. All staff go the extra mile to ensure that access to the curriculum, especially for those who face particular challenges, is of a high quality leading to considerable gains in learning and self-confidence. The very effective work of an able team of teaching assistants boosts the impact of the good teaching so that targeted pupils make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. Links with other agencies to support potentially vulnerable pupils in overcoming barriers to learning, whether these are due to social, medical, emotional or academic factors, are outstanding. Excellent and seamless support and guidance at times of transition are a very strong component of the school's work.

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 gentle but assertive leadership of the headteacher has ensured that the school has made significant strides since the last inspection and all staff have high expectations for the future. A clear, collective spirit permeates the school and staff

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fully share their leaders’ vision. Monitoring of the school’s work is systematic and rigorous and development planning is astute and focused on the right priorities. The governing body is highly committed, knowledgeable about the school’s work and offers sensitive but focused challenge and encouragement to the school’s leadership.

Procedures for child protection and safeguarding are consistently good because staff are well trained and active in ensuring that pupils and staff are safe and very well cared for. That said, links across key policies are not always explicit and the scheduling of policy review is inconsistent. All staff and the governing body are fully committed to promoting equal opportunities and challenging discrimination. Leaders’ close scrutiny of pupils’ achievement with rapid action taken when needed ensures that no individual or group is placed at a disadvantage. Strategies to engage parents and carers are effective, and the school has plans in place to improve lines of communication through its developing website and through more regular curriculum bulletins. Pupils and staff work in a cohesive and harmonious community. The school reaches out well to other communities, especially locally, and is establishing effective links with communities from different contexts, both nationally and globally.

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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children thoroughly enjoy their time in the Nursery and Reception classes. They make good strides in their learning, particularly in Reception, so that by the time they move to Year 1, most attain skill levels in line with, or very close to, those expected in all areas of learning. As a result of good induction strategies and the positive engagement of parents and carers, children settle into class routines smoothly. Children know how to be safe and are very aware of whom to approach for help. The outdoor and indoor learning environments are often stimulating and

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children access the learning activities with increasing independence. In Forest School, opportunities for independent exploration are especially good. Consequently, children develop a wide range of social, emotional and practical skills. They are cooperative, show respect for one another and their environment, and behave well.

Systems to track children’s learning and progress are improving but there is insufficient use of day-to-day observations to finely tune planning of activities and to group children according to need so that the next day’s activities match their pace of learning. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage is enthusiastic and committed. She is currently working on establishing new routines and developing strategies to monitor more effectively the work of the setting; her plans for the future are well focused and perceptive.

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	3

Views of parents and carers

There was a broadly average level of response to the questionnaire. Parents and carers who returned questionnaires, alongside those who had informal discussions with inspectors, express a high level of satisfaction with the school’s work. The vast majority of parents and carers agree or strongly agree with all the statements, and inspection findings endorse their positive views. A very small minority of parents and carers do not think that the school takes enough account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors explored this carefully and found that the school does more than most to engage with parents and carers and to listen to their concerns and suggestions. In discussions with parents and carers, staff were described as very approachable, friendly and helpful. One parent said, ‘It’s a listening school’. Another wrote, ‘My children love their school. I am impressed with the speedy ways problems are dealt with’.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thorn tree 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 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 235 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	78	13	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	73	16	27	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	38	63	21	35	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	63	21	35	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	46	77	14	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	40	67	18	30	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	68	19	32	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)	36	60	21	35	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	41	68	18	30	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	65	19	32	2	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	50	24	40	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	44	73	13	22	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	47	78	12	20	0	0	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



3 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thorntree Primary School, London SE7 8AE

The inspection team really enjoyed our recent visit to see you at work. You made us feel very welcome and all of you spoke positively about your school life.

You clearly enjoy school. Your parents and carers are equally happy. Inspectors agree with you that Thorntree Primary is a good school. This letter is to tell you what we found, including those aspects that we thought were good.

- The staff take excellent care of you and support you to overcome any difficulties that you face from day to day.
- Your behaviour is good and you get on well together as a community.
- You make good progress overall, although we know that with extra help you can do even better, especially in writing.
- You feel safe and secure and thoroughly enjoy your lessons.
- The staff work hard to ensure that you develop as good citizens and develop positive attitudes to learning.
- You are keen to improve your school and you play your part well by taking on responsibilities such as being a school councillor or Junior Road Safety Officer.
- The school offers you lots of after-school clubs which improve your physical, creative and personal development.

The school community at Thorntree Primary rightly wants the school to be even better and to help make this possible we have asked the staff and governors to:

- raise your levels of attainment and progress in writing to those levels you achieve in reading and mathematics
- improve teachers' marking and assessment of your work so that you have a better understanding of how to take the next step and to help you become more independent as learners.

We hope that you will continue to play your part in making Thorntree Primary an even more successful school.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Ewing
Lead inspector

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