

Thirsk Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121365
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	380223
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2012
Lead 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	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	291
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Maude
Headteacher	Richard Wild
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2009
School address	Hambleton Place Thirsk YO7 1SL
Telephone number	01845 524349
Fax number	01845 527176
Email address	headteacher@thirsk-pri.n-yorks.sch.uk



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



© Crown copyright 2012

Introduction

Inspection team

Andrew Swallow
Sally Hicks
Jan Lomas

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 19 lessons, taught by 14 teachers, including two observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, meetings were held with three groups of pupils, members of the governing body, and school staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, the safeguarding and equality policies, and minutes of the governing body meetings. Also, inspectors analysed 148 parental and carers' questionnaires and others completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This school is larger than the average-sized primary school. A higher than average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. The overall number of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at School Action Plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than the national average. A smaller than average number is from minority ethnic backgrounds, with few who speak English as an additional language. However, in recent years, the proportions of pupils joining the school from Eastern Europe and from Traveller communities have increased.

The school meets the current floor standard, which sets the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress. Among the school's awards are the Basic Skills Quality Mark, national Healthy Schools status, and Active Mark.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Adults provide high levels of pastoral care for all pupils and create a positive climate in which the vast majority of pupils look after each other. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school’s work. Pupils say how much they enjoy coming to school and the many extra-curricular and enrichment experiences, particularly music and sport. Those experiences help to promote well pupils’ spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. The school is not yet outstanding because teaching is not outstanding.
- Pupils achieve well. From much lower than expected starting points on entry to the Nursery, the vast majority makes outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. Across Years 1 – 6, most pupils have good attitudes to learning, achieving well in reading, writing, and mathematics and reach average standards by the time they leave school.
- Teaching is good. Inspectors saw examples of good and outstanding teaching, but a small proportion that was satisfactory. In some lessons, the teacher talks for too long and activities are not tailored precisely to the needs of pupils.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils are very friendly and polite around school. Parents and carers, pupils, and staff believe that the mutually respectful relationships promote a culture of safety. In lessons, most pupils are eager to learn and succeed. Attendance is rising rapidly and is now average.
- Leadership of teaching and management of performance are good. Teachers share good practice constantly within the local cluster of schools, to improve the quality of pupils’ learning. The checking of pupils’ progress is rigorous and general self-evaluation procedures ensure that leaders and managers have a clear understanding of how well the school is performing. There are examples of leaders taking decisive actions to improve teaching, although the monitoring of lessons does not always focus sufficiently on the impact of teaching on all pupils’ learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching becomes outstanding by:
 - reducing the amount of talking by teachers in some lessons and generally increasing the time spent by pupils working with each other and thinking for themselves
 - providing activities and experiences better suited to the needs of all pupils, as a result of more astute checking of their progress during lessons
 - improving the quality of marking, especially in mathematics, to ensure that pupils are always given a clear view of their attainment and how they can improve it
 - refining the monitoring of lessons by focusing more on the impact of teaching on the quality of pupils' learning experiences and how well these are supporting their achievements.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with social, emotional and communication skills that are much lower than the levels typical for their age. They make outstanding progress, because of the excellent teaching, to work securely within most of the learning goals by the time they begin Year 1. In particular, they learn to collaborate very well indeed and to explore, persevere and work things out for themselves. Nonetheless, reading, writing, and calculation skills remain below expectations for some pupils as they leave the Reception year.

Most of the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire think that their children are making good progress. The majority of the pupils think that they learn a lot most or all of the time. Across Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make increasingly good rates of progress, reaching average standards in reading, writing, and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Most teachers take account of pupils' abilities to challenge them sufficiently in key mathematical skills such as oral calculation, applying basic number operations to solve problems in 'real-life' contexts, and measuring accurately. In many lessons, pupils show a keenness to learn and deepen their understanding, readily sharing ideas in small groups and pairs, listening perceptively to each other's viewpoints. For example, Year 2 pupils collaborated eagerly to draw and measure lines accurately in centimetres, checking each other's measurements diligently. Many write coherently, sequencing ideas thoughtfully and using punctuation to good effect. The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters represent) and promotion of reading skills are strengths. By the end of Key Stage 1, many pupils read with increasing confidence, so that attainment is average. By the end of Key Stage 2, they read with fluency and interest, so that attainment is above average.

Pupils who join the school from overseas and those from Traveller communities make rapid progress. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well

also. That is because activities and experiences are planned carefully to meet their needs and formal targets are reviewed and updated regularly.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good overall and outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In many lessons, teachers provide exciting opportunities for pupils to collaborate in small groups, to deepen their understanding, share and extend each other's emerging ideas. For example, in a Years 5 and 6 English lesson on using personification in poetry, pupils were engrossed in linking words normally used to describe humans and living creatures with the seasons and the weather. Stimulating questioning and interactions by the teacher stretched pupils of all abilities in their discussions, resulting in ambitious use of imaginative language, with dramatic outcomes. Similarly, in a mixed Years 3 and 4 lesson, a large number of pupils was absorbed in identifying the correct word operations to solve given problems and then co-operated successfully to find out the answers. Targeted support by all adults, in lessons and in small groups out of lessons, is effective in improving the confidence of pupils who join the school from Eastern Europe and from Traveller communities. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported very well by activities that match their needs. The teaching of reading is good. It helps pupils to identify and understand unfamiliar words and phrases and develop the skills to retrieve facts and interpret situations.

Parents, carers and pupils say that teaching is good and that pupils make good progress. Well-chosen resources and interesting contexts for learning, including visits and references to the local community, help to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development well and implement the planned curriculum well. For example, links with the local churches and thoughtful assemblies enhance pupils' spiritual and moral development; visits by local artists and performers enrich their cultural awareness.

In some lessons, teachers do not listen to and observe carefully enough groups of pupils and individuals. They miss opportunities to provide astute comments about how well pupils are doing and what they need to do to improve. On occasions, some teachers tend to talk for too long and over-direct activities. The quality of marking is good in English, but less effective in mathematics in providing pupils with a clear view of their attainment and how they can improve it.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that adults are very supportive. As a consequence, they have a good understanding of the risks to which they may be exposed, both within and outside of school. Parents and carers, also, believe that the school takes good care of their children. A number of pupils, parents and carers did raise concerns about some pupils who show a lack of respect for each other and a lack of self-discipline in lessons, at times, resulting in inappropriate behaviour. Inspectors did find a very few examples of such behaviour. However, inspectors also found that instances of misbehaviour were isolated and confined to a very small minority of pupils only. Teachers manage pupils with behavioural difficulties very well indeed and the vast majority responds positively to strategies which are applied

consistently. As a result, behaviour in lessons and around the school is typically good and learning is not disrupted. A very large proportion of parents, carers and pupils express confidence in the school's systems for dealing with instances of bullying, if they arise. Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying, especially homophobic and cyber-bullying. Through their work on the school council and daily interactions in the playground, they try to prevent it actively from occurring. They make a good contribution to a safe, positive learning environment, readily celebrating the achievements of others in assemblies and working willingly in different groups and pairs in lessons. A range of strategies to promote regular attendance, especially of pupils new to the school and from Traveller communities, has a positive impact and attendance is rising rapidly and now average.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior leaders have high aspirations for all pupils. They work hard to ensure success for all. Morale and levels of team work throughout the school are high. Teachers are keen to share and learn of good practice and believe that the school provides well for their professional development. Leaders at all levels are able to articulate the school's key areas for improvement and contribute to checking the quality of the school's work and planning for future developments. The school has suitable systems in place for continuous self-evaluation and the management of teachers' performance. Senior leaders have responded appropriately to the key areas for improvement in the previous inspection. Outstanding provision has been maintained in the Early Years Foundation Stage and achievement is improving in Key Stage 1. Teaching is good and enables pupils to reach overall average standards by the end of Key Stage 2. This demonstrates strong capacity for improvement.

Procedures to check the quality of teaching sometimes concentrate too much on teaching, rather than its effectiveness on the quality of pupils' learning and achievements by different groups. Consequently, outcomes of monitoring are not used as successfully as they might be to promote consistently good or better practice in all year groups.

The impact of the curriculum on pupils' academic outcomes is good and their needs are met well. A thematic approach to the teaching of key communication and mathematical skills offers opportunities for pupils to practise key skills in different contexts and for different purposes. In all subjects, pupils collaborate regularly to reason things out for themselves, question and share viewpoints, and consider genuinely the meaning and implications of key events, such as war and peace. Specialist musicians visit the school regularly to complement the daily teaching and to inspire pupils with ukulele lessons. Carefully chosen visits to museums, local churches, and places of interest bring to life the planned curriculum. All of these experiences, together with the wide range of extra-curricular activities, including choir, sport, dance, art, knitting, and touch typing, promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development well.

The governing body discharges its statutory responsibilities and ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. It ensures that the school promotes well equality of opportunity through rigorous tracking of pupils' achievement, bespoke support for individuals at risk of underperforming, and close monitoring of

pupils' behaviour to tackle any discrimination that may arise. The governing body has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and members are regular visitors to lessons to check pupils' outcomes.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



4 May 2012

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Thirsk Community Primary School, Thirsk, YO7 1SL

Thank you for talking to my colleagues and me when we visited your school recently. The inspectors spoke with you in lessons, around the school and in groups, looked at your work, read the results of questionnaires filled in by you and your parents and carers, and spoke with some of your teachers. Here are some of the school's particular strengths.

- The school provides you with a good standard of education.
- You achieve outstandingly well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress in most lessons across Years 1-6, reaching average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Most of you behave very well and are polite to visitors and respectful of each other.
- The quality of teaching is good overall.
- The school provides good support to those of you who need additional help.
- Senior leaders and the governing body at the school know what needs to be done to bring more rigour in evaluating how well the school is doing and to make things even better.

We have asked the headteacher and the governing body to make sure that teaching becomes outstanding, in order to ensure that all lessons challenge you as much as possible to develop your skills, and that all teachers let you know regularly how well you are doing, especially in mathematics. We have also asked that staff are more rigorous in evaluating the quality of the teaching. You can all help by continuing to attend regularly, participating enthusiastically in all lessons, and telling your teachers when you find your learning to be too easy or too difficult.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Swallow
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.