

Thornton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119148
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	379735
Inspection dates	21–22 May 2012
Lead inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eric Winston
Headteacher	Rachel Clements
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

Melvyn Hemmings

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed 12 lessons or parts of lessons taught by five teachers. Discussions were held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, staff, groups of pupils and representatives of the local authority. He observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, records of meetings of the governing body, assessment information and curriculum planning. Work in pupils' books and displays around the school were examined. Questionnaires from staff, pupils and from 44 parents and carers were scrutinised.

Information about the school

Thornton is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. An above average proportion of pupils join the school during the year. Some of the classes contain mixed-year groups. The school meets the current floor standards, which are the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The headteacher was appointed in January 2012. The school has gained a number of national awards, including the Leading Parent Partnership Award, and holds Healthy School status.

The before- and after-school clubs are privately managed and are inspected separately by Ofsted. The school shares the building with a children's centre.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- Thornton is a satisfactory school. Its main strengths are the headteacher’s perceptive leadership, pupils’ behaviour and attendance, the care of pupils and engagement with parents and carers. It is not yet good because the proportion of good or better teaching is not high enough and not all leaders are fully involved in promoting improvement. Also, planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage tends to emphasise what children are to do rather than what they are to learn. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Pupils’ achievement is satisfactory and they attain broadly average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. There is no significant difference between the achievement of different groups.
- Teaching has a variety of strengths, including classroom management, relationships and the use of questioning to develop pupils’ speaking and listening skills. At times, it is too directed by adults and teachers do not consistently provide sufficiently challenging work for different groups. Teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively to promote learning.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes to learning. They behave well and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.
- The headteacher has quickly identified the school’s strengths and weaknesses and has led a variety of initiatives to drive the school forward. The leadership of teaching and the management of performance are satisfactory and improving. Other leaders carry out their responsibilities diligently but lack expertise in evaluating learning and taking action to bring about improvement. The close links with the children’s centre benefit pupils’ learning and the school’s engagement with parents and carers. The curriculum is planned carefully to meet pupils’ needs in the mixed-age classes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to accelerate progress and raise achievement by:
 - making sure that teachers consistently set sufficiently challenging work for different groups
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to work independently and explore ideas for themselves
 - ensuring teaching assistants are always deployed effectively to promote learning.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring all leaders are proficient in evaluating learning and taking action to drive improvement.
- Improve planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that it emphasises what children are to learn rather than what they are to do, particularly for outdoor activities.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils achieve satisfactorily from their skill levels on entering the school. These are generally below those expected, particularly in speech and language development. They attain broadly average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children show interest and curiosity in their activities. They work and play happily together in pairs and small groups, sharing and taking turns fairly. In Years 1 to 6, pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and are keen to do well. They cooperate well and enjoy sharing ideas.

The school has worked closely with consultants from the local authority over the last year to improve progress. As a result, increasing numbers of pupils are making better than expected progress. This is particularly the case for reading because of a greater emphasis on developing pupils' phonic skills in linking letters and sounds. This was exemplified in a Year 2 lesson in which pupils made good progress in identifying and accurately saying words that end in 'ed', such as 'washed', 'walked' and 'saved'. Attainment in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave school is broadly average. They show interest in reading a variety of books and talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors. Pupils can write in a variety of styles, including poetry, to express their ideas. Their structuring of sentences, in terms of correct punctuation, spelling and grammar, lacks accuracy. Pupils have secure mathematical calculation skills but lack expertise in applying these to solve problems in real-life situations.

In their questionnaires, all parents and carers agreed that their children were making good progress at the school. Inspection evidence shows that progress is satisfactory overall with increasing numbers of pupils making good progress. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the same progress as others because their needs are identified early and extra support provided to ensure they are met. The school has worked successfully to narrow the identified gap in the performance of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are not. This gap is now minimal.

Quality of teaching

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults provide activities that are interesting and mainly practical. They encourage children to make choices for themselves and to cooperate with others to complete tasks. Children show much enjoyment, such as when they were buying and selling items in the role-play area set up as a Garden Centre. Planning tends to emphasise what children are to do rather than the skills they are expected to learn during the activity, especially for the outdoor area. This restricts the progress children make. Throughout the school, teachers ensure that pupils are clear about what they are to learn in lessons and what they need to do to achieve success. They manage classrooms well so that little time is lost and pupils remain engaged in activities. Questioning is used well to probe pupils' understanding and to develop their speaking and listening skills. Pupils respond positively, saying 'We enjoy lessons because teachers make them interesting and fun'. Teachers do not consistently set work that effectively challenges different groups and this slows progress at times. Opportunities for pupils to find things out for themselves are limited because activities are often led by adults. This restricts pupils' development as independent learners. Teachers have improved their use of guided and shared reading sessions to develop pupils' reading skills. This is impacting positively on the progress they make.

In the best lessons, teachers enthuse pupils, ensure a brisk pace and effectively meet individual needs. This was apparent in a lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6 in which they made good progress in learning how to identify the main features of persuasive writing. Teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively to promote pupils' learning. This is particularly during the introductions to lessons when they often take a watching role rather than active involvement. However, they do make a valuable contribution in group work, especially in supporting the learning of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils' social development is fostered through opportunities to work collaboratively and share ideas. In their questionnaires, all parents and carers agreed that their children are taught well at school. Inspection evidence shows that the proportion of good teaching is increasing but it is satisfactory overall.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school has successfully improved attendance, which was identified as a key area for development at the previous inspection. It is now above average and pupils are punctual arriving at school. The role of the learning mentor in liaising with parents and carers has been central to improvement in this area. In their questionnaires, staff, pupils and parents and carers agree that behaviour is good and pupils are safe in school. Discussions with pupils and scrutiny of behaviour logs show that behaviour is good and has been so over time. Pupils are polite, considerate and act responsibly in and around school. They have a good understanding of the different kinds of bullying, including cyber and physical bullying. They say instances of bullying are rare and are dealt with quickly by staff. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school. They have a good insight into how to keep themselves and others safe. This is effectively promoted through the curriculum in sessions about road and water safety and how to use the internet responsibly.

Pupils take pride in their school and are willing to take on responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council. In so doing, they add to the life of the school. This is evident in the way councillors have instigated the purchase of play equipment to be used at break and lunchtimes. Pupils also enhance the local community, such as by helping to keep the beach clear of rubbish. Parents and carers are particularly appreciative of the care taken of

their children. Two comments are typical, 'My child feels like he's part of a family.' and 'My son is known really well by all staff and feels happy and safe while at school.'

Leadership and management

The headteacher has worked closely with the local authority to provide good quality professional development for staff. This is impacting positively on the quality of teaching. Performance management is more rigorous and effective in identifying areas for staff to improve, such as ensuring activities are always sufficiently challenging for all groups. Other leaders manage their areas of responsibility conscientiously. However, they are not adept at evaluating the quality of learning through the school and in taking action to bring about improvement. The headteacher is currently responsible for this. She is keen to develop their expertise in order that these responsibilities can be delegated more fairly among leaders. The governing body is strongly supportive of the school and effective in shaping its direction. It ensures that safeguarding procedures meet requirements so that all staff and pupils are safe while in school. The school's track record since the previous inspection shows the capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Leaders effectively promote equality and tackle discrimination by carefully tracking the performance of different groups. This enabled the school to identify that pupils known to be eligible for free school meals were not doing as well as those pupils who are not. Action was taken to successfully narrow the gap and this is now minimal. Transition arrangements are successful in helping pupils new to the school to settle in quickly. This is important given the above average number of pupils who join during the year. Engagement with parents and carers is good so they are kept abreast of what is going on in school and helped to be involved in their children's learning. This engagement is fostered through the work of the learning mentor and the close links with the children's centre. These links have been particularly helpful in the school engaging with families that are traditionally hard to reach. The school's work in this area has been recognised by it gaining the Leading Parent Partnership Award.

The curriculum is planned appropriately to meet the needs of pupils in the mixed-year classes. It is enhanced by well attended extra-curricular activities and educational visits, including the Roman Museum at Ribchester. Pupils' moral and social development is promoted by opportunities for them to explore ideas about right and wrong and to work together to complete tasks.

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.



23 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thornton Primary School, Thornton Cleveleys, FY5 4JP

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave me when I inspected your school. I enjoyed meeting you and seeing the many interesting things you do.

Inspection judgements show that yours is a satisfactory school and that:

- you attain average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6
- your behaviour is good and you are polite and kind to others
- the curriculum provides interesting activities, such as a visit to the Roman Museum in Ribchester
- you feel safe in school and learn a lot in lessons, as indicated in your questionnaires
- you enjoy school, as is shown by your above average attendance
- staff and governors are working hard to help you do better.

I have asked your school to do three things to make it better. These are to:

- improve the quality of teaching, such as by making sure you are always given work that makes you think hard and providing more opportunity to find out things for yourselves
- make sure all leaders are skilled in checking how well you are learning and in taking action to bring about improvement
- improve planning for children in the Reception class so it emphasises what they are to learn rather than what they are to do.

All of you are a credit to your school and can help it improve further by continuing to try your best in your activities.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings
Lead Inspector

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