

Thorverton Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	113368
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	378686
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2012
Lead inspector	Michael Barron

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bryony Gilbert
Executive headteacher	Heather Perry
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2007
School address	School Lane Thorverton Exeter EX5 5NR
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Barron

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector spent a total of 285 minutes observing nine lessons taught by four teachers. One was a joint observation with the executive headteacher. The inspector heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read and made short observations of sessions on the teaching of phonics (pupils learning letter patterns and the sounds they represent). The inspector held meetings with members of the governing body, the executive headteacher, the head of teaching and learning, staff and pupils. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at documentation including school policies, governing body minutes, school development planning, pupils' work and tracking information regarding the progress of individual pupils. The inspector observed pupils' behaviour and scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures. He also analysed completed questionnaires from staff and pupils as well as 53 from parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average size primary school set in a rural village. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes; a Reception and Year 1 class, a Year 2 and Year 3 class and also a combined Years 4, 5 and 6 class. All pupils attending the school come from White British backgrounds. The proportions of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or with disabilities are below the national average. The proportion of pupils or who have special educational needs supported at school action is comparable to the national average. The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress. There is pre-school provision on the school site which is not managed by the governing body and therefore did not form part of this inspection.

The school entered into a federation with two other local primary schools in April 2012. An executive teacher is in charge of all three schools and the day-to-day management of the school is carried out by the designated head of teaching and learning at the school. There is a single governing body for all three schools.

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	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school which is recovering from a period of significant disruption since the last inspection to staffing and leadership and management. It is now, once again, preparing pupils well for the next stage of their education. It is not outstanding because pupils' attainment and progress in writing in Year 2 is below average.
- The quality of leadership and management is good. The executive headteacher provides inspirational leadership and is very well supported by the enthusiastic governing body and by the head of teaching and learning, who leads and manages the school well in the executive headteacher's absence. The overall performance of the staff and pupils is managed well. The leadership of teaching and the management of teachers' performance are rigorous. The good curriculum supports the pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development well.
- Inadequacies in teaching in Year 2 and Year 3, evident before the school federated, have been eliminated and teaching throughout the school is now good. Some is outstanding. However, initiatives to improve pupils' writing skills in Years 2 and 3 have yet to impact on raising attainment in writing.
- Pupils achieve well and attainment is above average by Year 6 in mathematics, reading and writing. However, the progress pupils make varies throughout the school. Pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Year 1 and outstanding progress in Years 4, 5 and 6. Pupils' progress in Year 2 and Year 3 has recently accelerated because of vast improvements in the quality of teaching but progress over time in both year groups is slower than in the rest of the school. Attainment in reading in Year 2, although improving, is close to average but attainment in writing is below average. Pupils requiring extra help receive the good support they need to make similar progress to all others.

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- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils realise that a very small number of other pupils sometimes find it difficult to behave well and they try hard to support them. Pupils say they feel very safe and that whenever rare instances of bullying occur adults deal with them effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the attainment in writing of pupils presently in Year 2 and Year 3 by January 2013 through:
 - ensuring pupils are provided with frequent opportunities to improve their ability to use punctuation and spelling correctly when completing longer pieces of writing
 - ensuring pupils always produce their best handwriting in their written work.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is good. Pupils say that the school has improved considerably since the federation and the executive headteacher's appointment. Parents and carers correctly believe that their children are once again making good progress, although some voiced concerns about progress in Year 2 and Year 3 before the school federated. The comment by one parent and carer summed up the present views of the vast majority: 'I am delighted with the school's recent change into a federation and feel more secure as a parent.'

Children usually enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with the skill levels expected for their age, although this can vary because of the small number of children entering the school each year. They make good progress in the combined Reception Year and Year 1 class because teaching matches their differing individual needs well in a stimulating, well-resourced and safe environment. This was evident during a well-taught lesson in which the pupils were split into two different groups within the class. The Year 1 pupils were taught more formally than the Reception Year children, who were given opportunities to engage in a range of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Good support from adults meant that all members of the class, including those with special educational needs, were included in a range of activities based around the theme of the London Olympics, which they found very interesting. As a result, children make good progress in both classes in developing both their writing skills and their understanding of the wider world in which they live.

Previous weaknesses in teaching in Years 2 and 3 have now been eradicated and the quality of teaching greatly improved, although this has left a legacy of underachievement, especially for Year 2 pupils. The school has put a great deal of

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effort into successfully improving this situation in a short space of time. As a result, pupils have made accelerated progress during this term and this has led to a noticeable improvement in attainment in mathematics and reading. However, attainment in writing in Year 2 is still below average and a scrutiny of work confirmed that pupils often have difficulty using their handwriting skills, punctuation and spelling correctly when writing longer pieces of work.

Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 make at least good progress in all areas of learning because teaching is good and often better. It consistently meets the needs of pupils of different ages and abilities very well. As a result, by Year 6 attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average and this was clear from pupils' work and from records of their progress.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good with some notable strengths. Parents and carers also believe that the quality of teaching has improved since the school entered into a federation and that it is now good. Teaching observed during the inspection was never less than good and some was outstanding. During discussions pupils said that they enjoy lessons because teachers try to make learning fun. Teachers display good classroom management skills and this ensures that lessons flow smoothly. Teaching assistants provide skilled support to individuals and groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs. Good subject knowledge ensures that teachers are able to explain tasks well and use their expertise to help pupils complete their work successfully. This was evident during an art lesson when the teacher's expertise was put to good use to enable pupils to work successfully at making straw sculptures. Pupils smiled with pride as they showed off their completed sculptures to the inspector.

Pupils are clear about their learning and whether they are successful in meeting their targets. Marking provides pupils with clear guidance about how to improve their work. When teaching is at its best pupils are thoroughly engaged in well-chosen activities which they find very interesting and which are designed to make them think. An example of this was observed during an outstanding literacy lesson for Years 4, 5 and 6. The teacher's clear explanations of the task pupils had to complete focused the lesson well and his high expectations resulted in all pupils working hard. The task focused on a moral dilemma; *'Should a headteacher bribe pupils to produce their best work by offering them packets of crisps as rewards?'* Pupils divided into groups for heated debates and the teacher moved around the class ensuring the arguments always maintained a clear focus and made pupils think. Those pupils with special educational needs and others needing adult help were very well supported by effective teaching assistants and so played a full part in the lesson. Throughout the lesson the class teacher explained the meaning of new vocabulary to pupils. This helped them to produce more lucid rational arguments to support their points of view. By the end of the lesson it was quite evident that the quality of the debates had improved noticeably as pupils learned to use new vocabulary to far better effect

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to put across their views.

Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, for example, by promoting high standards of behaviour and providing pupils with frequent opportunities to work together in lessons.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is outstanding. Parents and carers believe there is a good standard of behaviour in the school and that their children feel very safe, although a very small minority voiced concerns regarding incidences of bullying. Inspection evidence confirmed that pupils feel very safe and judged that the behaviour of the overwhelming majority of pupils is outstanding.

Pupils display very good attitudes to learning. They say they enjoy school and this is reflected in their above average rates of attendance and good punctuality. Pupils say they all get along well together and older pupils say they enjoy looking after the younger ones at playtimes. Pupils display consideration and respect for others and settle down quickly to their work in lessons. Bullying is rare and dealt with effectively if it occurs. They say there is very little bullying although they are aware that it occurs occasionally. They are confident that adults always deal with it rapidly. Pupils have a growing awareness of the different forms of bullying, for example name calling, physical and emotional bullying. Older pupils are also aware of the dangers of cyber-bullying and social networking sites. Relationships between pupils and adults are very positive throughout the school. Older pupils say that a very small minority of pupils who have social and emotional problems find behaving well all the time quite difficult but that teachers quickly deal effectively with any instances of anti-social behaviour.

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is good. The school has recovered well from a prolonged period of disruption to leadership and management and significant turnover of teaching staff. The all-round improvements demonstrate its capacity to improve in the future. The leadership of the executive headteacher is a strength of the school. One parent or carer voiced the thoughts of many when commenting, 'I feel the school will improve markedly under this new leadership.' Another commented, 'We fully support the new leadership in bringing the school up to a standard that the village can once again be proud of.'

Working effectively with staff and the federation's recently formed governing body the executive headteacher has ensured that rapid and much needed improvements to the school have taken place rapidly. The school has developed rigorous systems for the monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress and teachers use the available information well in their lesson planning. There is a good level of professional support for all staff which is well linked to performance management in order to

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improve their practice. Governance is strong. The enthusiastic and knowledgeable members of the new federation governing body are very proactive and act well as both supportive and critical friends of the school. Procedures for safeguarding pupils and risk assessments meet government guidelines and include robust arrangements for vetting staff appointments. The safety of pupils is well managed and parents and carers expressed no concerns about their children's safety.

The well-balanced curriculum provides pupils with experiences that enhance their learning and understanding as well as strengthening their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer is valued by the pupils. There is no discrimination and all pupils are given equal opportunities to succeed. Strong links with the village and local church give pupils an active presence in their local community.

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.

12 July 2012

Dear Pupils



**Inspection of Thorverton Church of England Primary School,
Thorverton Devon EX5 5NR**

Thank you so much for making me welcome in your school when I visited it recently. You were all so polite and very friendly and I enjoyed talking to you about what you like the most about your school. I was impressed by the assembly I watched and I must admit I was really amazed with the mosaic of the 'hand' which you all worked on so well. I will also never forget watching Class 1 'worm charming' successfully in the forest school.

Pupils in Year 6 told me that they believed they attended a good school and I agree with them. Here are some of the things I found out about your school.

- Your school has improved a lot since becoming part of a federation with two other primary schools.
- Teaching is good and teachers make sure you get a good start to your education.
- You all enjoy school and get on really well with each other.
- You feel very safe at school and nearly all of you behave very well indeed.
- You enjoy visits to interesting places and taking part in after-school clubs.
- The new governing body is working really hard to make sure the school continues to get even better.

I have asked your school to improve pupils' progress in writing in Year 2 by making sure pupils spell words correctly and use the correct punctuation when writing longer pieces of work. I was impressed by the way Year 2 pupils write the letters of the alphabet correctly when practising their handwriting skills and I have asked the school to make sure their handwriting is always as good in all their exercise books.

All of you can make sure your school gets even better by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Michael Barron
Lead inspector

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