

Thornsett Primary School

Aspenshaw Road, Birch Vale, High Peak, Derbyshire, SK22 1AT

Inspection dates 8–9 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Under the headteacher's leadership and management the school has improved significantly.
- Pupils' progress in all age groups has improved over the past two years, resulting in above-average standards at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Leaders and managers and the governing body ensure that teaching and learning are good across the school.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and teach lessons that help them to learn well.
- Attendance is well-above average.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. They say they feel very safe in school. This good behaviour makes a strong contribution to good learning in lessons.
- Pupils receive a good variety of exciting additional activities and experiences throughout the school year. These include visits, residential stays with pupils from nearby small schools and visitors to the school.
- The school accurately evaluates how well it is doing and what needs to be done next to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Just occasionally, teachers do not provide work at the right level for all pupils in the mixed-age classes and, in a small minority of lessons, the pace of learning slows after a good brisk start.
- Not all subject leaders take an active enough role in observing teaching in their subjects and analysing data in order to ensure further improvements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, of which three were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Meetings and discussions were held with representatives of the governing body, members of staff, a representative of the local authority and groups of pupils.
- The inspector took into account the nine responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View).
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Clive Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most other primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, the additional funds provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children in local authority care, is above the national average.
- An above-average proportion of pupils join the school at other than the normal time, after the start of the school year and part-way through their primary education.
- Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average and only a very small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who need extra help with their learning or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average, although it is particularly high in some year groups.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the overall quality and consistency of teaching in the school by ensuring:
 - all lessons proceed at a brisk pace
 - there is an appropriate level of challenge for all age and ability groups within each mixed-age class or set.
- Develop the roles of subject leaders by ensuring that they are supported in their areas of responsibility and encouraged to take a more active role in improving pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Throughout the school, good teaching leads to good progress.
- Children's experiences and skills on entry to the Reception class vary considerably from year to year but are generally below those typically found for this age group. Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress during their first year in school.
- Pupils across the range of year groups and abilities achieve well. The quality of lessons observed and the work in pupils' books confirm this good progress. Pupils make particularly good progress in developing their reading skills. This starts by teaching younger pupils to read by linking letters to the sounds they make. The teaching of reading continues throughout all age groups, and the older pupils read fluently and with good understanding of their texts.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding because, in a small minority of lessons, teachers do not ensure that the work set always helps pupils to learn as much as possible and, occasionally, after a brisk start to the lesson, teachers allow the pace of learning to slow.
- The school's results in the latest Year 6 national tests were above average. School data and pupils' work seen during the inspection confirm that pupils in the current Year 6, a significant proportion of whom joined the school in Key Stage 2, have made good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make equally good progress as others due to the good use of the funding the school receives to provide additional support. Pupils from minority ethnic heritages and those for whom English is an additional language make equally good progress. Those who join the school other than at the start of the Reception year benefit from good individual support so that they quickly catch up with their classmates.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. The good support provided by class teachers, teaching assistants and outside agencies ensures that work is set at the right level for them and that they make small but progressive steps in their learning.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Consistently good teaching enables pupils of all backgrounds and abilities to learn successfully. Lessons are well planned with clear learning goals that are shared with the pupils. Marking is regular and typically gives pupils good guidance about how to improve. Good use is made of resources, including technology, to motivate pupils and enhance their learning.
- In one good mathematics lesson, pupils were learning about fractions. The teacher set a very good pace, which was maintained throughout the lesson. Subject vocabulary and key facts were constantly reinforced and activities were changed frequently to maintain pupils' interest. The teacher used questioning skills very effectively to gauge and guide pupils' learning. Challenging tasks, labelled 'Too tricky to solve' motivated and inspired pupils exceptionally well so that enjoyment and learning were good throughout.
- Teachers plan lessons and subjects with imaginative activities that excite and interest pupils. Good links are made between different subjects and to previous learning. This helps to promote

pupils' confidence and enjoyment in learning as well as their spiritual and cultural development.

- Teachers are very well supported by a strong team of teaching assistants who provide good support for groups and individuals within classrooms and make a particularly effective contribution to the daily whole-school small-group 'setting' of pupils for mathematics.
- Strategies for managing the behaviour of pupils are very effective with the result that lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils work hard and remain on task without the need for constant adult intervention.
- Teaching and planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Good progress has been made in improving free access to the well-resourced and secure outdoor area. Children make good progress in all the areas of learning.
- Teachers have a clear focus on teaching pupils to read. Regular phonics sessions (linking sounds and letters) and guided reading activities for all age groups further support the development of pupils' reading skills and a love of books.
- Each pupil's progress in reading, writing and mathematics is checked rigorously and tracked as they move through the school. Half-termly meetings about pupils' progress are held to discuss the information gained. These meetings ensure that teachers have a good understanding of how well pupils in their charge are doing and the action they should take to support and help them to reach their challenging targets.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding overall. In most cases, pupils who need extra help are supported well and those who find learning easy are given more demanding tasks. However, in a small minority of lessons observed, pupils of widely varying age and ability spent too much time working on the same activity and the pace of learning slowed even though the lesson started briskly.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour, in the classroom and around the school, is typically good and is a major factor in the good progress pupils make in lessons. The school has an effective system of rewards and sanctions which ensures that any poor behaviour is dealt with effectively and promptly.
- Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and this is demonstrated in their consistently high levels of attendance. Year 6 pupils said that they will be very sorry to leave the school in the summer.
- Pupils say that learning is fun and they are enthusiastic about their education. They have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including that which might be encountered through internet sites.
- Pupils understand the need for healthy lifestyles and exercise. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe, and say that they are confident that any issues they raise will be dealt with promptly. Through the school council, pupils demonstrate their pride in the school community and take their responsibilities very seriously.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are curious about the world around them and enthusiastically embrace new experiences.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong leadership. The high expectations of the headteacher are the major factor in the significant improvements since the last inspection and, as a result, all aspects of the school are now good or better. School self-evaluation has identified appropriate areas for further development.
- All staff work very effectively together and regularly take advantage of training to enhance their work. Teaching is well led. Self-evaluation has identified the appropriate key areas for school development. As a result of regular monitoring and support, teaching is now good or better across the school and planning is founded on robust evidence and based on accurate data.
- Staff are well motivated and demonstrate a shared sense of responsibility and commitment to improving the school. However, not all subject leaders are sufficiently involved in improving standards in their subjects.
- The school provides outstanding pastoral care for all its pupils. The small size of the school ensures that all pupils and families are known very well by staff. The school's very positive relationship with parents and carers and its good links with a wide range of partners contribute significantly to improvements in pupils' achievement and well-being.
- Strong links with local schools help to overcome the potential isolation of such a small school and these links enable staff to share their expertise, ensure pupils gain wider experiences and broaden their horizons.
- The school's promotion of equality of opportunity in all its work is outstanding. It is constantly alert to any variation in achievement and is proactive in devising initiatives to overcome any weaknesses. Fully supported and monitored by the governing body, the school makes effective use of the money derived from the pupil premium to support frequent small-group and one-to-one work. This helps eligible pupils to achieve as well as their friends.
- Teaching programmes ensure pupils have a suitable balance of interesting activities. The recent strong focus on supporting literacy and numeracy across all subjects, integrated with the 'creative curriculum' has had a positive impact on pupils' progress, enthusiasm and ability to learn and work on their own.
- Local authority support has been helpful to the school. For example, the local authority advised on improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage and helped improve the quality of teaching through joint lesson observations and reviews of pupils' work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provides strong support and challenge for leaders and managers to ensure that the school improves and moves forward. It checks that safeguarding is secure and has overseen the arrangements for the use of the pupil premium funding and the arrangements for relating teachers' performance to pay effectively. It plays a fully active role in the school's self-evaluation, monitoring and improvement planning processes. It understands the data and the comparative performance of the school in relation to similar schools, knows what is happening in the school and is aware that overall provision is good.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	112600
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	401285

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	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Suzanne Handford
Headteacher	Ashley Parry
Date of previous school inspection	28 Septmeber 2009
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