

Thomlinson Junior School

The Goose Market, High Street, Wigton, Cumbria, CA7 9PG

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics in Years 3 to 5 does not always match the individual needs of pupils with different levels of ability, particularly those of less-able pupils.
- While pupils' progress across the school is improving, it varies between classes. This means that pupils' overall achievement requires improvement.
- In some lessons, the pace of learning is too slow. Pupils spend too long listening to the teacher's introductions rather than completing tasks and activities on their own which will help them to make progress.
- The systems in place to enable school leaders to check on the quality of teaching are not rigorous enough to make sure they identify and swiftly tackle weak teaching.
- The school ensures that all staff have opportunities for training and development, but school leaders do not always check that these have been effective in improving the quality of teaching in classes.

The school has the following strengths

- Relationships are strong. Parents feel very welcome in school and pupils know that adults in the school look after them well and are willing to listen to any concerns.
- The curriculum provides an unusually rich variety of experiences for pupils to learn through adventurous activities outdoors. This supports pupils' good behaviour and strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable receive a very high quality of care which helps them to develop confidence and feel very secure in a nurturing environment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, one of which was a joint observation with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and small-group sessions.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, parents, members of the governing body, a local authority representative and school staff.
- Inspectors took account of 18 on-line questionnaires (Parent View), two letters from parents and 14 staff questionnaires.
- A range of documents was looked at, including the school's data on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Janette Corlett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jim Bennetts

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average sized junior school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above average and the proportion of those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school has a Special Integrated Unit for pupils with severe and multiple learning difficulties.
- Most pupils are from a White British background and no child is at an early stage of acquiring English.
- The school currently meets the government's floor standard, which is the minimum expected for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is breakfast and after-school provision on the school site. This is not managed by the governing body and did not form part of the inspection but a report of its quality can be found on the Ofsted website.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or outstanding by:
 - increasing the pace in lessons so that pupils spend more time doing appropriately challenging tasks and activities and less time sitting on the carpet listening to teachers
 - making sure that individual teachers make good use of training and development opportunities to improve their teaching.
- Increase the proportion of pupils in Years 3 to 5 who consistently make good or outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - making sure teachers plan activities in lessons which closely match the needs of individual learners and improve pupils' rates of progress, particularly those of less-able pupils.
- Improve the quality of leadership, including governance, by:
 - setting up more rigorous systems for school leaders to check on the quality of teaching and making sure that, where teaching is weak, swift action follows to improve it
 - ensuring school leaders check on the difference that further training for teachers is making in improving pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Most children enter the school with average skills in reading, writing and mathematics. They make expected progress and by the end of Year 6, their standards are average and improving in these subjects.
- The amount of progress pupils make in Years 3 to 5 is variable and this is why achievement is not yet good. Too few pupils exceed the expected rate of progress. This is because of some weaknesses in the quality of teaching in these year groups where tasks and activities are not always accurately matched to pupils' needs, particularly those of less-able pupils. However, in contrast the pace of learning accelerates in Year 6 and an increasing proportion of pupils in the two classes are making better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Standards in reading are average and improving because pupils have opportunities throughout the school day to practise their skills across a range of subjects. This is through small-group reading sessions supported by teachers and well-qualified teaching assistants. By the end of Year 6, most pupils read confidently, fluently and with expression from a range of suitable texts.
- The school works hard to promote equality of opportunity. Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, those with special educational needs, including those pupils whose needs are provided for in the Special Integrated Unit and pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable benefit from the nurturing environment in the school and also from the extra help provided for them individually or in small groups. They make expected progress from their individual starting points in English and mathematics. At the same time they develop good personal and social skills to support them in continuing their learning as they move to the next phase in education.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Some teaching is good, but too much requires improvement. When teaching English and mathematics in Years 3 to 5, teachers do not always plan activities for the full range of ages and abilities in each class. As a result, work is sometimes too difficult for some pupils to complete on their own. Work set sometimes confuses less-able pupils and means that do not make as much progress as they should.
- Pupils often spend too long sitting on the carpet whilst teachers talk to the whole class introducing work. Where this happens, some pupils become restless, their concentration dips and valuable learning time is lost when pupils can work by themselves.
- Where teaching is most successful, lessons proceed at a brisk pace and pupils are motivated to work hard on interesting activities. Teachers build on pupils' rich experiences outside of school, for example, through trips to London where pupils visit the Science Museum and sites of historic and cultural importance. These visits stimulate pupils' imaginative writing and help develop their investigative skills in science.
- Teachers mark pupils work regularly and also support pupils in checking and marking their own work to help them develop to become more confident at working on their own. Pupils are increasingly taking good account of the helpful comments teachers make about their work and acting on this guidance to improve their work and to reach their individual targets for improvement.
- Teachers set homework tasks which effectively support pupils in continuing their learning at home. The majority of parents are very happy with this provision.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behaviour in lessons and as they move in and around the school is good. They treat one another well because the school's focus on learning through outdoor adventure fosters their teamwork skills, self-control and respect for themselves and for others.
- Adults have good relations with pupils and this supports pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are confident in asking for help when it is needed, answer questions confidently and contribute to class discussions. This is particularly so for pupils with special educational needs and pupils whose circumstances might place them as vulnerable. These pupils are given every encouragement to become more confident and take a full part in the life of the school community.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They understand the difference between bullying and simply falling out. They say that there is very little bullying of any kind, and have every confidence that adults in the school always take their concerns very seriously and take the right action to help them.
- Most parents appreciate their warm welcome, the helpful and approachable staff and the way youngsters new to the school are helped to settle into the routines swiftly. They are very pleased with the wide range of after-school clubs on offer and the many opportunities the school provides for residential visits, including a much-enjoyed summer camp.
- The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and arrive on time every day.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- While school leaders increasingly observe lessons, make checks on teachers' planning and the quality of pupils' written work, these activities are not joined together to give an accurate overall picture of the quality of teaching and learning in all year groups. As a result, current school plans for the future do not fully focus on the right actions to improve teaching and are not as effective as they should be in improving the school's performance.
- There are systems in place to appraise teachers' performance including that of the headteacher. However, these are not effective enough in holding teachers fully accountable for pupils' progress. Follow-up arrangements for reviewing teachers' progress against their targets are not clear, and the goals set are not always focused sharply enough on measurable outcomes for pupils. Where training needs are identified, support is provided, but the arrangements for checking that this support has been effective are not yet secure. As a result, some valuable opportunities to improve the quality of teaching are missed. This means that overall, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement still requires improvement.
- The headteacher has a clear view about how to develop the curriculum to provide ever-increasing opportunities for pupils to learn through adventure activities, particularly outdoors. His drive and enthusiasm for this aspect of the school's work have proved effective in building a suitably qualified team of staff and in providing rich and varied experiences for pupils. For example, groups of pupils benefit each week from outdoor visits, including hill-walking, caving and canoeing.
- The school leadership team has improved since the last inspection. Leaders now have enough time to carry out their roles and responsibilities and are beginning to show a positive impact in improving standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The local authority provides appropriate support which is helping the school to improve features of its work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are keen to support school functions and play an increasingly effective part in shaping the strategic direction of the school and taking spending decisions. They are developing an overview of the school's provision and performance and understand the need to improve pupils' rates of progress. They are willing to question and challenge school leaders and teachers. They support the school in maintaining strong links with the local community.

Some governors have undertaken training to support their roles and responsibilities. Governors are involved in the performance management of the headteacher, and are aware of the school's arrangements for the appraisal of teaching staff. While governors are aware that pupil premium funding has been allocated to provide help for some pupils who are at risk of underachieving, for example with support in small groups, they do not yet hold leaders to account for the impact of actions on the progress these pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics. The governing body gives support to the headteacher in currently meeting statutory safeguarding responsibilities, particularly regarding the safety of pupils in and around the school.

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	112125
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	401238

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoffrey Ravalde
Headteacher	Douglas Hardie
Date of previous school inspection	15 April 2010
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