



Thorner Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107994
LEA Leeds
Inspection number 277877
Inspection dates 14 February 2006 to 15 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Roger Hartley HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Kirkhills
School category	Voluntary controlled		Thorner
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Leeds, West Yorkshire LS14 3JD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0113 289 2541
Number on roll	111	Fax number	0113 289 2991
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Rev Canon Jeff King
Date of previous inspection	9 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Gloria Stone

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 14 February 2006 - 15 February 2006	Inspection number 277877
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Thorner CE Primary School is situated in a village on the outskirts of Leeds. There are 111 pupils on roll aged 4 to 11 years. Most of the pupils live in the immediate community although there is a small but significant number who live further afield. Two per cent of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, although none require additional language support. Eight per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals which is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low at 10%. One child receives full-time additional support.

At the time of the inspection two of the four class teachers, including the assistant headteacher, were taking part in an educational link initiative in Sri Lanka, and the specialist music and physical education teachers, who normally undertake a full teaching commitment on the inspection days, were absent. Therefore, temporary teaching arrangements were in place for the whole of Key Stage 2, and for a number of subject lessons across the school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Thorner CE Primary School is an effective and popular school where pupils make good progress overall in their learning and reach standards which are above national averages. Despite the staffing difficulties encountered during the inspection, the quality of teaching was never less than satisfactory and much of it displayed some good features. The curriculum is broad and well balanced, and is enriched by a good range of cross-curricular and extra-curricular activities, with strong links to the local and wider community to which the pupils belong.

The pupils' personal development and their care, guidance and support given by the staff are outstanding. The school is skilled at recognising the personal and social needs of the pupils and the staff know them well. Attendance is high, and behaviour is impeccable. The pupils relish new challenges, are considerate of others and enjoy excellent relationships at all levels.

The school is well led and managed by the headteacher, ably supported by the staff team. She has an acute awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has successfully carried through a number of initiatives to improve the education provision for the pupils, as well as seeking to make further gains in standards.

The children receive a good start in the Foundation Stage and settle well, quickly becoming confident and independent learners. The work reflects the Early Learning Goals and builds on experiences the children bring from home or local pre-school provision. The teaching is of a consistently satisfactory standard and often displays good features. There are good links with parents and carers and they are kept well informed of their child's progress.

Overall, the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of teaching to a consistently high standard.
- Ensure that all pupils, especially the more able, are challenged to achieve their potential.
- Continue to refine the use of assessment data for planning the next steps in learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. Most of the children enter the Foundation Stage with good levels of attainment and make good progress towards the Early Learning Goals and beyond. By the end of the stage attainment is generally above that found nationally and in similar schools.

By the end of Key Stage 1 all pupils reach the nationally expected Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, and some reach higher levels in reading and mathematics.

Pupils continue to make good progress throughout Key Stage 2, achieving well in English and mathematics, particularly so in English where the school is in the top 25% of schools. However, science results lag behind, despite still being above the national average. All the Year 6 pupils who have been in school since Year 2 reached their expected target level including some who exceeded expectations.

However, there is still room for improvement, especially to raise standards in science, and to spur the more able pupils to achieve higher levels, especially at the end of Key Stage 1. The school is already tackling the weaknesses with a well thought out plan.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The pupils display consistently positive attitudes to their learning. They are keen to do well and work both independently and cooperatively from an early age demonstrating excellent levels of concentration and respect for the opinion of others; they thrive on challenge.

The staff create an atmosphere of trust and care, and the pupils say they feel safe and know there is someone to go to if they are worried. Bullying is not tolerated and the very rare occurrences are dealt with appropriately and effectively. Nevertheless, the school has introduced a 'worry box' system for pupils to express anxieties; these are dealt with sensitively and successfully.

Attendance is above the national average and unauthorised absence is very low. Pupils' behaviour is consistently of a high order both in and out of the classrooms. They are confident and mature and respectful of others' points of view. The democratically elected school council contributes ideas to improve the school environment, such as recommending games and play equipment for the playground, and also debating different aspects of school life including healthy eating and what aspects of work they enjoy or would like to alter. They appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sports, music and dance.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well and is a strength of the school. Pupils benefit from many cultural and multicultural activities, raise funds for charities, and contribute to their local community. Their spiritual awareness is encouraged through well planned and organised assemblies during which the pupils are helped to spend time in reflection.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. During the inspection teaching was good in half the lessons and satisfactory in the remainder. Lesson plans are suitably detailed and learning objectives are shared with the pupils. In most lessons, the teachers organise the pupils and resources well, and there are many opportunities for the pupils

to demonstrate their linguistic skills, offer ideas and opinions and take part in practical tasks. In the best examples, teachers employ a range of teaching techniques to keep pupils on their toes, display good subject knowledge, and plan work which meets the different learning needs of the pupils.

Where these features are present in a lesson, the pace of pupils' learning is brisk and they make good progress. However, there are some occasions when work fails to challenge pupils to greater effort, and does not take sufficient account of the skills the pupils already have. This is particularly so for the higher attaining pupils, especially at Key Stage 1. The teaching assistants make a substantial and effective contribution throughout the school, especially with pupils who require additional help, and when supporting teachers in class lessons.

Assessment procedures are comprehensive and careful records are kept of pupils' progress. There is a wealth of data which is beginning to help teachers plan the pupils' work, although there is still some way to go before all the teachers make the best use of it to match work accurately to learning needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and well balanced. Since the appointment of the present headteacher, weaknesses in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT), physical education, music and aspects of literacy have been successfully addressed. There is now a consistent and comprehensive approach to teaching reading with guided reading lessons of good quality, and specialist teaching for music, ICT and some aspects of physical education resulting in pupils making good progress in those subjects. The school recognises the major benefits of using the local and wider communities to extend the curriculum and broaden pupils' understanding of different subject skills. For example, they have been involved in Parish Council plans to redesign the village play area, while the regular links with schools in Sri Lanka have given pupils opportunities to use their writing and ICT skills, understand more about geography, and develop their cultural awareness. The school also plans twice yearly theme weeks, often with a strong emphasis on the world around us; for example, Fair Trade week. They focus on applying knowledge gained in lessons in practical contexts. All of these activities enrich the curriculum. Different groups of pupils are generally well catered for, especially those with learning difficulties, although there are some occasions when the most able could do better if the work proved more challenging.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for all its pupils. The staff encourages pupils to give of their best, and has built up an environment which supports and encourages pupils as individuals. Pupils feel valued, safe and cared for, and they have excellent relationships with adults and other pupils. Health and safety issues are given high priority and there are good procedures for identifying risks, and reporting child protection matters. The school attaches great importance to communication with

parents and ensuring that pupils receive high quality guidance; for example, in the arrangements for new pupils, settling pupils into new classes, and when they transfer to secondary schools. Thorner CE Primary School succeeds in helping individuals feel valued and prepares them well to take their place in the wider world.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are of good quality. A number of beneficial changes have been made since the current headteacher took up post, including reorganising the class structure; addressing gaps in the range and quality of the curriculum; strengthening communications at all levels; and reviewing the methods used to involve staff in decision making.

The headteacher has a vision for the school which is shared and understood by the whole staff, who in return give her good support. The staff team collectively decide on how new initiatives are to be implemented and also contribute towards the school development plan. The staff value the trust placed in them and also the regular communication which keeps them up-to-date and allows sharing of ideas and opinions; in addition to weekly staff meetings, there are regular briefing meetings which deal with administrative matters.

The measures taken to improve the quality of learning and the curriculum are bearing good fruit; there are examples of good work in ICT, music and reading and the use of specialist teaching has injected enthusiasm and skill in the pupils.

There is a range of self-evaluation and monitoring techniques to check on the progress of new initiatives and to identify both the strengths and areas for improvement in the current teaching and learning; they work well. Nevertheless, there are areas which need further development, and the school is well aware of what it needs to do to improve further. These include raising the attainment of the more able pupils by embedding further the planning of work which is accurately matched to their needs, and making marking more consistent.

The governors give very good support and enthusiastically acknowledge the quality of the leadership and management in making the school successful. The school makes good use of the range of support provided by the local authority. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

The headteacher has more than adequately demonstrated her capacity to improve further teaching, learning and standards from the good levels already being achieved.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Mrs Farrow and I would like to say how much we enjoyed spending two days in your school. Thank you for being so polite and helping us.

We spent a lot of time finding out how well you are learning by watching you work in some of the lessons and talking to Mrs Stone and your teachers. At the end of the inspection, we talked to Mrs Stone about what we had found out. This is what we said.

We thought you were very well behaved all of the time; we've used the word 'impeccable'. a sticker for the first one to tell Mrs Stone what it means, or maybe a mention on the 'wall of fame'! The youngest boys and girls worked hard, shared things and took turns. Older children acted responsibly, taking care of books and equipment. You told us that you enjoyed coming to school and felt that the teachers were interested in you and that you were happy to talk to them and they took good care of you. All of you work hard, listen to your teachers and try your best to answer their questions.

One of the jobs we have to do when we inspect schools like yours is to see if there are any things which could make your school even better. Of course we couldn't think of anything you need to do because you're brilliant already! It was a very difficult job because your headteacher and teachers work so very hard. We did make a couple of suggestions about things that you would find boring, such as looking a little more at how they know you are working hard and doing as well as you can, and how the school uses data; many of you learn data handling in your mathematics lessons don't you? So watch out, some of you may be getting even harder work.

Mrs Farrow and I know you enjoy coming to school. I think we would if we were a bit younger. We both think you are lucky to be at Thorner School!