



# Thorney Close Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 108828  
**LEA** Sunderland  
**Inspection number** 278054  
**Inspection dates** 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Andrew Scott

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Torquay Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Sunderland
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		Tyne and Wear, SR3 4BB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 553 6093
<b>Number on roll</b>	312	<b>Fax number</b>	0191 528 8199
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Short
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 November 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Catherine Jones

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 2 November 2005 - 3 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 278054
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

The school serves an urban neighbourhood with areas of considerable deprivation. Pupils begin school with skills and abilities that are well below average. Approximately one-third of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including 18 pupils with hearing impairments. Virtually all pupils are from white British families, with a few from Asian families. The pupil population is fairly static, but there has been more than average movement over the past year. The school benefits from a breakfast club.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with several strengths. All pupils make at least satisfactory progress as they pass through the school, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage and Year 6, because of lively and well-focused teaching. Elsewhere, pupils' achievement and teaching are satisfactory overall because teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough. By the end of Year 6, standards are below average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with hearing impairments make good progress because the support they receive is skilfully matched to their individual needs. The school monitors the progress of pupils well and sets suitable targets for improvement, especially in mathematics. The curriculum is satisfactory, focusing on English, mathematics, science and ICT. However, teachers do not link subjects together enough to help strengthen pupils' basic skills.

Pupils develop well as individuals. Behaviour is good and pupils mostly get on well with one another in and out of class. They enjoy their work and respond readily in lessons. The school takes good care of its pupils who understandably say that they feel safe. Pupils say they like school. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher has the right priorities for the school and these are shared by all staff. Some good changes have been introduced, including a brighter and well-resourced learning environment. Senior staff and governors know how well the school is doing. Nevertheless, they are not clinical enough in ensuring that plans for improvement are clearly defined and rigorously carried out. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection, although standards are slightly lower. As a result, the school offers satisfactory value for money, and has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement between Years 1 and 6 by ensuring that teaching is consistently good.
- Ensure self-evaluation identifies clearer goals for school development.
- Consistently establish links between subjects to develop pupils' basic skills further.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Inspectors confirm the school's view that pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Children enter the nursery with well below average attainment, and make good progress because of good teaching and a rich curriculum. They do particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development, language and physical development. By Year 2, pupils continue to achieve satisfactorily but standards are below average at best in all subjects. This is because there have been disruptions to teaching in these year groups. The most recent test results were influenced by the high percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

By Year 6, standards are below average in English, mathematics and science but pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. Effective teaching in Year 6 means that here pupils achieve well. Pupils' achievement in Years 3, 4 and 5 is improving with a strengthening in the quality of teaching. A recent emphasis on support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities means that they now make as good progress as other pupils. The close and skilled support for children with hearing impairments enables them to achieve well. However, more able pupils do not all achieve as well as they could, because teachers do not often give them challenging enough work.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors agree with the school that pupils develop well as individuals. Pupils mostly behave well in and out of lessons and are considerate to one another. They work sensibly together whether puzzling over a mathematical problem or pulling together in a hard football match. It is clear why pupils say they enjoy their work, although they do not all have enough self-discipline when lessons are not interesting enough or lack pace.

Pupils relish any responsibilities given to them. They take their work with the school council seriously, although the scope of this work is comparatively limited. Pupils have good links with the local community and this includes visits to temples and churches, giving them a broader view of the world. Therefore, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Pupils appreciate the need for a healthy lifestyle. They understand why sport is good for them, but do not benefit from it because the school does not provide the recommended two hours of physical education per week. At lunch-time, healthy choices are available although pupils are not encouraged enough to opt for them. Pupils rightly say they feel safe at school. They know that staff have their best interests at heart and deal promptly with any misbehaviour. Attendance is satisfactory.

Grade: 2

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors judge teaching and learning to be satisfactory, unlike the school's view that they are good. Teachers generally establish a positive learning environment in their classrooms. They present new learning clearly and use good questioning and resources to reinforce it. Pupils with hearing impairments learn well because they are well integrated in class activities and the support they receive is sensitive and personalised.

In the nursery and reception classes, teaching is good because it is well planned and there is a healthy blend of directed teaching and independent learning. In Year 6, and sometimes elsewhere, teachers have good expectations of pupils. They provide

stimulating work that closely matches the needs of all pupils. Lessons are often brisker and more exciting so that pupils are motivated and their pace of learning is faster.

In other year groups, teaching is essentially satisfactory but sometimes good. For example, in a Year 4 English lesson, pupils were eager to suggest suitable verbs for a text because it involved a recipe for chocolate cake. Teachers do not always base work well enough on prior learning so that pupils learn progressively, teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough, and teachers do not insist on a fast enough pace of work — as a result, pupils' concentration can be variable and they do not always work as hard as they could.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors judge the curriculum to be satisfactory, rather than good as the school believes. Teachers provide a secure framework for all subjects so that pupils have a sufficient range of topics. The curriculum for nursery and reception children and for pupils who have hearing impairments is good, because it is tailored carefully to their individual needs. Elsewhere, teachers do not maximise opportunities to link subjects so that pupils can strengthen their basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). The school does not yet provide the recommended two hours of physical education per week.

The school provides a satisfactory range of activities after school that broadens pupils' experiences. There are interesting visits and visitors throughout the year; older pupils, for example, have benefited in ICT from visits to a local learning centre working with simple robotics. Links with local businesses encourage a sense of responsibility and a greater awareness of the outside world. The greatly improved accommodation and resources provide pupils with a stimulating place to learn.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is correct in saying that it provides a good standard of care, support and guidance for its pupils. Secure child protection and health and safety arrangements are seen in day-to-day practice. Pupils agree that they have someone to go to if they are worried. Adults know the pupils well and communicate closely between themselves, and with parents, to ensure continuous care throughout the school day, particularly for vulnerable pupils.

Pupils with behavioural difficulties receive good support in lessons from well-trained support staff. The school keeps a sharp eye on the progress of these pupils. Work provided within lessons is matched satisfactorily to meet individual needs of pupils who need additional help. The school uses outside expertise well to help pupils with physical, emotional or behavioural needs when necessary.

The school tracks pupils' progress in work well. Teachers use this information to set good targets to support pupils' learning in numeracy, and are just beginning to do so

in literacy. However, not all pupils know exactly what their targets are or how to achieve them.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors consider that leadership and management are satisfactory and not good, as the school believes. Nevertheless, the headteacher has made some positive changes to the school since her arrival. Staff have become more consistent in their approach, behaviour has improved and the building has become a more inspiring place to learn. The headteacher has introduced an open style of leadership, and the senior teachers are increasingly accountable in their areas of responsibility.

The headteacher and senior staff work well together and have a good view of the school's strengths. They also know its weaknesses but do not always acknowledge them openly enough. The school analyses issues such as pupils' progress well, but not all its plans are detailed or precise enough to help raise pupils' achievement appreciably throughout the school. The school does well to involve parents and pupils in its development.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors monitor the progress of the school well. They meet very regularly and are kept suitably up-to-date through, for example, presentations by subject leaders. As a result, they are well involved in its development. However, governors do not hold the school to account with sufficient rigour, especially with regard to pupils' achievement.

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards are not quite as good as they were then, although the accommodation, resources and the provision for ICT have all improved. There is a combined will to improve among all staff and so, overall, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE  
T 0207 421 6800  
F 0207 421 6707  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Thorney Close Primary School  
Torquay Road  
Sunderland  
Tyne and Wear  
SR3 4BB

4th November 2005

Dear Children,

Thank you for the part you played in the inspection of your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you and getting to know your school.

We understand why you like your school. We found it to be satisfactory because:

You are well behaved, and mostly kind to one another; you are particularly good at including pupils with hearing impairments in all that you do.

You become sensible and responsible, and are good at carrying out your jobs.

Your headteacher has the right ideas to make your school better; she is very caring, she is helping teaching to become better, and she has improved your building and resources.

Your teachers help you to make at least satisfactory progress in your work; you do especially well in the nursery and reception classes, and in Year 6.

The school takes good care of you and you have rightly said that you feel safe at school.

You clearly like coming to school because your attendance has improved and is now much like other schools.

However, we feel that the school could still improve in three ways:

Your standards in English, mathematics and science are not yet as good as they could be, because teachers do not always expect enough from you.

Teachers do not overlap subjects often enough so that you can improve your skills, especially in English, mathematics and ICT.

Your headteacher and teachers need to be clearer in their plans to improve the school.

I wish you and your school every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,  
Andrew Scott AI  
Lead Inspector

Annex B