



Thorntree Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111633
LEA Middlesbrough
Inspection number 278737
Inspection dates 30 November 2005 to 1 December 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs Gillian Salter-Smith

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	The Greenway
School category	Community		Thorntree
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Middlesbrough, TS3 9NH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01642 242309
Number on roll	297	Fax number	01642 250476
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Pastor Paul Howells
Date of previous inspection	1 March 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Sue Picknett

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Thorntree is a larger than average primary school for pupils aged 3 to 11 years, and a children's centre, run in partnership with SureStart, provides day care for pupils from age six weeks. The school takes children from areas of significant deprivation and is situated on a large estate of social housing in east Middlesbrough. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very high. A high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic groups or are in the early stages of learning English. A small number of pupils come from families of refugees or asylum seekers. There are a small number of looked-after children. The numbers of pupils joining or leaving the school at times other than is usual is high. Pupils enter the school with very weak literacy skills, personal development and social skills. The school has the Healthy Schools award. Consultation on the re-organisation of primary education is taking place and the school awaits a decision on its future.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Thorntree primary is a good school. Although standards are below average, especially in writing, pupils make good progress from a very low starting point and achieve well. Pupils' personal development is good. The pupils are taught by a committed and enthusiastic staff and enjoy school and learning. They behave well. Leadership and management are good. Significant improvements are being made in pupils' progress and in teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers' use of assessment and target setting enables pupils to do well in numeracy and literacy. This good practice is not yet happening in all subjects. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and pupils make a good start.

Excellent partnerships with many local agencies, including SureStart, enhance pupils' care, support and learning opportunities. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The curriculum meets the needs of individual pupils well and there is a good range of additional visits, trips and clubs that enrich learning. Pupils with specific learning difficulties are well supported. The school knows its own strengths and weaknesses well and provides good value for money. The school has improved since the last inspection and there is good capacity to make further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' standards in English, especially in writing, by providing greater opportunities for pupils to develop writing skills in all subjects.
- Ensure the good use of targets and activities, matched to pupils of different abilities in basic skills, is extended to all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achieve well and make good progress. Standards overall are below average. Recent changes in leadership and staffing are having a positive impact on improving standards, as reflected in the upward trend in test results for pupils aged 11. Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, building from a very low starting point. At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have not yet reached average levels and national test results reflect this. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2 and in 2005 results in national tests for science and mathematics were average. Results in English were below average. The school sets challenging targets for these tests. They were exceeded for mathematics and met for the proportion of pupils reaching average levels in English. The target for the higher level in English was not met. Boys' standards are not as high as girls but they make equally good progress. Pupils' writing skills are below average and the school is working strenuously and effectively to improve them. Pupils in need of academic and personal support are identified early and well supported. The high proportion of pupils with learning disabilities and difficulties make good progress because they receive well targeted support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils behave well and they enjoy coming to school. They are polite and welcoming to visitors. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and help pupils to become confident learners. Attendance is satisfactory. A small number of families do not respond to the school's good work in encouraging regular attendance. Pupils develop good spiritual, moral and social awareness. Assemblies promote the school's positive ethos and include joyful singing and meaningful time for reflection. Internet links with other countries and activities in subjects improve pupils' understanding of other cultures. However, the school recognises the need to do more. Pupils feel safe and secure in school, putting their trust in the adults around them. Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through regular participation in physical activity, healthy eating and opportunities to drink water. Pupils take on responsibilities well. Older pupils enjoy supporting younger pupils at playtimes in their role as mentors. The school council has contributed well to improvements in play and toilet facilities but the views of younger pupils are not always taken into consideration fully. Pupils are well prepared for their futures through an emphasis on building self-esteem, on the ability to work co-operatively in groups and on the use of basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and pupils learn at a good rate. Some teaching was outstanding and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Teachers' enthusiasm helps to stimulate and enliven learning. Teachers manage behaviour well using rewards and well-deserved praise so that pupils build confidence and enjoy learning. Lessons are well planned so that activities are varied, interesting and challenge pupils of differing capabilities. Assessment is good. Pupils' progress is tracked closely, helping to identify underachievement quickly. Teachers use assessment information well to plan learning and set targets for literacy and numeracy. Individual targets for writing are leading to improvement. Pupils understand their targets and know what they need to do to improve. This good practice does not yet extend to all subjects. Work is marked well giving useful advice on how to improve. Lessons are purposeful and pupils understand what they are trying to achieve. Well-structured endings to lessons help pupils to know how well they have done. In the best lessons there are good opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and groups and discuss their work informally. There are fewer formal, structured occasions when pupils talk to or question each other about their work. In the very few lessons that were satisfactory, rather than good or outstanding, expectations of behaviour were not always high enough and the purpose of activities was less clear.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good for pupils of all ages. There are no gaps in what should be taught. The school is particularly successful in enriching its work by providing a good range of visits, clubs, events and visitors. Pupils enjoy and remember these, and often do some of their best written work after these experiences.

The school goes the extra mile to meet the needs of all its pupils, for example in the generous provision of support for those with learning difficulties or those with particular talents. Teachers keep a close eye on each pupil's progress and are quick to adapt the curriculum where needed, for example, in looking at different learning styles or providing materials to encourage boys to read and write. Teamwork amongst staff is effective; ideas are shared and new approaches tried. A recent example of this is the successful whole-school pilot scheme to put more fun and creativity into lessons, without losing rigour or sight of the need to raise standards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of the care, guidance and support provided by the school is outstanding. Parents view the school very positively. Staff know individual pupils very well and relationships are very good. Pupils' academic and personal progress is tracked very carefully and pupils in need of support are identified promptly and precisely. Support is tailored closely to meet pupils' needs, especially in literacy and personal development. Many initiatives in school, such as the work on behaviour and stress with the learning mentor, help pupils to feel secure and happy. The school works exceptionally well with a wide range of partners and local agencies to meet the needs of all pupils, including those deemed vulnerable and those from asylum-seeking or refugee families. Partnership with SureStart through the Bright Stars nursery is particularly successful in helping more children to start school with greater self-confidence. Procedures to safeguard children are followed rigorously.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

All aspects of leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides determined and well-informed leadership. She has a clear vision that is shared by all staff, of a school where pupils learn happily, get along with each other, and with adults, and where personal development has a high priority. The commitment, energy and knowledge of senior staff and subject leaders have been major factors in the improvements made. Morale is high.

The headteacher and governors are successful in seeking support from the wider community, for example, working with other schools or agencies and giving parents a voice. The considerable help from the local advisory service is valued and is making a difference.

Leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses and the views of parents and pupils are sought and acted upon. The leadership team has good procedures for keeping an eye on the quality of teaching and learning. These have the support of all staff, who are open to advice and eager to improve. Thorough records on how well pupils are making progress are used effectively to improve provision and raise standards.

Governors meet all their statutory obligations very well. Recent changes and training have made the governing body more involved in planning and in checking the effectiveness of the school.

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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	2	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	4	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?	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	2	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	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	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

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Thorntree Primary School
The Greenway
Thorntree
Middlesbrough
TS3 9NH

2 December 2005

Dear Children

Many thanks for welcoming us into your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you all. It was a pleasure to visit your classrooms and see how much you enjoy learning and how hard you work. You were all very kind, polite and eager to help us.

You are rightly proud of your school and we think it is special.

All the adults look after you very well. They help you to enjoy school and do well.

You are very well behaved and are eager to do your best. You get on well with each other and with all the adults in your school.

Many of you enjoy helping out around the school. We think you do a good job, especially in looking after the younger pupils at playtimes.

You have lots of chances to go on trips and visits to help you to learn about different things. Many interesting people come to the school to talk to you and help you with your work.

We have asked your teachers to help you to carry on working hard, especially on improving your writing. You told us that you like having your own targets to help you to know how to improve your literacy and numeracy skills so we have asked the teachers to do this for more of your work.

We hope that you carry on enjoying your school and doing well.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Salter-Smith, Keith Oglesby and Kathryn Dodd

(The inspection team)