



Thirsk Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121365
LEA North Yorkshire
Inspection number 280998
Inspection dates 1 March 2006 to 2 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Lesley Clark CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hambleton Place
School category	Community		Thirsk
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		North Yorkshire YO7 1SL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01845 524349
Number on roll	288	Fax number	01845 524349
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Adrian Maude
Date of previous inspection	26 June 2000	Headteacher	Mr R Wild

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average-sized primary school with a nursery. Almost all children are of white, British heritage with a very small number at an early stage of learning English. The school serves an area of significant socio-economic disadvantage. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are looked after or vulnerable or come from travelling families is above average. An average proportion has statements to provide for their needs. When children start in nursery, their standards are well below expected levels, particularly in communication, language, literacy, in personal, social and emotional development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with many outstanding features, a judgement that matches the school's view of itself. The school's belief that 'everyone is an individual and everyone is important' is evident throughout its work. Its outstanding provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for vulnerable and looked after pupils and minority groups is reflected in their outstanding personal and academic progress. Achievement is outstanding in the Foundation Stage, where children turn into effective learners from a low starting point on entry, because of outstanding provision. In all other classes, achievement is good. Overall standards are above average as a result of good teaching quality in every class. The curriculum is outstanding as is pupils' personal and social development. Pupils behave well and really want to learn because the school fosters their ambitions. Attendance is satisfactory and improving because the school works successfully with parents of poor attenders and the school works well with parents to help their children attend regularly and arrive punctually. Pupils are given good support, care and guidance. While support for personal development is outstanding, the school has identified that pupils should be more involved in checking their own learning so they understand fully what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils are well equipped for their future lives. Leadership, management and governance are good. However, subject leaders have too few opportunities to monitor achievement and ensure pupils have enough occasions to learn independently. The school has made good progress since it was last inspected and is well placed to continue to improve. It gives good value for money and pupils learn with evident enjoyment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the roles and responsibilities of subject leaders to include evaluating achievement and checking that pupils have more opportunities to make independent choices.
- Find ways to involve pupils in assessing their learning so they learn from their mistakes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall and outstanding in the Foundation Stage. When they first start school, the children are hampered by limited social, language and communication skills. They make outstanding progress because they are exceptionally well taught and there is outstanding provision for them to work and play independently, constructively and imaginatively both indoors and outdoors. At the start of Year 1, standards are close to average. Children continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2, learning basic skills. Results are broadly average at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards are usually above average at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. In English, results in 2005 showed significant improvement because of the school's drive to improve standards in reading and writing

across the school. The dip in standards in mathematics in 2005 was untypical and not borne out by pupils' work. The school is set to exceed its challenging targets in 2006 as in English. In science, results indicate that pupils develop the relevant knowledge, understanding and skills to achieve well. However they do not have sufficient opportunities to work independently, planning and carrying out investigations and presenting and interpreting data. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, vulnerable pupils, those learning English as an additional language and traveller children make outstanding progress because of excellent provision for their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure and that they have an important voice in the way the school is run. Members of the school council take their responsibilities very seriously and they manage their budget very well. They have worked hard on the provision of a 'friendship stop' in the school playground and the excellent 'NOW WASH YOUR HANDS' pupil poster competition has also led to improvements in their personal levels of health and safety. A wide range of opportunities are provided to enhance pupils' personal development by undertaking, for example, the role of house captains and working as library, corridor or wet playtime monitors. Pupils clearly enjoy their education. They said so, often. One Year 6 pupil said, 'the school gives you confidence for the future'. In the Foundation Stage, children quickly become independent and confident learners. They learn routines and develop very good relationships with each other and with adults.

Pupils' attendance is in line with national averages. It is improving because the school works very hard with parents of poor attenders and with the pupils themselves to continually drive up attendance and punctuality levels. Pupils behave well and they are very kind and considerate, for example when holding doors open for fellow pupils and adults.

The provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development at the school is outstanding and includes significant use of the local and wider environment together with a wide range of visits and visitors. The school also holds occasional multicultural weeks in addition to developing its international links and these further enhance this excellent provision. A large number of extra curricular activities and clubs are attended very well by pupils, leading to improved access to sport and a developing understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and some is outstanding. It is outstanding in the Foundation Stage where children's days are filled with activities to awaken their curiosity and stimulate language development. They also benefit from times to work

intensively with an adult on specific tasks to develop their personal, social and communication skills. In each class, pupils learn well because work is planned conscientiously to meet their needs and abilities. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are learning English as an additional language or are from minority groups learn exceptionally well because of outstanding individual education plans which help pupils to build on success. This makes their learning enjoyable and productive. Good questioning skills, good pace and a variety of activities characterise the good quality teaching. In outstanding lessons, pupils understand difficult concepts exceptionally well because of imaginative and carefully prepared approaches as when Year 4 pupils used negative numbers accurately to solve problems. Teachers have relatively low expectations of pupils' capacity to work independently. While marking is thorough, pupils have limited opportunities to check their work against achievable targets so as to promote even better progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding; it is better than the school believes. Strong emphasis is given to personal, social and emotional development in the Foundation Stage and to personal and citizenship education in Years 1 to 6. This has a profound impact on pupils' personal development, well-being and receptiveness to learning. The school makes very good provision for developing the skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and there is an equally strong emphasis on the creative arts and sports. Timetabling gives appropriate emphasis to each subject and so pupils' days are interesting and varied. The decision to teach literacy in mixed age and ability groups with a strong focus on developing speaking and listening skills is having a good effect on writing standards and further enriching the curriculum through drama. The increased provision for reading is also having a positive impact. Year 6 pupils say they 'like the way the day is split up into easily handled sections'.

There is outstanding enrichment of the curriculum, with a wide range of extracurricular activities as well as frequent educational visits, much appreciated by pupils. For example, a quarter of pupils attend choir practices after school. The biannual multicultural week provides pupils with a stimulating mixed arts experience. The school's growing international links effectively extend pupils' cultural awareness.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, support and guidance to pupils at the school is good with some outstanding features. The school roll includes a very wide spectrum of pupils and there are outstanding levels of support, welfare and guidance provided for traveller, vulnerable and looked after children, in addition to the few pupils with English as an additional language and a larger number identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Outstanding child protection procedures are in place and all staff have received appropriate levels of training. Any incidents or accidents involving pupils are quickly and effectively addressed by the school's staff and appropriate records are maintained. Although pupils are aware of their short-term targets for improvement, the school acknowledges there is a need to involve pupils in assessing their learning so they learn from their mistakes. Parents say that they are kept very well informed of their children's progress and annual reports include helpful targets for pupils' further development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher's leadership is outstanding. The school has built successfully on its strengths, making good progress since the last inspection. The outstanding lead given to equal opportunities, together with the celebration of pupils' individual strengths, result in exceptionally good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from vulnerable or minority groups. The headteacher's scrupulous monitoring and evaluation has secured good quality teaching and learning throughout the school, much improved standards at the end of Year 2 and outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage. The school is forward-looking. The leadership team is used effectively to spread responsibility and develop staff expertise. For example, the team's collective responsibility for literacy has given rise to a radically different approach, incorporating drama and many more opportunities for speaking, listening and reading, resulting in a significant rise in standards at the end of Year 6. The school recognises that the next stage is to develop all subject leaders' understanding of achievement and standards in their subjects so they can check, for example, that pupils have sufficient opportunities to learn through making independent choices. Governors bring a wide range of expertise which benefits the school. The school improvement plan effectively guides future developments. Financial management is good. Parents' views are taken into account and returns from parent questionnaires indicate strong appreciation of the approachability of staff and the way their children grow in confidence. The school has a good understanding of what it needs to do to improve and good capacity to improve because of these considerable strengths and pupils' enthusiastic attitudes.

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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?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	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	1	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	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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	1	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	1	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?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	1	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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for being so friendly and helpful. We really enjoyed our visit and want to share with you what we thought about your school.

What we liked most about your school:

- we think that you are taught well, that you have an extremely good curriculum with lots of extra activities which make learning enjoyable
- we like the way you become increasingly confident and responsible and we were impressed at how seriously you take your responsibilities and pleased you have ambitious plans for your future
- we think the school council represents your views very well and that you have a good say in what goes on
- your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.

What I have asked your school to do now:

- we think that your teachers should give you more opportunities to learn through finding out for yourselves
- we think your teachers spend a lot of time marking your work and that you could do a bit more to help them by checking your mistakes and seeing if you have met the targets they set you.

We liked talking to you and wish you well for the future.