



Thorpe Hesley Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106850
Local Authority Rotherham
Inspection number 287626
Inspection date 13 December 2006
Reporting inspector Lesley Clark

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Upper Wortley Road
School category	Community		Thorpe Hesley, Rotherham
Age range of pupils	7-11		South Yorkshire S61 2PL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0114 2570153
Number on roll (school)	234	Fax number	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Garth Bradwell
		Headteacher	Ms Paula Harmer
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Thorpe Hesley Junior School is average in size, serving an area of considerable socio-economic disadvantage. In common with other schools in the area, the number on roll is falling because of the declining birth rate. The school is part of an Education Action Zone. Most pupils previously attend the neighbouring infant school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, as is the number with statements of special educational need. The headteacher started in January 2006, after a term when the school was led and managed by an acting headteacher. A new deputy headteacher and senior leadership team were appointed in May 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Thorpe Hesley Junior School is a good school with outstanding features. It is improving rapidly. The school's more conservative assessment of its progress so far is a reflection of its high aspirations. The many changes evident in the past year all have as their starting point 'the desire to create an exciting school where children will want to come every day, where children feel comfortable about expressing themselves, confident that their views are important and they are valued'. The school is highly successful in fulfilling these aims. Pupils are clearly at the heart of its work and the school buzzes with vitality. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Attendance has improved to above national averages and behaviour is now excellent because pupils take responsibility for their actions. The school is alive with enthusiastic pupils who are eager to get on because there is so much to do that interests them. The pupils undertake many interesting activities including interviewing governors for the school radio station, taking photographs for the school newspaper or meeting together to discuss their term's work. This is the result of outstanding leadership and management with the will and capability to make radical changes to turn a good school into a considerably better one. The school gives good value for money and has outstanding capacity for improvement.

Standards are well above average. Pupils achieve well from a generally above average starting point on entry. This is because teaching quality is good overall and therefore pupils learn well. The pattern of pupils' achievement, however, is uneven. The school's tracking systems show that pupils tend to tread water or even slip back a bit in Year 3, and it is not until the top end of the school, where teaching is consistently outstanding, that pupils really put on a spurt and achieve the high standards of which they are capable. The school identified that standards are consistently higher in English and science than in mathematics. Although results in the 2006 national tests show equally good performance in all three subjects, it has put into place stringent measures to ensure greater consistency in mathematical achievement in all classes. This is already bearing fruit with pupils using and applying their mathematical skills in other subjects almost as extensively as their literacy skills.

The curriculum is undergoing radical revision to ensure that it provides pupils with opportunities to achieve excellence through enjoyment. At present, it is satisfactory but with innovative features that are already making a difference to the quality of pupils' learning. It is now planned to develop key skills through linking subjects imaginatively together with information and communication technology (ICT) at its heart. Over the course of a year it has changed the way teachers plan lessons but there is still some way to go. Senior leaders used assessment successfully as the main means to drive the pace of change. Simple systems give a clear overview of achievement and pinpoint weaknesses. The end of term 'conferencing day' works superbly as pupils spend time sorting out their best pieces of work to give an oral presentation in pairs to pupils either two years older or younger than themselves. From this they learn confidence, self-awareness and sensitivity, concluding for example, that, 'this conference was better than last time's but we could improve it by talking a bit more

and asking more questions'. This, together with regular checking of their work against targets, gives pupils a sharp awareness of what they have learnt and what they have to aspire to. Academic and personal guidance are outstanding.

The school provides pupils with many valuable experiences that have a bearing on their academic progress and prepare them exceptionally well for their future lives. Pupils with special talents or interests are given many opportunities to develop these further in extra-curricular lunchtime or after school clubs, or through taking on responsibilities such as photographing the school's recent inter-class 'kurling' competition and then being judged competitively for the quality of their filming. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and have equal chances to shine. The school's open-door policy extends to pupils as well as parents. For example, pupils confidently pop into the headteacher's office to make suggestions which are considered seriously. This is indeed a school where pupils come first.

What the school should do to improve further

- Bring all teaching up to the quality of the best so that learning is consistently good in all classes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are well above average, indicating good achievement by all pupils. Almost all pupils reach nationally expected standards and recent national test results confirm that an above average proportion of pupils reach the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science. Standards are generally higher in English and science than in mathematics because outstanding teaching in Year 6 often links the two subjects imaginatively together to the mutual benefit of both. Teachers at the top end of the school have an enormous amount to do to bring standards in mathematics up to the same level. This is because pupils make slow progress in Year 3, because teaching quality is uneven. Challenging targets are met each year and often exceeded at the higher levels. The trend in the school's results is upward with significant improvements evident each year over a three-year period.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school resounds with happy, enthusiastic pupils who are extremely busy. Displays in corridors require pupils to respond such as the 'thank you' board where pupils pin up messages or the Christmas tree bearing wishes on gift tags, which pupils explained are 'not allowed to be selfish'. They work and play with great energy, knowing it is important to lead healthy lives and appreciating that they are 'learning new stuff all the time'. They say that, 'there are more smiles around' because there is no bullying: 'if anything happens outside class you can't win any lost 'golden time' back so you have to take responsibility for your actions.' The school council, elected following

proper electoral procedures, actively whips up support to apply for an Eco-award, eager to 'get a gigantic green flag to go on top of our school'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and pupils understand how important it is to help others both in school and the wider community. They feel trusted themselves and this makes them sensitive and responsive to others' needs and willing to take on responsibilities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. It ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. In satisfactory lessons, while teachers provide interesting learning materials, support is not precisely targeted where it is needed and pupils have fewer opportunities to work independently on aptly challenging tasks. Pupils are restless and work slowly as a result. By contrast, in outstanding lessons evident in Years 4, 5 and consistently in Year 6, precisely targeted questions generate intensive learning as pupils are required to explain their thinking and to listen and learn from each other. Work is exactly matched to pupils' differing needs, often with an imaginative twist that generates great interest. These lessons end with questions so that pupils apply what they have just learnt, thus making learning highly effective. Marking is of good quality.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is developing rapidly to offer extended opportunities for pupils to learn, use and apply skills in a wide range of subjects, creatively linked to maximise interest and enjoyment and to extend the use of ICT. This is at an early stage of development with the new curriculum shaping round broad themes such as 'world' and 'community' with a planned 'Pirate week' for next term. The shift from a curriculum concerned with content to one based on learning processes is the school's current focus. Extra-curricular provision, including educational visits and visitors to school, is good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There is outstanding provision for pupils' welfare and child protection procedures are robust. The systems to support children with learning difficulties are good and teaching assistants give good support to pupils with different needs and abilities. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is excellent and pupils say it helps them to 'stand up for yourself' and have 'special awareness'. The systems to support academic progress are outstanding and give a clear overview of progress and challenging targets to aspire to. Through sharing their term's work with older and younger pupils, pupils

too have a sharp overview of their progress and are very clear what they need to do to improve further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher's dynamic lead has been embraced wholeheartedly by staff, governors and pupils, and the school is changing rapidly as a result. Honest self-evaluation coupled with effective assessment systems quickly established the main areas needing development. Staffing has been used creatively as in mathematics, for instance, where the subject leader is completing a term spent analysing weaknesses and working alongside staff to produce changes in practice. The school recognises the need to stimulate more adventurous and effective teaching methods in Year 3. The excellence in leadership and management lies in the innovative practice extending to all aspects of the school's work with immediate impact on pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour. This has instantly raised everyone's expectations. The school improvement plan provides clear direction and all major issues have been accurately identified. The curriculum developments are well thought out to extend and enrich pupils' learning. Governors give strong support and the school runs extremely efficiently. Financial management is good. The school is in an excellent position to continue to improve.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making me so welcome in your school. I thoroughly enjoyed talking to so many of you and seeing some of your lively lessons and some of the fascinating work you have done this term. Your headteacher and teachers have a lot of excellent ideas to involve you in school life such as the 'kurling competition' or taking photographs of wood as part of your study of Arthur Rackham's work. I was impressed at the way you presented your work to each other during the 'conference' and thought your comments were sensitively worded, honest and helpful. It is the first time I have listened to a play based on batteries and circuits and I loved the ending with a bang!

All these things contribute to my judgement that your school gives you a good education with some outstanding features. It gives you an excellent preparation for your future lives because you have to do a lot of thinking and work on your own. You achieve high standards, particularly in English and science and older pupils do really well in mathematics. Your ICT skills are extremely good and you use them exceptionally well in many different kinds of work. You show a great deal of respect and understanding for each other and look after each other extremely well. This helps to make your school such a happy, friendly place. Perhaps the most important thing you learn is that 'everyone has the right to be wrong'.

It is part of my job to point out what your school should do to be even better. I have suggested one thing that will help. I saw that the youngest pupils were more restless in lessons than older ones and that they worked less efficiently. So I have suggested this:

- make all lessons as good as the best so that learning is consistently good in all classes.

You could help by asking questions when you find the work too hard and saying if you find the work too easy.

I wish you all the very best for the future. I know you will continue to have a lot of fun at your school!