

Thornton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107223
Local Authority	Bradford
Inspection number	287750
Inspection dates	17–18 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Jim Griffin

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	452
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Tothill
Headteacher	Mr Adrian Cogill
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2002
School address	Thornton Road Thornton Bradford West Yorkshire BD13 3NN
Telephone number	01274 833839
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average, with two single age classes in each year group. Most pupils come from the urban village of Thornton, located at the western edge of the authority. Around an eighth of pupils is entitled to free school meals, which is below the national average. Around a tenth is from minority ethnic groups, mostly Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi. A small minority of pupils have English as their second language, although this is not a barrier to accessing the curriculum. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, while the proportion with a statement of special educational need is below average.

In the past year, the school has emerged from a period of high staff turnover, affecting not only senior positions but also teaching and other staff.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Thornton is a satisfactory and improving school that effectively promotes pupils' personal development. Pupils enjoy the happy atmosphere in school and share good relationships with staff and each other. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show respect and concern for others and good awareness of other faiths and cultures. Pupils' attendance is average. Their behaviour is good. Pupils are aware of the importance of keeping fit and maintaining a sensible diet. Playtimes are safe and active. Pupils enjoy the fresh fruit and healthy lunch options that the school provides. They make a good contribution to the school and local community. Pupils have a voice through the school council and regularly take part in local events, such as the annual Thornton gala. Parents are positive about the impact of the new headteacher and value the positive contribution made by the school to pupils' personal development.

Pupils make satisfactory academic progress overall. On entry to the Nursery most children have skills that are below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) because of good quality teaching and learning. Throughout the rest of the school, while there are growing pockets of better progress because of stronger teaching, pupils' progress is satisfactory. Consequently, pupils' attainment at the end of both Years 2 and 6 is broadly average. Pupils' progress and the standards reached are consistently higher in science than in English or mathematics. Closer analysis of English results shows that it is pupils' progress in reading that is the weak link. Improving writing has been a school priority for a number of years and this work has been effective.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is improving because senior staff make regular and rigorous checks on the quality of lessons. However, there is still room for improvement in some lessons so that pupils' learning is consistently good. In these lessons, the learning objectives are not always specific enough and the set work does not always provide a good level of challenge for all learners. Marking is regular and supportive, but does not give pupils enough guidance on how to improve their work.

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. There is sufficient focus on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). The curriculum for ICT has greatly improved since the previous inspection. There is a good range of visits, visitors and after-school clubs. The personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) contributes much to pupils' good personal development. The pastoral care provided for pupils is good. The school has recently started to set pupils literacy and numeracy targets but it is too soon for any impact of this initiative to be seen.

Leadership and management are satisfactory, with emerging strengths in senior leadership. A capable, senior team with complementary skills is now in place. Other staff have confidence and trust in the clear expectations and sense of direction provided by senior leaders. The school improvement plan identifies appropriate priorities. Checks on pupils' progress are carried out regularly. The initiatives to improve pupils' attainment and progress in writing and science are already effective because senior leaders and teachers have been clear about what needed to be done to bring about key improvements. This is not yet the case in relation to reading and mathematics. Consequently, the school's attempts to accelerate pupils' progress in these areas are not yet as effective as they should be.

Governance is good. The governors played an important part in the recruitment of the new senior team and provide the right mix of challenge and support for senior leaders. There is satisfactory capacity to improve further, as pupils' progress is currently satisfactory and most of the self-evaluation is done by senior leaders.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and children make good progress in all six areas of learning, especially in relation to their communication skills. When children enter the Nursery their skills are below those expected. As a result of good teaching and effective support, most children make good progress and most achieve the early learning goals set for them by the time they enter Year 1. From their earliest days in school they are encouraged to develop independence in their learning and in coping with their personal needs. They enjoy coming to school and settle quickly into routines. They are well supported by the good induction procedures into the Nursery and smooth transition through to Reception. Children are safe and secure. They are able to share and take turns, and they make good quality relationships with adults and with other children. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well, based on the rigorous tracking of children's progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' attainment and progress in reading and mathematics.
- Clarify the key areas for improvement in reading and mathematics, so that teachers and leaders know exactly what needs to be done to raise pupils' achievement.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 to 6 so that it becomes consistently good.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 1 to 6. They make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 to reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. In Years 3 to 6 while achievement is satisfactory there is variation in the progress pupils make in different subjects. For example, pupils achieve well in science to reach standards that are slightly above the national average. The difference between the good progress made in science and writing and the satisfactory progress made in reading and mathematics is a striking feature of current performance. This is largely because staff, including the subject leaders, have been less successful in identifying the key improvements needed in reading and mathematics to ensure good progress. Consequently, pupils are not always challenged enough to attain what they should in these subjects and this contributes to the slower progress they make. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and enabled to make similar progress to the others in their year groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils mature into well rounded and thoughtful young people with clear values about honesty, hard work and fair play. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. For instance, in a discussion about human rights, pupils expressed strong and considered views regarding the freedom to wear religious clothing. Pupils form good relationships with others and work harmoniously in lessons, drawing on each others' knowledge and understanding well, for example, when problem solving. Their awareness of the diversity of cultures in society is strong. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good and they enjoy the wide range of activities on offer. Behaviour is good. While there are just a few incidents of bullying, mostly in the form of name-calling, pupils know that these incidents are regarded as unacceptable by adults and are decisively addressed. Pupils make a strong contribution to the community. They are keen to take up the good range of responsibilities on offer and enjoy an influential role in school improvement. For instance, the school has taken on board many of their ideas about developing play-areas and the school grounds. Their preparation for future economic well-being is satisfactory, based on gaining reasonable skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Attendance is satisfactory and the school does all it can to reduce unexplained absence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Where teaching is good, pupils show high levels of concentration and enjoyment. Other good features of teaching include perceptive questioning and time given to pupils to reflect on their learning, which draws out their knowledge and understanding. In some lessons, however, learning objectives are not specific enough to ensure that pupils know precisely what they need to include in their work to take their learning forward. Additionally, lesson plans do not always include specific activities to enable pupils of differing abilities to be challenged sufficiently well. Teachers generally manage pupils' behaviour well in lessons, so little time is lost between activities. They use interactive whiteboards effectively to help pupils' understanding. Teaching assistants are well briefed and they support pupils effectively, especially so in group-work. There are examples of good quality marking that ensure pupils have a clear indication of how to improve their work. However, this is not yet consistent practice.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has some good features. It is enriched effectively by visits and visitors, including poets and a range of musicians. It includes a good range of extra-curricular activities, which are well supported by pupils and there are residential visits for pupils in Years 5 and 6. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in its provision for ICT. Interactive whiteboards are used regularly and effectively in classrooms to provide a visual stimulus for the pupils. The well taught PSHCE programme is reflected well in pupils' good personal development. However, the curriculum in reading and mathematics is not meeting pupils' needs fully.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Arrangements to ensure child protection and health and safety are in place and regularly reviewed. Pastoral support and guidance is good. It is based on positive relationships between adults and pupils that foster an atmosphere of trust and security. There is well focused and effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for vulnerable pupils and for those displaying challenging behaviour. Outside agencies make a good contribution, for instance, specialist teachers from the local authority regularly attend the school to support pupils' specific needs. The school has introduced successful strategies to improve behaviour. Pupils are well motivated by a system of rewards which celebrate their good personal development and efforts to improve their work. However, because the quality of marking varies and target setting is so new the academic guidance provided for pupils is currently satisfactory rather than good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher and new deputy headteacher provide effective leadership and management. They have a broadly accurate view of the school's performance and show this in their self-evaluation and the relevant priorities in the school improvement plan. Appropriately challenging targets, based on outcomes for pupils, are an explicit feature in improvement plans. The renewed sense of direction provided for staff has already resulted in improved morale, motivation and teamwork. Pupils' behaviour has also improved considerably. The headteacher has adopted a calm, sensible approach to change and improvement, effectively encouraging and challenging staff to take part in this process. The deputy headteacher is the key player in ensuring that the outcomes of rigorous, regular checks on the school's performance are fully understood by staff and have a positive impact in lessons. Other senior leaders, some of whom are also newly in post, are beginning to make a positive contribution to improving pupils' achievement.

The contribution of the governing body is good. They have played an important part in resolving the previous budget deficit, in the recruitment of the new senior team and in many other appointments. Governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They strike an effective balance between providing support and challenge for senior leaders.

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Annex A

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

(Inspection of Thornton Primary School, Bradford, BD13 3NN)

I'm sure you remember that three inspectors visited your school recently to find out how well you are learning. I know I speak for us all when I say a big 'thank you' for the kind and friendly welcome you gave us. We enjoyed our visit and want to share with you what we found out. We found that your school is giving you a satisfactory education; that means there are good things but also some important things that could be better.

It was good to see that most of you are friendly, kind and polite towards each other and the teachers and other adults who work with you. We liked the caring atmosphere and the way all adults who work in school take good care of you so that you feel safe and happy. Most of you attend school regularly and arrive on time which helps you build on what you learn each day. You know about the importance of having a healthy lifestyle and taking regular exercise. You appreciate the work of the school council and the responsibilities taken up by older pupils. Also visits, visitors and special events make your time at school more enjoyable. You get off to a good start in Nursery and Reception. In Key Stage 2 you make good progress in science and in your writing.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to find out exactly the things you find difficult in reading and mathematics so you can have help to do better in these subjects. In order to improve your learning, we have also asked your teachers to explain more clearly what you need to learn in each lesson and to set you work that you all have to think hard about. In addition, we have asked if they can make some of your lessons more interesting and challenging to enable some of you to make even more progress. We are sure that you will help them by telling them what makes lessons interesting and what helps you to learn.