

# Glastonbury Thorn School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 110400             |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Milton Keynes      |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 288657             |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 21 March 2007      |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Charalambos Loizou |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Infant   |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Foundation   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 4–7  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 214  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mr M Dobell  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mrs F Webb   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 12 November 2002   |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Pigott Drive<br>Shenley Church End<br>Milton Keynes<br>MK5 6AB |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01908 504648   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01908 504648   |

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|--------------------------|---------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a large school situated in a generally advantaged area of private housing. Nearly half of the pupils join the school from outside the immediate area. The vast majority are of White British heritage and others come from a wide variety of backgrounds. A small but increasing number of pupils are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils leaving or joining the school at different times is quite high. This was a first school at the time of its last inspection and included Year 3 pupils. The age of transfer changed in September 2005 and the school became an infant school that admits pupils from the Reception year up to Year 2.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school, which as its mission statement says is, 'Every day getting better in every way'. The pupils achieve exceptionally well and reach well above average standards. The teaching is excellent across the school. Outstanding leadership has guided improvements to the school extremely well since its last inspection. The leadership team and governors have accurately assessed all aspects of the school. There is a high level of satisfaction from parents. 'We feel that Glastonbury Thorn has given our child the best possible start to school life', is one of many tributes. Parents recognise that the school provides excellent opportunities for their children. 'Such a fantastic school with a really stimulating environment', says another.

Children in the Foundation Stage make excellent progress because of the high quality of provision there. The teaching continues to be excellent in Years 1 and 2 and is never less than good. Teachers plan work that is well matched to pupils' needs and abilities, including those who join at different times. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above average by the end of Year 2. However, some boys of average ability do less well than girls in reading and writing. The staff are not checking the progress of these boys often enough to ensure that they all reach their targets. Recent changes to the teaching of mathematics have ensured that all pupils make excellent progress in that subject and many are on course to reach high standards.

Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development helps them to mature into extremely well behaved and confident young people. They reflect very well on moral and spiritual themes in assemblies and lessons. School councillors are confident that the staff will act on their ideas. One pupil explained, 'We have special worry boxes in our class so we can write about anything so that we are always happy in school'. Pupils value the work they do in the local and wider community through charitable fund raising, world book days and community festivals, or when singing Christmas songs in the local shopping centre.

The curriculum across the school is excellent. The creative arts, information and communication technology (ICT) and a rich variety of indoor and outdoor experiences, inspire and motivate the pupils. One commented, 'There's a lot to do and I like writing on the All About Me board', an example of the school's commitment to improving pupils' all round personal development. The high standard of art displayed demonstrates how well pupils' achievements are valued. Special topics, musical ensembles, themed weeks, visits and visitors stimulate the pupils' interests and talents. Art, music and traditional stories from around the world help pupils to learn about other cultures and customs. The innovative use of ICT to support teaching and learning prepares pupils extremely well for the next stage of their education.

Pupils receive excellent guidance and support. Teachers and highly skilled support staff are vigilant and provide excellent care to ensure that pupils are safe from harm or harassment. Healthy living is promoted very well through 'golden time' sports and activities, and parents help by ensuring that lunch boxes contain healthy food.

The school's track record in raising standards demonstrates its excellent capacity to keep on improving. Governors and all staff are highly skilled and a real asset to the school. Parents feel very involved because the school regularly seeks their views.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Keep a closer check on the progress of average ability boys in reading and writing to ensure that they all reach their targets by the end of Year 2.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

Standards are well above average. Throughout their time in school the pupils achieve extremely well. The majority of children in the Reception year start school with levels of knowledge and skills that are below those of most four-year-olds. They make excellent progress towards the learning goals expected for their age so that standards are above those expected by the start of Year 1. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above average by the end of Year 2. Boys and girls do equally well in mathematics and those in Year 1 are on course to reach high standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those in the early stages of learning English do extremely well and make rapid progress. The school sets challenging targets for all pupils but the performance of some boys of average ability in reading and writing is not as it should be.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

The pupils' personal development is outstanding. Good attendance rates reflect their enjoyment of school. Pupils are extremely well prepared for the future by receiving a very good grounding in basic skills including ICT. They develop strong friendships and understand how to help others. Pupils in the school council show initiative and maturity when representing the views of others. They actively help to develop the school, confident that the staff will consider their ideas. Pupils are very aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and enthusiastically take part in sporting and physical activities. Pupils often reflect, 'in what ways am I smart?' which are one of many ways the school successfully develops their self-confidence, talent and skills. There is a strong emphasis on tolerance, safety and an awareness of others. This is reflected in pupils' excellent behaviour and their appreciation of the variety of cultures and backgrounds represented across the school.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

Outstanding teaching across the school enables pupils to make rapid progress. Teachers have high expectations and are meticulous in their planning. They use assessment information very well to plan work that builds on what pupils already know and understand. Lessons have clear success criteria and targets which are shared with the pupils. Excellent use was made of a traditional story in the Reception year to help the children predict key words. Highly skilled and focused teaching of letter sounds helped other Reception children to recognise and learn new words. In Year 1, pupils are grouped by ability in mathematics so the teaching is highly focused. This enables higher attaining pupils to quickly solve problems associated with clock times. Clear writing targets are provided for pupils in Year 2, which helps them to organise their story plans and edit their writing by making sentences more complex and interesting.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum, including that in the Foundation Stage, is excellent. It successfully promotes the pupils' academic and personal development. Pupils are provided with a stimulating programme of creative arts, music and sport, that makes learning fun and exciting. Exciting outdoor areas and the special memorial garden are used for science and geography studies. Pupils are encouraged to explore the world around and are often invited to describe what they know, think and wonder before each topic. They use the creative arts, ICT and science to explore in innovative ways, 'Its great isn't it!' says one, 'Look at my picture', pointing to a magnificent arrangement of paper sculptures depicting the work of Picasso. Especially themed weeks, topics and exhibitions of pupils' work, including 'World Book Week' and the crafting of African beads and jewellery, provide excellent opportunities to learn about different cultures, customs and lifestyles. Pupils talk excitedly about the multitude of high quality displays, exhibitions and writing, some excitedly pointing out the display of writing when they pretended to be Florence Nightingale writing letters to her mother.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Outstanding care and welfare are provided for every pupil. There are consistent systems to encourage excellent behaviour. Pupils are very safe and secure because staff are vigilant and keep good records of attendance, accidents and medical needs. Child protection arrangements conform fully with legal requirements. Excellent health and safety routines ensure that pupils are safe and secure in a clean and carefully maintained environment. Academic support and monitoring are very good, although teachers are not checking the progress of average attaining boys often enough to ensure they all reach their reading and writing targets. Pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work. Teachers use a traffic light system to encourage pupils to respond by marking red, orange or green as a measure of how well they have understood what they are learning. This works very well.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors provide excellent leadership and are guiding improvements to the school extremely well. Parents recognise these qualities and think highly of the school, one typical comment summing up the views of many, 'I cannot speak highly enough of the school. Glastonbury is a credit to the headteacher and her staff.' The leadership team has a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has guided excellent improvements since the school's last inspection. Standards are improving rapidly and, despite the large turnover of staff since the last inspection, highly effective teaching has been maintained. The leadership team is quick to identify areas for improvement. It sets out its priorities based on thorough and systematic monitoring and in seeking the views of parents, pupils and the local community. Parents have access to, and are very pleased with the wide range of 'pocket guides' designed by the school that inform them about all aspects of what the school provides for their children. Governors ensure that the staff are focused on key priorities through accurate self-evaluation and systematic analyses of the school's performance.

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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 | <b>School Overall</b> |
|---|-----------------------|

### 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> | 1   |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | 1   |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage  | 1   |
| 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

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

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 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

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 1 |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 1 |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 1 |

<sup>1</sup> 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**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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  | 1   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 1   |
| 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 very much for welcoming me to your school. I enjoyed my day very much because you were all very friendly and proud of your school.

I can see why you are so proud. Yours is an excellent school and your parents agree.

There are so many good things about your school that it is hard for me to pick out the very best. However, these are what I was pleased with most:

- you are very well behaved and try very hard in lessons
- your teachers are brilliant and are helping you reach very good standards
- you enjoy school and I can see why; I really liked your stories, beautiful pictures and models; the displays are all around you and they are really fantastic, well done!
- your parents are very pleased with you and your teachers; the 'pocket guides' are very helpful to parents and explain what the school does for you all
- the staff take excellent care of you and make sure you are all safe and happy
- your headteacher, staff and governors manage the school very well and work hard to keep looking for ways to make the school even better.

I have asked your teachers to:

- keep a close check how you are doing in reading and writing so you can all do even better.

I particularly like the way you and your parents have chances to suggest ways to improve your school. Keep this up as it is very much welcomed by the staff and governors.

Well done, and I wish you all the very best.

Yours faithfully

Charalambos LoizouLead Inspector