



Thornhill Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112165
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289188
Inspection dates 12–13 December 2006
Reporting inspector Gianna Ulyatt

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Ehen Road
School category	Community		Thornhill, Egremont
Age range of pupils	4–11		Cumbria, CA22 2SJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01946 820402
Number on roll (school)	73	Fax number	01946 823383
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Gillian Bounds
		Headteacher	Mr John MacKay
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 12–13 December 2006	Inspection number 289188
--------------------------	--	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school situated on the Thornhill Estate and serves the immediate community, which is an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage. Nearly all pupils are White British. Most children attend pre-school provision within the school premises. Almost half the pupils are identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities. The children are taught in three mixed-aged classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides pupils with a satisfactory education. A strength of the school is the high level of care and dedication shown for pupils' pastoral needs. The school has a strong desire to do its best by the pupils and parents overwhelmingly appreciate its work.

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. They start the school with skills that are below those expected for children this age. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage, especially in reading and mathematics and are just below expectations by the end of the Reception year. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and reach standards that are average by the age of seven. Progress in junior classes is satisfactory and by the age of 11, standards are broadly average. School and national test data show that although achievement is satisfactory, writing is weaker than other subjects with no pupil reaching the higher level at the age of seven and very few at 11.

Parents are pleased that their children like school. The reason for this is that pupils in this school are surrounded by adults who care about their physical and emotional needs and value them as individuals. As a result, pupils get on well together. The school displays pupils' work attractively around the school to remind pupils that their work is truly valued. Improvement in attendance to above average is testimony to the way the school encourages pupils and celebrates their successes through treats and awards. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe. Their knowledge of healthy eating and the importance of exercise is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers know pupils well and they encourage them to develop their personal skills. As a result, relationships in lessons are good and pupils show consideration towards everyone by collaborating with classmates and listening patiently to their views. In lessons where good progress is made, pupils enjoy listening to the teacher alongside with practical activity and challenging written work. However, in lessons where the work is not sufficiently matched to pupils' needs, progress slackens off, because the activity set is sometimes too easy. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties are supported well by adults, but their individual learning plans do not have enough detail to support good day-to-day learning. The curriculum is satisfactory. The range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits broadens pupils' horizons and teaches them how to work in teams.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders and managers have a clear vision of the school's development and provide detailed guidance for parents so all can be involved in improving standards. Good use is made of computer technology to check the progress of individual pupils, but this valuable information is not translated sharply enough into day-to-day practice across the school. The monitoring of teaching and learning is underway and useful information is now being gathered. The school has sound capacity to improve and provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing, particularly for the more able pupils.
- Make better use of assessment data to plan lessons so that work is matched accurately to all pupils' varying needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils join the school with skills that are below those typical for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. They make good progress overall in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 because adults know pupils well and work with them in small groups to support their learning. As a result, pupils by the age of seven reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. In the 2006 tests, most seven-year-olds, achieved well, except in writing where more able pupils did not do as well as they should.

Pupils in junior classes make satisfactory progress and reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. In 2006, the results for 11-year-old pupils were lower than in previous years, particularly in English. This group of pupils had an above average number of pupils with learning difficulties. These pupils made satisfactory progress and achieved satisfactorily given their different starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal development. Pupils enjoy coming to school, punctuality has improved and their attendance is above average. They behave well and work hard. They feel safe in school. Pupils talk about eating healthy food and keeping fit, but they are not too clear about the reasons why they should do so. Pupils collaborate well and help each other in lessons. They show a good understanding about the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. This, combined with their satisfactory basic skills, prepares them soundly for their future economic well-being.

Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and are keen to take responsibility. The school has just started a school council and pupils are enthusiastic about having the opportunity to make their school better. They take their responsibilities for looking after younger children very seriously and, as play leaders, enjoy teaching them games. They have a good sense of social responsibility; for example, they plan money-raising events for charity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and there are elements of good practice. In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, where adults support pupils in small groups, progress is good. Teaching in the junior classes is satisfactory, but at times the pace of learning is too slow because pupils are not clear about what they are learning and how much work is expected of them by the end of the lesson.

Throughout the school, a particularly good feature in lessons is the relaxed and pleasant relationships that exist between the teachers and pupils. As a result, pupils try hard, settle to their tasks and do their best. Lessons are planned to take account of different age groups, but there is not enough emphasis given to each pupils' different stage of learning within this. This means the work, particularly in Key Stage 2 is too easy for some and too hard for others. In mathematics, teachers are beginning to use assessment information to focus teaching more closely on what pupils are ready to learn next. Consequently, test results in 2006 were better in this subject than in English and science. The way teachers use the information they have about pupils is not consistently applied across subjects and classes. As a result pupils are not always given enough guidance about what they have to do to improve their work. This is one of the main reasons why achievement in English and science is too low.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is soundly planned and meets the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. There is a satisfactory focus on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and science that has led to improved standards in recent years. Pupils are successfully using information and communication technology to support other subjects. The school is now considering ways to further extend links between subjects. The personal, social and health education programme, which includes a visit to the Life Education Bus, teaches pupils how to stay safe and helps them to lead healthy lifestyles. The curriculum is particularly well enriched. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the residential visits because they learn to work as part of a team and to mix with boys and girls from other schools. Their horizons are extended by seeing city life in York, where they learn a great deal about geography and history. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about the visits to Ennerdale Scout Centre where they learn to be independent of their families and to self-cater. The recent visits by an artist have resulted in helping pupils produce good quality work. The after school clubs which include French and art and craft are enjoyed by pupils. Music is taught by specialists and pupils show great confidence playing tunes on the keyboard and performing for the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. A strength of the school is the very good personal support pupils receive from their teachers and teaching assistants. All show good levels of concern for individuals and pupils feel safe and secure. Parents are very aware of the strong emphasis and confirm that, '...all teachers are very caring'. Procedures for safeguarding children are firmly in place and clearly understood by all staff.

The systems for tracking of pupils' progress have improved since the last inspection. However, this useful information is not used consistently across the school. Therefore, pupils are not always clear about their targets and what they have to do to improve their work to reach them. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well in classes. However, the individual plans for those with moderate learning difficulties do not have enough detail to ensure their steady progress over time

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The headteacher's long-standing commitment to pupils' pastoral care is greatly appreciated by parents who write, 'The headteacher is very caring and very fair to the children and parents'. This is very evident in the way the school welcomes all pupils. Governors know the school well and use their expertise to support its work in many different ways. Since the last report there have been some improvements in the way the school monitors test results and evaluates teaching and learning. The data are extensive but the information is not being used consistently enough in teaching and learning across classes and subjects. The school has evaluated its strengths and areas for improvement. These are translated into the school improvement plan. However, the document is too bulky and is not sufficiently rigorous about the most relevant improvements. The school makes satisfactory use of its resources and gives satisfactory value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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

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 behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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?	2

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?	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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	3
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

Thornhill Primary School

Ehen Road

Thornhill

Egremont

Cumbria

CA22 2SJ

12 December 2006

Dear Pupils

I really enjoyed my visit to your school. I very much enjoyed looking at your work that is displayed so well around the school. I particularly enjoyed talking to so many pleasant and polite boys and girls during lunchtime. The Christmas dinner was superb! It is good to see you enjoying yourselves at playtime. You are well looked after and are learning lots of new games.

In your school, everyone cares about you. I know this is true because adults talk about you with real fondness and want the very best for you. I noticed that you listen well in lessons, to the teacher and to each other. Most of you concentrate and try to make your work even better. I know the teachers give you tests to do from time to time and keep a good track of your results. I have asked the school to examine these results more closely and set learning targets for you so you are very clear about what you have to do to improve your work. You in turn, including those of you who find work tricky, must work as hard as possible to reach your targets.

I know the teachers make you work very hard especially in mathematics and most of you are doing well here. Many of you told me that you like English too, so I have asked the school to give you as much help as possible to improve your writing. You in turn must try even harder especially with your spellings and punctuation so your results become better. I know you can do it!

I hope you continue to enjoy your time at Thornhill!

Yours sincerely

Gianna Ulyatt

Lead inspector