

# Thornsett Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112600
<b>Local Authority</b>	DERBYSHIRE
<b>Inspection number</b>	289337
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 July 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Geof Timms

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	104
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Miss Debbie Watton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Alice Littlehailes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 January 2002
<b>School address</b>	Aspenshaw Road Birch Vale High Peak Derbyshire SK22 1AT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01663 744391
<b>Fax number</b>	01663 744391

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school which serves the village of Thornsett, New Mills and the surrounding area. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and none is learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average overall but high in some year groups. Very few pupils currently have statements of special educational need entitling them to extra support. The cohorts are small and this means comparisons in test results from year to year are unreliable. Attainment on entry to the school varies widely between and within year groups, but overall is below that expected. The school has a Healthy Schools Award and a Gold Artsmark.

## 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 a satisfactory education and a good level of personal development, care and support. It has a caring and inclusive ethos, which is appreciated by parents and pupils. Children are treated as individuals, and they and their families are well known to all staff. Staff work hard to overcome the difficulties presented by the school buildings, which are too small. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Although many enter the school with attainment below that expected, they make good progress in the Reception Year. Progress through the rest of the school varies from year to year and is satisfactory overall. Pupils attain good standards in reading and science, average standards in mathematics and below average standards in writing by the end of Year 6. Boys achieve less well than girls. Boys' writing is particularly weak. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities often make good progress as a result of the extra support they receive. The school's focus on pupils' creative development has resulted in some high quality art and design work, and design and technology projects.

Pupils' personal development is good and the school cares for them well. They behave well in the majority of lessons. However, parents, pupils and staff are aware that the behaviour of a small minority of pupils is not good enough, especially outside of the classroom. The management of these pupils, although largely effective in lessons, is not always as well managed at other times. The small size of the play areas, and the rooms and corridors in the school, has a negative impact on behaviour. Even so, most pupils enjoy school and take a full part in the activities provided. The curriculum is good. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to stay healthy and safe, through healthy eating, exercise and drugs awareness. They contribute well to the school, the local and the wider community. This is shown in the work for the village memorial garden, for example. They also develop a good understanding of wider economic issues through projects such as the planning, financing and online ordering of a healthy picnic.

The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. The best lessons are active, have a good pace and are sufficiently challenging to keep the interest and involvement of all pupils. Where the teaching is less effective the purpose of the activities lacks clarity and pupils are unsure of what they are supposed to learn. Teachers do not use available assessment information sufficiently when planning and delivering lessons, or setting targets for individual pupils. Overall leadership and management are good. This is evident in the improvements made since the last inspection, the rising standards in mathematics and improvements to pupils' speaking and listening skills. The school is well led by the headteacher and governors, who have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Taken together, these show that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing throughout the school, especially that of the boys.
- Ensure teachers make effective use of assessment data and ensure assessment is linked to planning more consistently.
- Improve the behaviour of pupils by reviewing arrangements at break and lunchtime.

A small proportion of 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**

The children make good progress in the Reception class from their often low levels of attainment on entry. Although this varies from year to year, a number of the current children had communication, language and calculation skills below those expected when they started. Progress throughout the rest of the school is more inconsistent, ranging from good to inadequate. However, the overall progress made by pupils is satisfactory and they attain levels by the end of Year 6 that are broadly average in reading and mathematics, but below average in writing. Current standards in science are above average. Boys achieve less well than girls, especially in writing, and the school is aware of a need to address the attitudes of some boys to help them make better progress. Some new ideas have been tried and work well in Year 6, although they are yet to be reflected in test results. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress towards the targets set for them, often due to the good extra support provided for them. Higher attaining pupils also achieve well. Standards in art and design, and in design and technology are good, as are standards in information and communication technology (ICT) which have improved since the last inspection.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Personal development and well-being are good because the school gives this aspect a high profile. Pupils enjoy being at school and their relationships with adults are usually very strong. The behaviour in lessons and when pupils are directly involved in activities is at least satisfactory and often good. However, the behaviour of a small minority of children has been a significant concern for some parents, staff and other pupils and is not always appropriate or effectively managed. The buildings make it more difficult for those pupils with behaviour or relationship problems to cope as they do not have enough space. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school ensures good opportunities for reflection and clear social and moral expectations are successfully shared with pupils. Cultural development is very effective with many opportunities for pupils to learn about their own and different cultures and to take part in a range of cultural activities. Attendance is broadly average.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and this is reflected in the satisfactory progress most pupils make. There is good teaching evident in some lessons. The improvements made to the teaching of mathematics have resulted in better standards by the end of Year 6, although progress in other years is uneven. Teachers make good use of the teaching assistants, and their work is often very effective in the support of those with learning difficulties or disabilities. Teachers also ensure that the more able pupils are also challenged sufficiently. In most lessons teachers' questioning is effective in keeping pupils busy with their work and consolidating their learning. Pupils usually behave well in lessons and this supports their learning. In the Reception Year, pupils are developing good learning skills through listening, working together and asking questions. Teachers' use of ICT has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory overall, although it is good in those classes where teachers have more confidence and knowledge.

Pupils' progress is tracked on an individual basis and this quickly highlights those who may be underachieving, although this information is yet to be used fully in planning lessons. The marking of pupils' work varies in quality and does not always help pupils understand what they have done well and how they can improve.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and supports the sound progress made by pupils. The school enriches and enlivens the basic curriculum by providing a wide range of creative and other activities. For example, the recent work by Year 4 and 5 pupils on creating an amphitheatre, with the help of a professional architect, and after a range of visits to buildings of interest, resulted in some high quality work. The school is continually looking to improve the curriculum. This is evident in the development of good cross-curricular links and more creative work, alongside the improvements made to how the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught. Given the size of the school and the very limited accommodation available, there is good provision of extra-curricular activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

This is a caring school with a family orientated ethos where the needs of individuals are central to the provision. First aid and health and safety arrangements are good. The school ensures pupils' safety by carrying out all necessary safeguarding checks on adults, and by trying to make the difficult accommodation as safe as possible. Staff work well to support pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and to ensure the school lives up to its inclusive ethos. Teachers support their individual knowledge of pupils with good day-to-day assessments, using appropriate methods in all subjects. This information is used by teachers to group pupils but is yet to be used to its fullest extent in planning activities or in setting consistent and clear targets for each pupil.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good overall and, although this is not yet reflected fully in high standards, it is clear in the improvements recently made and the capacity for further improvement. The headteacher provides good, dynamic and creative leadership. The deputy headteacher and other staff work very well as a team. They are very supportive of new initiatives and demonstrate a very positive willingness to adopt new ideas and turn to outside expertise for advice where appropriate. Subject leadership has improved and has already had a positive impact on standards in speaking and listening, ICT and mathematics. The governors are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and they offer good levels of support and challenge. Their focus for many years has rightly been on the need for a new building, but they have not let that detract from their strategic role in overseeing provision for the current pupils. The school's self evaluation is accurate and honest, and there is a clear focus on continuous improvement.



## 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>
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### 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>	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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	2

### The quality of provision

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

<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>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	2
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

6 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Thornsett Primary School, High Peak, Derbyshire. SK22 1AT

Thank you for the way you made me feel welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you and finding out what you like about the school. You told me how much you enjoy being there. Many of you are keen to take part in activities and the school is especially good at finding extra events that you can take part in, like the Aladdin film. You told me how much you enjoy the trips and visits. I hope the choir enjoyed taking part in the opera in Buxton and that the House picnics are a success. One thing I thought was very good was the way some of the older pupils helped the younger ones when you were doing the Aladdin work.

Your teachers work hard to help you learn and you told me how difficult that is in the old buildings. Most of you help the teachers by being well behaved but some of you do need to improve the way you get on together especially at break and lunchtimes. The school gives you lots of opportunities to be responsible and do a range of jobs. The adults care for you well. You told me that there are adults in school whom you trust and with whom you can talk and share any worries.

Most of you work hard and reach satisfactory standards. Some of you, especially among the boys, need to get better at writing and I have asked the school to seek other ways of helping you to do this. I have also asked teachers to use what they know about what you have learned when planning work and to set you targets that will help you to improve your work. They will also make the marking of your work more useful to you so it will help you understand how you can improve.

Once again, thank you for your help. I hope you carry on enjoying being at the school and working hard!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms Lead Inspector