

Thurnham Glasson Christ Church, Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119543
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	291455
Inspection date	3 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Penny Parrish

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Capt Steve Gaunt
Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2002
School address	Marsh Lane Glasson Dock Lancaster Lancashire LA2 0AR
Telephone number	01524 751425
Fax number	01524 751425

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This very small Church of England school serves the parish of Thurnham, an area of small settlements and farms south-west of Lancaster. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes. Some travel from Lancaster to attend. Socio-economic backgrounds are about average, although an above average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. There are no pupils with a minority ethnic cultural background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is average. The attainment of children admitted to Reception is typical of four-year-olds nationally, although a significant proportion joins the school at a later stage. The headteacher was appointed permanently a month before the inspection after serving as acting headteacher from September 2006.

An inspection of the religious character of the school was carried out simultaneously and a report is available separately.

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 for its pupils. The inspection confirmed the school's evaluation in many respects. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Although comparison with national test data is not easy when cohort numbers are so small, the school's data and pupils' work confirm that standards are average by Year 2 and Year 6 in English, mathematics and science, and progress is satisfactory for most pupils. In English, writing is a little below average because very few reach the higher levels, and this has been the case for some years. In the Foundation Stage, children make satisfactory progress and reach the learning goals set nationally for the age group. Good care, support and guidance helps pupils with LDD make good progress.

The school's friendly and caring ethos ensures good personal development and well-being. Pupils grow in confidence, feel safe and secure at school, and know that each one of them is valued. Parents are happy with the provision made for their children, especially for their personal development and to meet any special educational needs. Parents and pupils speak highly of the way those who are new to the school are included quickly and helped to feel at home. Behaviour is good. Pupils are well aware of the need for a healthy lifestyle and have a good sense of responsibility, enjoying their contribution to the school and the local community. Curriculum provision is satisfactory. Enrichment activities, such as musical tuition and sporting events and 'healthy eating' days, are good and promote pupils' personal development well.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, as they were at the time of the last inspection. The new headteacher has successfully audited the school's strengths and areas for development and shown skill in inspiring teamwork. New systems of assessments track pupils' progress accurately; they have the potential to identify underachievement but need more time to affect the quality of teaching and learning. Recently established systems of individual targets for literacy, numeracy and personal development, set with pupils and shared with parents, are beginning to bear fruit although some of the targets are not yet precise enough to focus teaching and learning clearly on what needs to improve. Pupils' work is sometimes marked well, especially in Key Stage 2. When this is the case it shows pupils how well they have done and what needs to be better, but this is not consistent through the school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is at an exciting stage of renewal and recent developments demonstrate the school's good capacity for further improvement. The governing body provides a strong influence over the ethos of the school and a firm commitment to supporting improved accommodation and provision. More time is needed for the enthusiastic and well focused plans of the headteacher to be put into place and to show their impact on provision and outcomes for pupils. Subject management by staff other than the headteacher is not good enough. Provision in the key subjects of English and of information and communication technology, for example, has shown little improvement since the last inspection and standards have stalled as a result. Standards in information technology have recently improved because the teaching of the subject is better; however, pupils' computer skills are not yet applied and extended sufficiently across the curriculum.

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.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly in the case of the more able pupils.
- Increase the application of information and communication technology across the subjects of the curriculum.
- Develop the role of the subject leaders in monitoring teaching, the curriculum and standards achieved.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average by the end of the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls. In English, although standards are broadly average, there are weaknesses in writing that have been slow to improve since the last inspection. The more able pupils especially could achieve more, and this applies to those who started out in the school as well as those who have joined more recently. Some underachievement has been tackled well over the past two terms. Regular checks show that pupils' spelling is improving throughout the school. Pupils with LDD are helped by the good relationships in the school and the good level of staffing provided; consequently, they make good progress towards the targets set for them. Because of specialist teaching, standards in information and communications technology have risen although pupils have insufficient opportunity to experience its use across the curriculum.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils respond with enthusiasm to the positive ethos of the school. The school's Christian ethos ensures that spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy school, feel very safe and say they like the way the whole school can do everything together. The strong commitment of the headteacher and the good relationships within the school ensure that all pupils, from the youngest to the oldest, have a voice in this small, family-like community. School council members and playground 'buddies' fulfil their roles well and do not hesitate to organise changes in equipment made available, for example, or football timetables to make sure playtimes run smoothly. Pupils new to the school and their parents, report on the warm welcome on arrival. All pupils have a good understanding of healthy living. They eat healthily at lunchtime, take plenty of exercise and enjoy the sporting activities made available. Attendance matches the national average. Pupils' average basic skills and good personal and social skills prepare them soundly for the next stage in their education and for future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Good relationships instil confidence in the pupils and encourage them to focus well on their work. Lessons are planned carefully and there is good use of assessments to meet pupils' learning needs. Improved links between assessment and teaching have resolved some areas of underachievement, such as spelling. The level of work is satisfactorily matched to most of the pupils' ability. Good teaching has led to particular successes with poetry, for example, but these teaching skills are not brought so well into developing

pupils' narrative or fictional writing. Marking is effective in the class for older pupils, identifying clearly successes and pointers for improvement. However, in both classes opportunities are missed to show pupils examples of good writing. There is more to be done to ensure that teaching is consistently good through the school. Pupils' new termly targets are helpful in guiding learning but are sometimes too vague, particularly in the case of the more able pupils. Individual programmes set for pupils with learning difficulties are clearer and, together with the small class sizes and good number of support assistants, these pupils learn well and make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is suitably broad and balanced and organised to avoid repetition in the mixed-age classes. In the Foundation Stage, the curriculum is satisfactory though the low number of children available to take part limits some activities. The small number of staff works hard to provide a good range of extra activities, such as French for the older pupils, residential visits for pupils in Years 5 and 6, and sporting and musical activities after school. Many pupils identify these as their favourite activities, including the occasional special days organised. Their enjoyment was evident, for example, when lunchtime included parents and other members of the community. This was followed by a 'healthy eating' afternoon, when the whole school came together to share activities that promoted healthy eating. Despite recent gaps in provision for computer technology, pupils' skills are now adequate. Computer skills are not integrated well enough, however, across the whole curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The safeguarding of pupils meets national guidelines and good systems are in place to ensure the health and safety of pupils. Staff know all pupils and their families very well and do not hesitate to take action where necessary to ensure pupils' happiness and well-being. Partnerships with parents, the community and other professionals are good, ensuring at least sound progress for pupils, a balanced curriculum and that any pupils with LDD are monitored and supported well. New systems for tracking pupils' progress are effective in helping staff to identify any underachievement, but more time is needed for these to impact fully on the quality of teaching and learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a strong sense of the school moving forward because the new headteacher's work has already had a positive effect. She has raised morale and gained the confidence and support of staff, governors and parents. A clear and updated review of the school's performance is helping to focus their efforts. She has started tackling shortcomings, such as the absence of a clear system to keep track of pupils' progress. She has a programme for checking the quality of teaching and the planning of work. The role of subject leaders is generally underdeveloped and these staff have been insufficiently involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance.

Governance is good. The commitment of the governing body is well established and provides a strong driving force in maintaining and improving the quality of provision in the school. It has effective ways of finding out how well the school is doing and relevant questions are raised. Governors have been a driving force in extending and renovating the school buildings since the last inspection. They are keen to enable further improvements and provide the headteacher with a good sounding board for future plans. The school provides satisfactory value for money. The strong partnership between the headteacher, the governing body and good relationships between all staff linked to recent improvements show the school provides has a good capacity for further improvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
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	2

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	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	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.

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 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	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

4 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Thurnham Glasson Christ Church, Church of England Primary School, Lancaster, LA2 0AR

Thank you for making me so welcome on my recent visit to your school, for answering all my questions and for telling me so much about why you like coming to school. The school provides a satisfactory education overall and I noticed these good things.

- How well behaved you are in lessons and at lunchtime and playtimes.
- How happy you all seem to be and how confident you are that you can get any help you may need.
- The interesting activities staff organise for you outside lesson time.

I have asked the staff and governors to do some things to help you get a better education.

- Make sure you do better in writing.
- Improve the use of information and communications technology across the curriculum.
- Help the teachers who are subject leaders to make work in every subject as good as it can possibly be.

I am sure you will help with more ideas about how to improve your school. I wish every one of you well for the future and hope that you will always work hard and enjoy school as much as you do now.

Best wishes

Mrs Penny Parrish

Lead inspector