



Thorpe Acre Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119957
Local Authority Leicestershire
Inspection number 291583
Inspection dates 11–12 October 2006
Reporting inspector Frances Gillam

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Alan Moss Road
School category	Community		Loughborough
Age range of pupils	7–11		LE11 4SQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01509 214974
Number on roll (school)	188	Fax number	01509 267326
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	John Hallett
		Headteacher	Melanie Aley
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized junior school. Most pupils come from a White British background. Just over 10% of pupils come from minority ethnic groups. A small number of these are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties is higher than in most schools. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is higher than average. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are taught together in three mixed age range classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a school that has come a long way in a relatively short time. It has established a positive climate for learning and provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. Parents say, 'Our children are well cared for and we are pleased with the improvements in the standard of behaviour'. How right they are! The care, guidance and support pupils receive, and their personal development and well-being are good. Many pupils commented, 'It is better now at school, other children are more caring and the school is a safe place to be.' Pupils' behaviour is good and this is one of the main reasons why pupils now say how much more they enjoy school. Pupils choose to take regular exercise, to eat fruit and vegetables and care for themselves and others. This is due to the good emphasis the school places on healthy lifestyles and on helping pupils to keep safe. Pupils appreciate the way their ideas are taken seriously and are especially proud of the difference the new play equipment has made to the quality of break times. The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of activities that are relevant to the pupils' ages and interest. The wide range of after school activities contributes well to pupils' levels of fitness and enjoyment of school.

Predominantly satisfactory teaching ensures that most pupils do as well as expected and this leads to average standards by Year 6. The pace of learning is often good for lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties. Well focused support for these pupils, and activities pitched at just the right level enable them to succeed and make good progress. Elsewhere, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, although there are variations, especially in Year 4 and for the more able pupils in writing and mathematics. For these pupils, the pace of learning is slower because the work they do is sometimes too easy. Not all teachers use assessment information well enough to provide activities that challenge the more able. Some older pupils have a good idea of how well they are doing and know their next steps in learning. This provides a good incentive for them to work hard and do their best but this level of guidance is not yet fully developed throughout the school.

The school is led and managed satisfactorily. The headteacher, governors and staff have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Self-evaluation procedures and the capacity to improve are satisfactory. Developments are now leading to changes for the better, most notably in pupils' behaviour and in the better progress of average attaining pupils. Senior managers acknowledge that some action has been slower to prove effective. This is because they do not always evaluate robustly enough the implementation and effectiveness of whole school initiatives. This has led to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in Year 4 and for the more able pupils in writing and mathematics.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of assessment information to challenge the more able in writing and mathematics and to ensure better progress for Year 4 pupils.
- Ensure that all pupils have clear guidance about what they need to do to improve and get better.

- Ensure that whole school initiatives are implemented fully and evaluated carefully to check for their effectiveness.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' attainment when they start in the school is broadly average and they make satisfactory progress by Year 6. Standards at the end of Year 6 have improved since the last inspection and are now average in English, mathematics and science. Test results at Level 4 improved in 2006 as a result of targeted work for the average attaining pupils, but they were lower at Level 5.

Throughout the school, most pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups, achieve satisfactorily. Strategies to improve the achievement of average attaining pupils have proved successful with activities suitably matched to their abilities. Good support and a clear focus on improvement targets ensure that lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties achieve well and make good progress. In Year 4, the achievement of pupils is not always good enough because the work in the mixed age classes is too often pitched at a level more suitable to the Year 3 pupils. In writing and mathematics, the more able pupils across the school do not make the same good progress as other groups because they are not always challenged to do their best.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' behaviour has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now good. Pupils say that school is enjoyable and lessons are interesting. Pupils contribute well to their school and the wider community and readily take on responsibility. Most act sensibly, with due care for their safety and that of others. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils develop confidence quickly and they respect and value the views of others. They know their worth and have the self-assurance to stand up for their beliefs. Opportunities to work together help them to develop their ideas successfully but they have more limited opportunities to develop independence in their work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers clearly explain to pupils what they are going to learn and this focuses their thinking and helps them to settle quickly to their work. Support for the lower attaining, and pupils with learning difficulties, is good. For these pupils, teachers are particularly careful to plan activities that build effectively on their previous learning. Teaching assistants play a successful part in supporting pupils with learning difficulties and this

helps them to make good progress. Teachers question pupils to encourage them to talk about their learning. In some classes, 'talking partners' enable pupils to share their ideas and clarify their thinking and this leads to some good learning. However, this approach is not consistent throughout the school and at times teachers struggle to involve pupils in discussions. This leads to teachers finding it difficult to gauge how well pupils are doing. Some teachers do not make enough use of assessment information to plan work that matches pupils' abilities. This is most noticeable for pupils in Year 4 and for the more able in writing and mathematics, where the work is sometimes too easy. Marking is regular, and in some older classes it is good. This ensures that pupils in these classes are clear about how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provides a broad range of experiences for pupils, including after school clubs. Activities are usually relevant to the ages and interests of the pupils. For the most part they build satisfactorily on pupils' previous learning and prepare them adequately for the future. A carefully planned curriculum for lower attaining pupils, and those with learning difficulties, ensures good progress but older pupils in the mixed Year 3 and 4 classes are not always challenged to do their best. This is because some activities do not take sufficient account of their age and ability. Work is underway to increase the opportunities for writing across the curriculum and to make best use of teaching time by linking work between subjects, but this is not yet fully developed.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The high level of care for pupils contributes well to their personal development and well-being. Child protection procedures are well established and staff are quick to respond to pupils' concerns. Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for. They are routinely reminded about the need to take care and staff promote healthy lifestyles and physical activity successfully. Staff value pupils' efforts and this develops pupils' confidence and establishes good working relationships. Guidance and support for pupils vary. For example, target setting is not yet fully developed throughout the school. In the older classes, pupils have clear targets to work towards, they have a good idea of how well they are doing and how they can do even better but this is not always the case for younger pupils

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Senior managers and governors have a clear understanding of the school's effectiveness. They evaluate the quality of lessons regularly and accurately and they track pupils' progress carefully. This ensures they identify relevant priorities for development that focus strongly on improving pupils' achievements. Action to make change for the better is proving successful, particularly in pupils' behaviour and in the progress average

attaining pupils now make. However, senior managers do not always evaluate if whole school initiatives are effective and used well by teachers. This leads to inconsistencies in pupils' experiences and often in their pace of learning. This is a reason why weaker aspects of teaching persist, especially in Year 4 and for the more able pupils throughout the school in writing and mathematics.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
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	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.

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

Thank you for making the team of inspectors so welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking with you and seeing all the different things you were doing.

Your school, the people in charge and your teachers do a satisfactory job and this is helping you to make satisfactory progress and reach average standards by the time you leave school.

Here are some of the most important things we found good about your school

- Some of you, especially those who need extra help with your work, do well because you have good support from your teachers and the teaching assistants.
- You are well cared for and teachers and other adults treat you fairly and make sure you are safe and free from harm.
- Your behaviour is good; many of you say playtimes are much happier now.
- You do a good job of helping to improve your school.
- You keep healthy and fit because you choose to eat plenty of fruit and get lots of exercise.
- You enjoy most subjects and you make good use of out-of-school clubs.

To improve the school still further we have asked the people in charge and your teachers to work together on three things

- To help pupils in Year 4 to do better in their work and make sure that activities for the more able pupils in writing and mathematics challenge them to do their best.
- To make sure that all of you have good information about how well you are doing and how you can improve your work and get better.
- To check that strategies to help you improve are really working well.

You can all help by working extra hard in lessons.

With best wishes for the future