



Thurston CE VC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124715
Local Authority SUFFOLK
Inspection number 293084
Inspection dates 16–17 January 2007
Reporting inspector Joy Richardson

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

Type of school	First	School address	School Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Thurston, Thurston
Age range of pupils	4–9		Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 3RY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01359 230444
Number on roll (school)	159	Fax number	01359232729
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Diane Richardson
		Headteacher	Mrs Rosemary Carter
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2003		

Age group 4–9	Inspection dates 16–17 January 2007	Inspection number 293084
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves the village of Thurston, although a third of pupils come from further afield. Children's skills on entry at the age of four are slightly above average for their age. Fewer pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities than the average nationally, although this varies between year groups. The pupils are largely of White British heritage, and none are learning English as an additional language. At the age of nine, most pupils transfer to the local middle school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school gives children a good education, a view shared by parents and the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness.

The school makes good provision for children in the Reception class. As a result, they achieve well and their learning often exceeds the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the year. This gives children a good start. They continue to achieve well throughout the school, reaching standards that are above the national average. Pupils' progress is particularly good in reading. It is rather slower in writing because they do not write enough in literacy lessons or in other subjects, albeit that handwriting and spelling are well taught but pupils are not required to apply these skills to a high standard in all their written work. The school is taking action to improve progress in writing and this is reflected in the pupils' enthusiasm for writing.

Teaching is good. The teaching of basic skills is thorough and systematic. Work is carefully planned for pupils in the mixed-age classes, and pupils are regrouped at times to focus on specific needs. Teachers manage classes well and there is a happy and purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Teachers explain well and give clear instructions, although they do not always challenge pupils enough by harnessing curiosity and pursuing questions in sufficient depth. Pupils are attentive, co-operative and keen to learn. In the best lessons, the pace is varied to keep pupils actively involved and to give speedy practice where reinforcement is needed.

Pupils enjoy school. They have a strong sense of belonging and they learn to co-operate and to consider others. The school council and the linked class councils are developing pupils' awareness of the contribution they can make within the school and beyond.

An after-school club is available on the school's premises although there are few other extra-curricular clubs. In consultation with parents, the school is planning ways of extending its provision. It is working to create more opportunities for pupils, for example in sports. Pupils like the 'activity days' when the whole school shares a focus. The school effectively teaches pupils about healthy living and care for the environment. Pupils take recycling seriously, carrying out daily classroom collections.

The headteacher leads the staff team well in taking stock of how the school is doing and what could be better. As a result, the school is well placed to continue to improve. Care, guidance and support are good. Good systems have been introduced to assess learning and ensure that pupils make the expected progress each year. This has yet to be developed into an overview of progress through the school as a whole. The school's leadership recognises that this overview is needed to ensure that high expectations are set to help staff and pupils, with the support of parents, in pursuing targets for learning. Governors are effective in supporting the school in meeting its aims. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for writing and ensure that pupils make full use of the skills they have learned, whenever they write.
- Extend the tracking of progress to foster high expectations and a clear understanding by staff, pupils and parents of how targets can be met.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well in Reception, making good progress from their starting point on entry. By the end of the year, most reach or exceed the 'early learning goals' for this age in all areas. They continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2, reaching standards that are above the national average at the end of this stage. Achievement is good in Years 3 and 4 and standards are above the national average by the time pupils leave. Pupils' progress in reading is a strong feature of the school, but progress in writing is slower overall. Pupils do not have enough opportunity for writing and they are not consistently challenged to write accurately and to check their work themselves. The school makes good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and they achieve well as a result.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The strong focus on personal development helps them to enjoy school, to get on well with each other and to contribute to the community. Pupils behave well and are eager to learn. This is reflected in their good attendance. Year 4 pupils exercise responsibility well, particularly through the influential school council. Its members carry out their duties diligently. They are proud to be involved in making decisions and leading discussions with younger pupils. The school is working to increase pupils' responsibility for their learning, for example, by encouraging them to assess how well they understand, but this is not developed consistently. Pupils' all-round spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils develop spiritual awareness, self-esteem and appreciation of different faiths and cultures. Pupils have a good understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles. Activities, such as running of the school's 'Healthy Tuck Shop', give insights that contribute to pupils' future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Teachers use their good knowledge of the pupils to plan lessons that match the needs of children in single and

mixed-age classes. The staff manage classes well to ensure that pupils stay focused on their learning. As a result, pupils enjoy their work and are keen to learn. Teachers do not always have high enough expectations with regard to the presentation and the quantity of work achieved in lessons. Pupils rise to a challenge when it is offered, and enjoy being physically and actively involved in lessons. Teachers are supported well by effective teaching assistants. They help pupils, especially those with learning difficulties, to be included fully and to achieve well. Teachers explain and question pupils well, encouraging them to participate. In some lessons, able pupils could be challenged further by being asked more complex questions or required to work things out for themselves. Teachers are establishing effective assessment procedures to check on pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 4, offering a well-planned programme covering all the required subjects. The school has been working to enhance the curriculum with activities such as the 'gym trail'. It has also introduced special 'activity days'. Pupils greatly enjoyed one such day recently about Bible stories, when each class represented a story in a collage that is now on display. The development of a computer suite and the introduction of interactive whiteboards have extended opportunities for pupils in information and communication technology. The curriculum has an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy, but the application of writing skills in other subjects is underdeveloped. There is currently limited provision for extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Teachers and support staff know the pupils very well and provide good care and support. The quality of care is valued highly by parents and by pupils, and it reflects the school's mission statement: 'Show that you care'. There are secure systems for ensuring pupils' safety. Pupils say that they feel safe and happy in school. Those with learning difficulties receive good support and links with appropriate external agencies are effective. Induction procedures for children entering the Reception class are good and help them to settle well. Strong links with the local middle school prepare pupils for a smooth transition at the end of Year 4. Assessment and the tracking of progress help teachers to guide pupils' learning effectively. Groups of pupils are given targets to aim for in their reading, writing and handwriting. However, these are not used consistently to map out, for pupils and parents, the progress required, or to show pupils how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides clear leadership and has a strong sense of purpose to improve and extend the work of the school. She successfully manages the school, with good support from the senior leadership team. She has established a strong team approach in which staff, governors and parents work together effectively. Governors support the school well and exercise effective oversight. The school knows itself well, though it has yet to establish a continuing cycle of self-evaluation. The headteacher monitors the quality of teaching and learning effectively. 'Peer support' groups of staff share practice and explore ways of improving provision. Open discussion and strong teamwork generate a shared commitment to improvement. The school's development planning focuses clearly on how to bring this about. New systems, such as the tracking of pupils' progress, are having a positive impact, though not yet fully developed. The school runs smoothly as a happy and orderly community.

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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?	2
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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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	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	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	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	2
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	2
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

18 January 2007

Dear Children

Thurston Primary School, School Lane, Thurston, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 3RY

We enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you for welcoming us and telling us about the things you do.

We were pleased to see you working together and looking after each other. It was interesting to hear how the school council has been ordering healthy snacks for the tuck shop and helping to run it. It was good to see all the recycling going on too. You are good at organising things and being responsible. We hope that you will have more good ideas and be able to put them into practice.

You told us that you learn a lot at school. We think you do too. The staff teach you well and we were impressed to see how you pay attention and try hard.

Mrs Carter and the teachers are good at thinking about how to help you learn as well as possible. We agree with them that you could do even better in writing. Some of you told us how much you enjoy writing. We think you need the chance to write more so that you can get really good at it. Remember too, whenever you write, to check that your spelling and handwriting are as good as can be.

The teachers will be looking to see if you could make progress any faster in your learning. You have some targets in your literacy books to help you. We want you to use these to help you think about how well you are doing and how you could do better.

Thank you again for helping us to find out about your school.

Yours sincerely

Joy Richardson

Lead Inspector