



Thorpe Lea Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125072
Local Authority Surrey
Inspection number 293187
Inspection date 1 November 2006
Reporting inspector David Marshall

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Huntingfield Way
School category	Community		Thorpe Lea
Age range of pupils	3–11		Egham TW20 8DY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01784 456398
Number on roll (school)	246	Fax number	01784 462614
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr K Thompson
		Headteacher	Mr J Micklewhite
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average size community school with a maintained nursery. The catchment area is mixed. More pupils than usual have learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is also above average. Most pupils are white British. There are a small number of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Thorpe Lea is a good, and improving, school with some outstanding features. Its mission statement is to create a school in which there are 'Happy, safe children who reach their potential.' Inspection evidence shows that the hard work of all staff is bringing them close to realising this aim for all pupils. As one parent wrote, 'I have seen the school grow into a fantastic community for the children to grow and learn in and I feel the staff are second to none.'

Children make a very positive start to their education in the Foundation Stage, where provision is very good. Throughout the school pupils achieve well. Progress is good and standards from a below average start, are average by the time pupils leave the school. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and teachers aim to make learning fun. The expectations of what pupils can achieve are generally appropriate but the use of assessment to pinpoint the next step in a pupils' learning varies from subject to subject. The careful use of tracking in English has successfully raised pupils' achievement. However, relatively new systems in other subjects are not yet effective. As a result, information about whether individual pupils are making adequate progress is not always readily available. Teachers take great care to keep parents fully involved in their children's learning. Parents are very pleased about this. One commented that, 'I find the staff very friendly, and they always have time for me. It's been a fantastic school for both my daughters.'

The excellent level of pastoral care ensures that every child feels safe and secure. The school is very successful at putting the happiness and well-being of each individual pupil at the heart of everything it does. As a result pupils' personal development is outstanding.

The broad curriculum is enhanced by an exceptional range of additional activities. The layout of the building makes quiet work and opportunities for individual input difficult. It is a tribute to the pupils' behaviour and attitudes that they are able to focus on their tasks so well and are not easily distracted.

The head teacher provides first-rate leadership. He is very ably supported by his deputy and all staff. Priorities for developments are speedily identified because the school has good systems for monitoring its work. Teamwork is excellent, although the current need for some teachers to take responsibility for so many different subjects makes huge demands on their time and frustrates some of their efforts. Support staff make an outstanding contribution to the pupils' development. The school has continued to improve from the strong position at the time of the last inspection. The school's capacity to continue to improve is very good.

What the school should do to improve further

Ensure the new assessment and tracking procedures are used consistently in all subjects to enable all pupils to make maximum progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards of attainment of the pupils currently in school are average and their achievement is good. Most pupils enter the school with below average attainment. They settle down very well in the Foundation Stage and make good progress.

In Years 1 and 2 the emphasis put on developing speaking and listening skills has a positive impact on the standards pupils reach in reading and in their personal development. Standards in writing were lower last year but there is now a secure system in place that provides both individual and class targets for each pupil in writing and identifies where additional support will be most beneficial. This process is being extended to mathematics, and all other subjects. School attainment targets are challenging and have been reached this year with an average number of pupils in Year 6 reaching both the expected level, and the above average Level 5. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties, and for those with statements of special educational need, is very good, and they make good progress. Provision for those pupils with special gifts or talents is also good, and their further targeted challenges are enabling them to make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils are friendly, polite, well-mannered and confident when talking with each other and adults. They value their school, enjoy the many opportunities that it has to offer them and speak enthusiastically about it. They all behave exceptionally well. Pupils feel safe at school and have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy, by eating sensibly and enjoying the many physical activities on offer.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. They are keen to take responsibility both for classroom tasks and by taking on school roles, like becoming members of the school council, being assembly monitors or playground mediators. As one of them said, 'We all enjoy caring for each other.' Pupils participate in a wide range of activities that help them to understand the lives of people from different cultures. Pupils' contribution to the community is excellent. In addition to fund raising for different charities, they participate in many activities that have strong community links. They are developing the necessary academic and social skills that will enable them to become good citizens in the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is lively and teachers use resources such as interactive whiteboards well to make learning interesting. Pupils want to learn because they are well motivated. They respond well and enjoy answering questions because of the excellent relationships that are quickly established. Pupils spoke of enjoying their lessons because teachers made them 'fun'. Lessons are conducted at pace with good use made of short, sharp whole-group sessions interspersed with opportunities for independent learning. Teaching assistants give excellent support to pupils with learning difficulties and as a result they are fully included and make good progress.

Marking is good. New arrangements have been introduced that show pupils what to do to make their work better and what to do next in English and mathematics. Checking of pupils' progress is consistent and rigorous in English and improving in mathematics but in other subjects it is less informative.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets pupils' needs and includes support programmes to boost the progress of pupils who need extra help to reach their goals. There is a strong focus on the development of pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Planning links subjects and skills together well to make a more flexible and creative curriculum, that really excites pupils. Within the school there is a high commitment to include all pupils in all activities. An example is the highly rated school choir that took part in the local concert. This choir is not put together through selection, but is made up of the whole Year 5 class.

The curriculum is enriched with visits and visitors which make learning more interesting. The exceptional range of well attended after-school activities extends pupils' interests well, in addition to further developing their skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Effective systems are in place to ensure the school environment is safe and welcoming. The school gives its pupils an outstanding standard of pastoral care and welfare. Procedures for child protection are rigorous and staff training is up-to-date. Visits from the emergency services give pupils a good understanding of how to stay safe. Pupils are confident that any difficulties they encounter will be dealt with effectively by staff.

Assessment is used well to track pupils' progress during and at the end of the year, but this is not consistent in all subjects. There are very well organised systems for identifying and meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities,

and support for these pupils is very good. The school makes full use of its good links with outside agencies to ensure the needs of its vulnerable pupils are well provided for.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Teamwork is of the highest quality and everyone plays a valuable part in moving the school forward. The experienced headteacher's leadership is outstanding. All staff follow his lead very well and are effective role models in their own right. Due to recent staff changes some senior teachers are leading a great many aspects and subjects this year. Their zeal and commitment are outstanding but this unavoidably limits their effectiveness at times. Despite this, management at all levels is good with effective systems in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. The opinions of parents and pupils are always valued and frequently acted upon. Many parents pointed out that the administrative team and caretaker are considerable assets to the school and are very much appreciated by all concerned.

The school's self evaluation is effective and staff have a clear understanding of strengths of the school and areas that need more development. The school development plan provides a very clear strategy for raising standards and takes into consideration support and initiatives from many sources. Governors and parents provide first-rate support. The governors bring a wide range of skills to bear as they act as critical friends, challenging decisions and requesting explanations where this is judged to be necessary. The school is very well placed to continue its successes and has a very good capacity to improve.

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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	3
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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

I am writing to thank you all for making me so welcome when I came to the school recently. I really enjoyed my time with you and you all helped by being so friendly and sensible. I thought you would like to know what I found out.

I agree with what so many of you told me that Thorpe Lea is a good school. When you arrive at the school in the nursery or reception classes you have lots of interesting things to do and adults help you to settle in really well. You develop your reading, writing and number skills in the infants and do well when you move into the juniors. By the time you go to secondary school you are very well prepared. Those of you who do not find work easy do well because of all the help you get. We were pleased that you like school and come regularly. You all seem to really enjoy your lessons, work hard and behave very well. There are lots of interesting things for you to do in the school day, in the clubs you attend and visits that you make.

Your teachers work hard to help you to do as well as you can. I have asked them to make sure you are all building on what you already know in all subjects. You must continue to listen carefully and take note of what they say. Then you will all continue to make really good progress in your learning.

Finally, I would like to thank you once again for all your help.

I wish you well in the future.

With kind regards

David Marshall

Lead inspector