

Thorp Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105674
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	308917
Inspection date	18 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Stephen Wall

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr T Baker
Headteacher	Mr P Royle
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2004
School address	Westerdale Drive Royton Oldham Lancashire OL2 5TY
Telephone number	0161 620 8961
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Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards and achievement, personal development and well-being, and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation; national published assessment data; the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes; observation of the school at work; interviews with senior members of staff and pupils; and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in the self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This is an average size school in an area of broadly average social and economic circumstances. Very few pupils are entitled to free school meals and nearly all are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below average. Very few pupils leave or join the school at times other than usual. The school has gained the following awards: Eco-school Green Flag, Healthy Schools, Basic Skills, and School Achievement.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. From broadly average starting points, pupils make outstanding progress to attain well above average standards by the end of Year 6. These high levels of achievement are brought about by highly effective teaching and an exciting curriculum, both of which encourage pupils to become inquisitive and committed learners. Parents value the school highly. 'I am glad I sent my children to this school. They love going in every day and I am delighted with the progress they are making and the care the school provides for them,' is a typical comment.

The headteacher, ably supported by other senior leaders, makes sure that the school is constantly looking for ways to improve further. As a consequence, standards continue to rise steadily demonstrating that the school has outstanding capacity to improve even further. Available resources are used very effectively to promote high standards and achievement; because of this, the school gives first-rate value for money. The school has made very strong progress in tackling the issues identified at the last inspection. In particular, resources for information and communication technology (ICT) are now excellent and systems to check on pupils' progress are exemplary.

The quality of teaching and learning overall is excellent; it is especially challenging and effective in Key Stage 2. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to set tasks which encourage pupils to think for themselves and come up with their own answers. The use of information to check on pupils' progress and match tasks to their needs is highly effective. Group work is used well to encourage pupils to discuss answers and help each other come to conclusions. With such effective teaching and an outstanding, themed curriculum, which makes exciting links between subjects, it is no wonder that pupils make rapid progress as they move up through the school.

In Key Stage 1, pupils build on the good start they have made in the Foundation Stage. They make good progress to attain standards, which are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 2, pupils have gained a very solid foundation as inquisitive and eager learners. This enables them to take full advantage of the very challenging teaching in Key Stage 2 where they make outstanding progress overall to attain well above average standards. Standards in 2007 dipped a little to above average. However, current standards in Year 6 are well above average, which follows the pattern of previous years. The school sets very demanding targets, which it consistently meets or exceeds. The progress of the few pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in Key Stage 2, although generally good, is slower, especially in mathematics. This is because more emphasis is placed on supporting them in literacy. For this reason the quality of care, guidance and support the school provides is good and not outstanding.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They really enjoy school; attendance levels are above average as a result. They know how important it is to eat healthily and take regular exercise. The school's 'healthy eating representatives' have worked successfully to encourage healthier eating, including turning attention to packed lunches that pupils bring to school. The school uses its Eco-school status very effectively to encourage pupils to care for the school environment. The eco-committee has brought about significant improvements to the school's outdoor facilities by establishing the nature garden, for example. Activities such as these, as well as the wide range of enrichment activities in sports and music, add significantly

to pupils' enjoyment and self-esteem. Pupils feel safe in school. Procedures and policies to safeguard them are in place. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good; they show understanding of right and wrong, and good understanding and respect for other cultures and religions. By the time they leave the school, pupils are confident and articulate young people who are very well prepared to take full advantage of the next stages in their education.

Very productive leadership and management promote excellent levels of teamwork. There is a substantial sense of commitment and teamwork on the part of all adults working in the school. The school has an accurate view of its own effectiveness because of its comprehensive procedures to find out the views of a wide range of stakeholders, including parents and pupils. It uses these views very effectively to identify areas of its work which could be improved even further. The school has forged very strong partnerships with local businesses which provide support for its environmental projects. Governance is of a high quality. Governors are not only very supportive but are also rigorous in holding the school to account for its work and standards.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's skills on entry to the Nursery are broadly typical for their age. The recently appointed Foundation Stage coordinator is providing effective leadership and management. In particular, procedures for checking on children's needs and progress are being improved so that support and teaching are tailored to individual needs. However, the full impact of the improvements has yet to be felt. Nevertheless, by the end of Reception nearly all pupils have skill levels above those expected nationally, which represents good achievement. Activities are planned carefully and provide a wide range of learning opportunities. There is a good balance between directed and free-choice activities. Children benefit greatly from the good quality teaching. The emphasis on the development of social and language skills is particularly successful. Children are keen to share their learning with visitors and enjoy explaining what they are doing and why. They enjoy sharing and taking turns. Parents express appreciation of the support their children receive in the Foundation Stage, particularly in terms of developing self-esteem. The dedicated and enthusiastic staff have worked hard to make the learning environment stimulating and welcoming. Outdoor facilities are used effectively to help children learn from doing things for themselves. These facilities also promote children's physical development well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the rate of progress made by the lowest attaining pupils in Key Stage 2, especially in mathematics.

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Annex A

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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Inspection of Thorp Primary School, Oldham, OL2 5TY

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to inspect your school recently. You were very kind to me. I enjoyed talking to lots of you. What you said helped me judge how good your school is.

You will be thrilled to hear that you go to an outstanding school. I was so impressed with the progress you make. Your teachers work very hard to make sure you get excellent teaching. In return, you also work very hard and enjoy your learning. It was very good to see how well you all get on together. You told me how much you enjoy school and I am not surprised. Your headteacher and all the adults working with you really do want every one of you to succeed and do your best. They are giving you an excellent start in life to help you take advantage of the next steps in your education. You are fortunate to go to such a successful school.

In order to make your school even more successful, I am asking it to boost the progress made by pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 who find learning more difficult, especially in mathematics.

I am confident that you will continue to work hard with your teachers to make sure your school remains so successful and goes from strength to strength in future.