

Thorn Grove Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106079
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	309022
Inspection date	7 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Jones

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	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs V Moore
Headteacher	Mr D Massey
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2004
School address	Woodstock Avenue Cheadle Hulme Cheadle Cheshire SK8 7LD
Telephone number	161 4851177
Fax number	161 4851233

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: achievement and standards; leadership and management; personal development and well-being; and care guidance and support. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, parents' questionnaires, the scrutiny of pupils' work and from assessment data and other documents. In addition, discussions were held with pupils, governors and key staff. 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 its self-evaluation were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This average sized primary school in a residential area takes in pupils from varied social and economic backgrounds. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than in most schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, although an above average proportion has a statement of special educational needs. This is mainly because the school is the local authority provider for deaf pupils who currently make up 8% of the school roll. The school holds the Inclusion Quality Mark and Activemark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and his passion and vision drive the school forward. He works tirelessly and skilfully to continually improve the quality of the educational experience provided for all pupils. He is well supported by his talented deputy headteacher and a dedicated and energetic staff. The school's strategic planning strongly reflects its commitment to inclusion. While it is sharply focused on raising standards and achievement, it gives equal priority to enriching the personal development of its wide range of pupils. The governing body is ably led and its members use their wide ranging expertise and wealth of experience to benefit the school. Together with the headteacher, they show great flair in successfully obtaining additional funding and sponsorship. Their combined efforts in this good leadership and management have enabled the school to maintain and improve its staffing levels and the high quality of its buildings and resources. The school's performance is carefully checked and evaluated. The self-evaluation of its work is accurate, although it is too modest in its judgement of pupils' personal development and well-being, which is outstanding rather than good. Challenging targets are used well to raise standards and the school has made good improvement since the last inspection. Given its sustained performance, it shows a good capacity for further improvement in the future.

Good quality teaching across the school leads to good achievement. Pupils make consistently good progress in mathematics and science to reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. Standards are also above average in English with pupils making satisfactory progress in respect of the standards they achieved in Year 2. The school has introduced strategies to improve writing, especially for older pupils, and these have made some impact. It has also identified issues around the motivation of a minority of its pupils, especially in English and literacy lessons. The good curriculum is broad and balanced, and the school has started to link subjects together to add interest and variety. However, the curriculum could be more exciting and stimulating, particularly in English, in order to fully engage all pupils and enable them to make the best possible progress. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including deaf pupils, make excellent progress as a result of the outstanding support and teaching they receive. This is an example of why, overall, the school provides good value for money.

Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school. This is confirmed by their excellent attendance and enthusiastic participation in the variety of interesting clubs and activities the school provides to improve their sporting, cultural and creative abilities. Parents are very appreciative of the school's work. They make comments such as, 'My children love coming to school and enjoy every aspect.' Pupils feel safe, and have very good awareness of the need to take regular exercise and eat healthily. The award to the school of the Activemark recognises the quality of its work in this area. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent as are their behaviour and attitudes. Pupils say that there is no bullying or discrimination. The school's inclusive philosophy lies at the heart of this success. The presence of deaf pupils and others with a range of needs has added another dimension to pupils' personal development. All pupils are taught sign language which adds greatly to their communication skills and understanding of the needs of others. The easy interaction

and respect between all pupils in lessons and in the playground is a joy to behold. The school's achievement of the Inclusion Quality Mark is a fitting endorsement of the progress it has made. The school raises awareness and knowledge of other cultures, and also celebrates the cultures

and faiths of its small number of pupils from ethnic minorities. Pupils are very actively involved in fund-raising for school and for charities. Service to the school and the wider community is strongly encouraged and the lively school council has helped to bring improvements to the playgrounds. The school ensures that pupils develop a very good range of skills and abilities that they will need to succeed in their later life.

Lessons are well planned, with very good teamwork between all staff. The excellent behaviour and relationships throughout the school underpin the good learning that takes place. Specialist staff from the Deaf Base within the school work very effectively alongside the school staff. Good use is made of the school's very good resources, particularly the interactive whiteboards installed in all classrooms. These help to make learning more interesting, as do the vibrant displays that often feature pupils' work. The school has developed its outside spaces to provide delightful garden and quiet areas that stimulate the senses and imaginations of all pupils. The pace of lessons is good. Staff have high expectations of work and behaviour and make good use of praise and rewards. Work is generally well matched to the needs of individual pupils, and higher ability pupils are challenged, especially in mathematics and science. As a result, overall progress is good.

The school takes excellent care of all its pupils. This is a major strength which impacts on all areas of its work. Every pupil is known and valued. Pupils say that they have many adults that they can turn to when they are upset or troubled. Most tellingly, they say that they can look to each other for support. The school makes full use of the wide range of specialist help available to it. The site is beautifully maintained by the caretaking and cleaning staff. There are extremely well-developed links with parents and carers and this is another significant factor in pupils' good achievement and excellent personal development. The safeguarding procedures meet current statutory requirements. All pupils receive extremely good academic guidance. They are set challenging targets and their progress towards them is closely tracked. Additional help and support is quickly provided should they need it. Their work is conscientiously marked and their progress recorded, and they are given very good advice about the next steps in their learning.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. They make good progress and by the time they enter Year 1, their standards in all areas of learning are above expectations. This is the result of the good teaching they receive within a stimulating, very well-resourced area. The school's inclusive approach makes an immediate impact on all children. This is where the exceptional harmony that permeates the school has its beginning. Children learn to respect and value each other. The school's intake includes children with a wide range of challenging physical and emotional needs, including deafness. They receive excellent specialist support and are integrated as much as possible into the learning experiences offered to all children. As a result, the personal and social development of all children is greatly enhanced. Many begin working independently while still in the Nursery class, and by the end of Reception, almost all children are confident learners who make informed choices and behave well. There is a strong emphasis on structured play both indoors and outdoors, and pupils have good opportunities to improve their physical development and coordination skills.

The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. The work of the highly trained school staff and the specialists from outside agencies is well coordinated. Teamwork and cooperation between all staff is very good, and children's progress is carefully assessed and recorded.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the curriculum, especially for English, in order to increase the motivation, skills and enjoyment of all pupils and in particular those who are not making the best possible progress.

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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?	2
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	2

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	1

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
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?	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?	1

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

Inspection of Thorn Grove Primary School, Cheadle, SK8 7LD

I am writing to thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I inspected your school recently. I enjoyed my visit very much. I would like to share with you what I found out.

You go to a good school with some outstanding features. You work hard in lessons and make good progress. Your teachers really want you to succeed, and they give you excellent advice about how to improve your work. The way your school cares for you all and the way you care for each other are very special. Your behaviour is excellent at all times, and I am impressed with your good manners and your consideration for others. You told me that the school keeps you safe, and that you enjoy your lessons and the interesting activities your school provides for you. I know the Year 5 pupils are very excited about the time they will soon be spending in Whitby! You like to help others and you raise large amounts of money for school and charity. Your school council has helped to improve your very well equipped playgrounds.

I would like you to do even better with your work and so I have suggested something that will help. I would like your teachers to make your lessons even more interesting, especially in English, so that everyone is eager and excited to learn as much as possible. You can help by continuing to work hard and trying your best.

Keep looking after each other.