

Thurgoland Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106626
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	309180
Inspection date	17 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Fiona Gowers

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Cook
Headteacher	Mrs R Davies
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2004
School address	Halifax Road Thurgoland Sheffield South Yorkshire S35 7AL
Telephone number	114 2883300
Fax number	114 2888836

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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 in detail the following issues: achievement and standards; the quality of care, guidance and support; and the effectiveness of leadership and management at different levels through the school. Evidence was gathered from the school's own self-evaluation; published national assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes; observation of the school at work; interviews with members of staff, pupils and governors; and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

The school is average in size. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Pupils come from varied social and economic backgrounds. 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. The school has received the Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Thurgoland Church of England Primary is an outstanding school, which has continued to improve since its last inspection. The school has close links with the community and parents are overwhelmingly supportive of their school, typically commenting: 'Thurgoland is all you could want in a village school. My child loves coming to school!' The headteacher is an outstanding leader with extremely high expectations. The headteacher and assistant headteacher foster a very strong team spirit where everyone's contribution is valued and people genuinely care for each other. As a result, the school provides an extremely nurturing environment, which very successfully promotes excellent levels of personal development and well-being as well as outstanding rates of academic progress.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are excellent. The school amply fulfils its aim 'to foster a warm and friendly atmosphere within a caring school community, in which children's self-esteem and respect for others can develop'. Consequently, pupils feel very happy and secure. They are very keen to do their best and enjoy having the opportunity to sit at the 'Special Table' at lunch, or receive a 'Special Mention' in assembly. Systems for safeguarding pupils' health, safety and well-being are in place and meet current requirements. Relationships throughout the school are excellent and ensure that pupils have the confidence to ask for help should they need it. 'We all seem like one big happy family here,' agreed a group of children. Exemplary behaviour is a feature of the classrooms and levels of attendance are well above the national average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils develop important life skills as they take on roles of responsibility at school and are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. They show a very high regard for the care and well-being of others when they act as peer mediators, in the playground and as hosts politely welcoming visitors to their school. The opportunity to work with local businesses and the emphasis placed on group work, discussion and joint decision making is making an outstanding contribution to pupils' social development.

During their time in school pupils' achievement is outstanding in relation to their broadly average starting points, because of excellent teaching and a stimulating curriculum. All staff have very high expectations of work and behaviour and pupils rise to this challenge. Teachers make very good use of assessment information to ensure that tasks are well matched to pupils' needs. Pupils take a great deal of pride in their work as the school places great emphasis on its presentation and content. Pupils are fully involved in assessing their own learning and discuss what helps them learn well. They monitor how well they are doing and are involved in setting targets for further improvement, as well as considering how the classroom can be organised to help them learn best. High quality speaking and listening activities stretch pupils in their thinking. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very effective support. All groups of pupils make excellent progress relative to their starting points. Standards by the end of Year 6 are well above average, with most pupils exceeding their very challenging targets. Standards fluctuate a little from year to year, because the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities varies significantly from class to class. Levels of achievement, however, remain very high.

Classrooms buzz with purposeful activity, because teachers make learning activities fun and challenging. Imaginative links that bring a relevance and excitement to learning are made between subjects. For example, older pupils worked with enthusiasm as they listened to music around a Space theme, while writing about a 'Mission to Mars'. Then they planned and designed

a model with a working light to demonstrate something they had learned about Space in their science work. At the end of a topic, theme days are held to consolidate all that has been learned. These are memorable and enjoyable days in the school calendar. A recent theme day on India involved pupils learning some Hindi words, printing tee shirts and making bracelets, as well as eating a special topic-related healthy school lunch. With so many exciting activities it is hardly surprising that pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and enjoy their time at school. As a group of pupils confirmed, 'We've worked so hard today. It was brilliant!'

Pupils enjoy an impressive range of additional activities whether it's keeping fit with the 'skipping lady' at lunchtime or taking part in a vast array of clubs. The school grounds have been developed into an attractive learning environment and pupils particularly learn a lot from visits to the wildlife area. Keeping everyone at school fit and healthy is high on the agenda, as members of the school council ensure that healthy snacks and drinks are available. They are currently organising a sunflower growing competition to raise money towards the growing of vegetables for school lunches.

The headteacher is utterly committed to the success of the school. She is very well supported by a dedicated assistant headteacher and a very committed staff. Extremely thorough planning ensures that all staff are fully aware of priorities and their roles in helping the school to improve. Governors know the school very well. They amply fulfil their role as 'critical friend'. The school benefits from their professional expertise and community links. Rigorous systems for monitoring pupils' progress are used very effectively to highlight any pupils not doing as well as expected, those who can be challenged further and those who may require extra support. Innovative support groups such as the early morning 'Exercises' are proving highly effective in accelerating pupils' progress. A restructuring of the way that pupils are taught to link sounds and letters in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is leading to improved achievement in writing. The school's leadership has a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. In light of such strengths and successes the school clearly shows it has an outstanding capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage establishes a firm basis for learning higher up the school. When they join school, children's skills are in line with national expectations. Children are encouraged to be independent and concentrate very well for extended periods. They enjoy taking part in a wide variety of learning activities. These motivate children to learn and help them make rapid progress. As a result, by the end of the Foundation Stage the majority are working securely within the expected levels in all the areas of learning. During a recent period of snowy weather, staff creatively extended children's speaking and listening, and personal and social skills, by taking the children on a 'Polar Bear hunt'. The Foundation Stage has improved since the last inspection and the Foundation Stage leader is constantly looking to see how the provision can be improved further. The excellent level of care and support from staff helps children settle very well and develop very positive attitudes to learning. Parents very much appreciate all the Foundation Stage has to offer, as summarised in the comment: 'My child really enjoys school and looks forward to every day. We feel exceptionally fortunate that our child is receiving such high quality care and teaching.'

What the school should do to improve further

The school's leadership has clearly identified what it needs to do to sustain improvement. Consequently, there are no further issues to add.

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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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	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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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?	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?	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?	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	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Thurgoland Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School, Sheffield, S35 7AL

Thank you very much for the warm welcome when I visited your school. You were all extremely polite and keen to talk to me about your work and your school.

Thurgoland is an outstanding school. Your headteacher, governors and all the staff are an excellent team and work tirelessly for your benefit. Your school provides you with an excellent education that I know you enjoy. You make excellent progress with your work and you reach very high standards when you leave at the end of Year 6. This is because you receive excellent teaching and enjoy many exciting learning activities.

You really enjoy having the opportunity to take part in many clubs and sporting activities. You know how to stay fit and clearly enjoy your healthy school lunches, especially when you have one of your special theme days!

Adults in school look after you very well so you feel safe and confident about asking them for help or talking to them about any worries. The school is extremely good at giving special help to those of you who need it. You should be very proud of the way you behave. Your behaviour is excellent and you look after each other very well indeed.

Your headteacher and other adults know exactly what needs to be done to make sure Thurgoland continues to be an outstanding school. You can help by continuing to try your best and behaving so well.

I wish you all the very best for the future.