

Thackley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107221
Local Authority	Bradford
Inspection number	309344
Inspection dates	31 October –1 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Julie Price Grimshaw

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	379
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Frazer
Headteacher	Mrs Nicola Howe
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Town Lane Thackley Bradford West Yorkshire BD10 8PJ
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average school which serves an area of social and economic advantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school's population is mostly White British, with approximately a tenth of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils have English as an additional language. Over recent years, there has been significant instability due to turnover of staff, including at senior management level. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning.

Since the last inspection, the rate at which pupils make progress has slowed, and there has been significant underachievement over the last three years. Children's skills on entry to the Nursery are broadly in line with those typically expected nationally for their age. A number of recent improvements to the provision in Nursery and Reception have already had a positive impact, and as a result children make good progress throughout the Foundation Stage. However, this rate of progress is not sustained during Key Stages 1 and 2. Standards by the end of Year 6 are broadly average, but many pupils, particularly the most able, do not achieve as well as they can. Although there are some examples of good and satisfactory teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2, the overall quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. In many lessons, the pace of learning is too slow, expectations are too low, and work is often not challenging enough. In addition, marking of pupils' work does not always point out what pupils need to do in order to improve.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are polite and well mannered, and feel safe within the school environment. They have a good understanding of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Behaviour is good, both in classrooms and around the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as demonstrated by their good attendance. They enjoy contributing their ideas on how the school can be improved, for example, through their suggestions for redesigning play areas. Pupils are very considerate towards one another and demonstrate responsible attitudes to the school and local community. For example, they are understandably proud of their fundraising for various charities. Pupils are motivated by the effective rewards system, which recognises their positive contributions by awarding 'stars' which are collected and exchanged for various prizes.

The curriculum is satisfactory with a number of good features. Most teachers ensure that there are opportunities for pupils to practise the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across a broad range of subjects. Pastoral care is a strength of the school's work. Pupils feel that 'there is always someone to talk to about any problems.' The school has recently developed its systems for tracking pupils' progress, and there is now increased emphasis on

setting targets and helping pupils to become more aware of the steps they need to take in order to improve. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this work on raising pupils' achievement.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Following a period of considerable instability, the new headteacher, together with members of the senior leadership group, has begun to establish an effective team approach to school improvement. The school has a very clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, and planning for future improvement is of good quality. There is evidence that this work has already started to have an impact in moving the school forward. The school has the capacity to make the necessary improvements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage due to the consistently good quality of teaching, which develops independent learning and personal responsibility very effectively. The good quality curriculum supports children's learning well. Teachers have created many good opportunities to develop speaking and listening through a variety of practical activities that reinforce elements of initial reading and writing skills. There are also strengths in physical development, although girls do not do quite as well as boys in this area. Children achieve well, and by the end of the Foundation Stage most are working beyond the expected levels for their age in all the areas of learning, including language. Teachers' planning makes good use of assessment information to track children's progress and identify challenging targets. Staff know what each child needs to tackle next in order to improve, and they create a good environment that enriches learning. Although the school building and inadequate outside play areas restrict the full development of this learning environment, the school is aware of the issue and is currently managing it as well as can be expected. Children are expected to behave well and to consider others. They respond positively and are supported in this expectation. An outstanding 'circle time' session on discussing aspects of sharing demonstrated how well staff support children in their personal and social development. The Foundation Stage is very well led and managed, and staff work well together as a team. The progress of children is well documented and parents are increasingly made aware of the progress their children make.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement, especially for the most able pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in relation to the pace of lessons and the level of challenge provided for pupils.
- Ensure that all pupils understand what they need to do in order to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage, so that when they enter Year 1 many have skills that are above typical expectations. However, during Key Stage 1 a significant number of pupils do not make satisfactory progress. Prior to 2007, standards by the end of Year 2 have been above the national average. A decline in 2007 has taken standards slightly below average, with standards in mathematics being lower than in reading and writing. In Key Stage 2 the rate of pupils' progress is inconsistent, but overall it is inadequate. Achievement is slightly better in science than in English and mathematics. In the 2007 national tests, standards by the end of Year 6 were broadly average. However, too few pupils achieved the higher levels in mathematics and science. The progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and /or disabilities is similar to that of their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are responsible and caring. They understand the importance of good behaviour, and this is effectively reinforced by the school's recently introduced behaviour policy. Pupils are friendly and polite, and enjoy coming to school as demonstrated by their good attendance, which is consistently above average. They feel safe and secure, and are fully confident that staff will

respond to any concerns they may have, including dealing appropriately with any rare incidents of bullying. The large school council is making a difference to the school's work, for example, by steering the development of outdoor provision and supporting the good work done by prefects and peer mentors. Pupils' social, cultural and moral development is good; spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils understand well the importance of healthy eating and taking regular exercise. They begin to develop secure economic awareness by, for instance, saving with the school bank, and saving up their 'stars' to exchange for rewards. They are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education and the world of work through the development of satisfactory skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Staff ensure that classrooms provide a pleasant learning environment for pupils. Teachers are developing their skills in using the interactive whiteboards; pupils respond with much enthusiasm when invited to use such resources themselves, and in some lessons this is effective in enhancing learning. In the most effective lessons, teachers plan lively and interesting tailored activities, based securely on pupils' prior learning, that very effectively meet the needs of all. In one such lesson, the teacher enabled pupils to successfully extend their skills through detailed exploration and discussion of ideas. As a result, pupils were enthusiastic, fully engaged with the task, and made good progress. However, too much teaching lacks pace, and too much time is wasted. Work set is not always matched to pupils' abilities, and tasks often lack challenge. Pupils speak of some work being 'too easy', and, at times, the most able pupils are not provided with work that extends their knowledge and skills sufficiently. As a result, a significant number of pupils do not achieve as well as they are able. There are some early signs that the school's new approach to assessment is helping teachers and pupils to gain a more accurate understanding of the progress made by individuals. The quality of marking, however, is still too variable and does not always support this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils, and is planned to take account of the requirements of the school's mixed age classes. Pupils access the curriculum well through strategies of well tailored support and through the grouping of pupils, which is done particularly well in the Foundation Stage. Provision and the planning of suitably challenging tasks for the most able pupils is less well developed. The programme for personal, social and health education contributes well to pupils' personal development, health and safety. Music, both within the curriculum and as part of the enrichment programme, is a strength of the school's work, and pupils speak with great enthusiasm about being able to represent their school in the local music festival. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities, and pupils are happy that 'there's something for everyone.' The curriculum is currently undergoing review as the school moves towards a theme-based approach to exploring links between various subject areas. Although this process has been well-planned, it is too early to evaluate its impact on pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school meets all statutory requirements for safeguarding its pupils. Pastoral support is good; pupils and parents alike show much appreciation for the high level of care provided by staff. Systems for academic guidance are satisfactory, and are currently being developed and refined. The staff are beginning to use data effectively in order to track pupils' progress and set challenging targets, but this work is currently at an early stage. Pupils are not always given sufficient guidance on what they need to do in order to improve their work. The school works well with outside agencies in order to provide support for individuals, and some good work is being carried out in establishing and developing effective partnerships with parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Following the recent period of instability, there are clear indications that the school is now beginning to work effectively, as a team, with the aim of raising standards and improving pupils' achievement. Within a short space of time, the headteacher has made a good start in securing a corporate approach to school improvement. Together with other members of the school's leadership team, she has started to build successfully on the foundations established by the acting headteacher over the previous year. This process has been tackled with sensitivity and understanding.

The school's accurate evaluation of its work shows that school managers have a very clear awareness of the challenges currently being faced by the school. The roles of middle managers, such as subject leaders, are now being developed. As a result, they are now able to take an active part in monitoring the quality of provision, and contributing to self-evaluation and improving the school. Early indications are that this is beginning to work well, although it is too soon to evaluate the impact of this work on teaching and learning across the school. Good strategies have been devised in order to improve classroom practice. The vast majority of parents are extremely supportive of the leadership team, and many comment that 'the school is now more settled, which can only be a good thing for the pupils.' School governors are committed to their work and are supportive of the senior leadership team.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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?	Yes

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

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome in your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views.

We were very impressed with your attitude towards school. Many of you told us that you enjoy coming to school, and we are really pleased that so many of you realise how important it is to attend regularly. We could tell that you are very caring and responsible, and you are understandably proud of your good work in raising funds for charity. It was great to hear that you enjoy earning and saving up your stars, so that you can exchange them for rewards! The school council is beginning to do some really good work in representing your views. You told us that the staff are caring towards you, and you clearly appreciate this.

We are very pleased with the good work carried out by the staff that work in the Nursery and Reception classes. They help to make sure that the youngest children in your school make good progress in all areas of their learning, including behaviour. In fact, we were impressed with everyone's behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, so well done!

Your test results show that by the time you leave school standards in English, mathematics and science are average. We believe that many of you could do much better than this. Some of you told us that occasionally, the work you are given is too easy, and we agree that many of you could cope with harder work, which would help you to make better progress and reach higher standards. Because of this, we have given your school a Notice to Improve. This means that an inspector will visit the school in about 6-8 months time to check how well it is doing and it will be inspected again in about a year from now. We have suggested that, in the meantime, the staff should look closely at helping to improve your achievement. We would like you to be given work that helps all of you to make as much progress as you can, and it's important that you are all kept busy in class! We noticed that some of you were not always sure of what you need to do to improve your work, so we've suggested that the staff help you with this, by giving good quality guidance to each one of you.

You have an important part to play here. You can help by always letting staff know if work is too easy for you, and by making certain that you understand exactly what you need to do to improve your work. We know that your teachers are very keen to help you.

Your new headteacher has not been at the school for very long, but it was very encouraging to hear so many of you say that you think the school is already getting better. We know that your headteacher and all the staff are very keen to help you make the best progress you possibly can. We are happy that you are pleased to be pupils at Thackley, and we wish you well for the future.