

Thornhill Lees Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107705
Local Authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	309481
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Ann Sharpe

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	282
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Longstaff
Headteacher	Mrs Diane Kerlake
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Slaithwaite Road Thornhill Lees Dewsbury West Yorkshire WF12 9DL
Telephone number	1924 325340

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most of the pupils who attend this above average sized school are of Pakistani or Indian heritage and about 15% are White British or from other minority ethnic heritages. A large, and increasing, proportion of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in the Nursery and in Reception classes. The school has achieved the Activemark Gold, Healthy Schools and Healthy Breakfast Club awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Thornhill Lees Infant and Nursery School is a good school, providing good value for money. Since the previous inspection, it has come successfully through all the challenges arising from significant staff absences and changes, as well as a major building project. During this time the headteacher has worked tirelessly to ensure a minimum of disruption to pupils' education. Her existing knowledge of the school, pupils, parents and local community, and her calm and purposeful approach, have ensured that parents and carers think highly of all aspects of the work of the school and that pupils are happy and achieve well. The school has a mainly accurate view of its effectiveness.

Outstanding provision in the EYFS gives children a wonderful start to their education. They make excellent progress from their starting points, particularly in learning to speak English. This is because provision takes full account of all their varying needs. Every day, children enjoy a myriad of opportunities to learn by doing things and by talking with caring adults. When they roll dough with fresh rosemary and cinnamon, for example, all their senses, curiosity and imagination are stimulated, and they love talking about how it feels. Children make a successful start with learning to read, write and understand mathematics. This is also because of the meaningful and practical activities that they eagerly take part in and talk about.

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress and standards by the end of Year 2 are generally above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Good progress in basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills prepare pupils well for transferring to junior schools at the end of Year 2. The good quality of teaching and learning ensures that pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well. Sensitive support from bilingual staff and other support staff helps pupils who speak English as an additional language to make good progress. Standards in speaking and listening, nevertheless, are not as high as they are in reading and writing, despite efforts to rectify this. The school knows that further action is needed in order to give children more 'life experiences' that will extend their understanding of the English language even further.

Pupils' good personal development and well-being and their satisfactory attendance help them to benefit from their education. They enjoy lessons and behave well because the enriching curriculum gives them many opportunities to learn first hand. In Year 1, for example, pupils learn about measurement rapidly because they work practically with mathematical equipment and other resources. Pupils' good knowledge of how to stay healthy and safe is seen, for example, in their awards and in their understanding of safety when using the Internet. The recent focus on the Olympic Games, during a popular 'WOW DAY', helped pupils to find out about many different cultural practices and customs. Pupils enjoy making a contribution to their school community, for example, by joining in celebrations of different religious festivals. Many parents and carers accept the invitation to come into school each morning with their children. They also say how welcome they feel. This gives pupils a relaxed, calm, secure and enjoyable start to the day and prepares them well for learning.

Good quality care and support for pupils help them to know that there is always someone to turn to for help. Pupils say that, 'Teachers and our friends keep us safe.' Strong partnerships with outside agencies ensure that pupils have access to specialist help if they need it. Detailed tracking of their academic progress means that staff are alerted and intervene quickly if pupils fall behind. Although the school has been endeavouring to involve pupils more fully in

understanding how well they are doing, there is further work to do, for example, by ensuring a consistent approach to marking pupils' work.

Leadership and management are good. Plans for further improvement focus on important issues related to raising standards. Satisfactory governance ensures that the school meets its requirements. This is a school that recognises and values its very special place in the community that it serves. Staff work hard to draw everyone together, particularly by involving parents and carers even more in their children's education. Now that the staffing situation has stabilised and some senior staff have returned from temporary absences, capacity to improve in the future is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

When children start Nursery, their skills are well below what is typical for their age and many children have little or no understanding of English. Girls and boys from all ethnic backgrounds make outstanding progress because of excellent leadership by the EYFS coordinator and the outstanding attention to their care and welfare. By the end of Reception, most children reach the goals expected for their age. Enthusiastic teachers and support staff work together as a team to ensure that provision meets the needs of all children. They are excellent role models, who ensure that children make rapid progress in personal, social and emotional development. Everywhere children turn there is something new to learn. Consequently, children relish learning and their behaviour is exemplary. A relentless focus on talking about exciting activities results in outstanding progress in communication, language and literacy and in problem solving, reasoning and number. Sensitive 'mother tongue' teaching is always available if needed. Staff track children's progress meticulously so that they can ensure that children have every opportunity to build on their previous learning. Very good links with parents and carers are particularly beneficial to children's learning. They express overwhelming support for the EYFS.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills in Years 1 and 2.
- Ensure pupils are clear about what they have to do to improve their work, particularly by marking it consistently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and standards in reading, writing and mathematics are generally above average by the end of Year 2. Pupils of all ethnic backgrounds, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress overall. Most pupils reach the challenging targets that the school sets for them. This is because of good quality teaching and the extra help they have from classroom assistants, including bilingual staff. Published assessments and provisional 2008 figures indicates that standards have dipped slightly over the last three years. This reflects the fact that some groups of pupils have not met their learning targets due in part to a recent large turnover in staff. Staff stability and good progress have now been restored. Pupils' speaking and listening skills, however, are not always as strong as their skills in reading and writing. The school's current focus on improving pupils' ability to understand and speak English more fluently is paying dividends. There is further work to do, however, in providing more opportunities for

pupils to practise their speaking outdoors and encouraging some parents and carers to play an even greater role in encouraging their children to converse more.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, helps them to achieve well. They enjoy school and pupils from all ethnic backgrounds work and play together happily. Pupils' good behaviour ensures that time is rarely wasted dealing with problems in lessons. Attendance is satisfactory, although punctuality is sometimes a problem that the school is addressing. Pupils' good understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles shows in the way that they enjoy drinking milk and biting into raw carrots as a snack at playtime. Many children enjoy taking part in physical and sporting activities, such as competitive team events with pupils from other schools. Pupils make a good contribution to their school community through the school council and by taking part in charitable fund-raising: they are very enthusiastic about the current 'Love in a Box' project. Pupils' good progress in basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills prepare them well for transfer to junior schools at the end of Year 2.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching and learning ensure that pupils make good progress from their varying starting points. Teachers are dedicated and hard working. Strong features of lessons include positive relationships with pupils, careful planning, skilful use of computerised teaching boards and thoughtful deployment of classroom assistants. Bilingual assistants know just when to provide help for pupils who speak English as an additional language and all classroom assistants are good at helping pupils to learn new words. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning and try hard. Teachers are keen to push pupils' learning forward. In reading and writing, for example, pupils take delight in learning and remembering the sounds represented by letters of the alphabet. Teachers sometimes give pupils good feedback in lessons and help them to know how to improve. There is scope for involving pupils even more in their own learning, particularly through a more consistent approach to marking work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good quality curriculum enables pupils of all abilities and ethnic backgrounds to enjoy learning. A strong focus on teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy leads to generally above average standards. Contributing to this is the emphasis on learning at first hand and giving pupils opportunities to understand the meaning of words and phrases. The curriculum is enriched well by visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities. Pupils' enjoyment of theatre groups, storytellers and artists extends their understanding of cultural diversity. The school is making good adjustments to the curriculum to reflect the fact that many pupils speak English as an additional language. Staff know that there is further work to do in order to bring standards in speaking and listening more in line with reading, writing and mathematics. Plans to develop the use of the school grounds as a resource for promoting pupils' speaking and listening skills are being drawn up.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good quality of care and support for pupils ensures that they enjoy school, feel safe and make good progress. Procedures for protecting and safeguarding them are in place. Strong links and partnerships with outside agencies and the local authority, ensure good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for pupils who speak English as an additional language. The encouraging of parents to come into school each morning and work with their children is an excellent way of making pupils feel happy and confident at school. Parents and carers who accept the invitation say that this makes them feel part of school life and increases their understanding of how they can help their children. Staff keep careful records of pupils' progress and the school provides extra support, if needed. In order to raise standards in reading, for example, the school is working on encouraging boys to enjoy books. Pupils have a growing understanding of how well they are doing, but teachers' marking of their work, although often diligently undertaken, is inconsistent in its quality and helpfulness.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership of the headteacher has kept the school on an even keel throughout significant staffing turbulence since the previous inspection. Her reliable, calming and supportive influence has ensured that parents think highly of the school, that staff thoroughly enjoy their work and that most pupils achieve well. More stability in staffing is reversing the declining trend in standards. The EYFS coordinator provides the consistency and expertise necessary to ensure that children get the best start possible. The new deputy headteacher has a clear view of how to help to take the school forward and other senior staff are keen to play their part. Governance is satisfactory. Although there are difficulties with recruiting and retaining new governors, especially parents, supportive governors ensure that the school meets requirements. Priorities link appropriately with raising standards. Capacity for further improvement is, therefore, good. The school encourages community cohesion and its success is seen in the way that it embraces and celebrates the cultural differences found in the community that it serves.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Thornhill Lees Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant and Nursery School,
Dewsbury, WF12 9DL

Thank you for the very warm and friendly welcome you gave inspectors when we visited your school. You answered all our questions very politely and thoughtfully. We could see how much you enjoy coming to school by the happy look on your faces and by how well you behaved, listened to adults and tried hard in lessons. You do a lot of exciting and interesting things at school that help you to learn quickly, especially when you talk about them. It is little wonder that your parents and carers are so pleased with your school and that so many enjoy coming in with you in the mornings. Some younger brothers and sisters just do not want to go home!

Your school is a good school. Your headteacher and all the other staff care about you a great deal. This is why they all work so hard to make sure that you have everything that you need to help you to do as well as you can. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes have an excellent start to school. They soon start talking more and more about all the lovely things there are to do. You know a lot about staying healthy and safe. It was good to see you waiting without a fuss for adults to collect you at the door at the end of the day. You do a lot to help people less fortunate than yourselves. What a lot of beautifully decorated 'Love in a Box' boxes you have collected already.

There are two things that I have asked the school to do to help you further. The first is to make sure that your listening and talking is always as good as it can be. The second is to help you to know more about how well you are doing and what to do to improve.

You can help by continuing to try so hard and by asking teachers how well you are doing with reaching your learning targets.

Enjoy your winter festivals at home and at school.