

# Thornhill Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114106
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	311484
<b>Inspection date</b>	24 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gianna Ulyatt

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	202
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Anne Young
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sally Green
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 June 2005
<b>School address</b>	Thornhill Gardens Shildon County Durham DL4 1ES
<b>Telephone number</b>	01388 772906
<b>Fax number</b>	01388 772906

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the gender differences in standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2;
- the impact of new staff members to the senior management team and to the Foundation Stage;
- the impact of new strategies to improve attainment in mathematics, reading and writing.

Evidence was gathered from school performance data and other documentation, observations of teaching and learning, evaluations of children's activities, (including how they interact with each other and within their learning environment), parents' questionnaires and discussions with children, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest the school's own assessment, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

The school is average in size and is set in an area of mixed housing with some pockets of social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils who claim a free school meal is above average. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The very few pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds speak English. A minority of pupils come from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families. The school has significantly more boys than girls.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Pupils thrive in this outstanding school with its warm, welcoming and very caring environment. Its reputation in the community is excellent. The school believes each pupil is unique and can succeed, and succeed they do. Achievement is exceptionally high. Standards are significantly above average. Excellent teaching makes pupils extremely motivated to learn. One pupil explained that attendance is above average because everyone enjoys school so much. He said, 'Here we get a good education and when we are older we will get jobs'. The school is not complacent and continuously identifies ways to improve its pupils' education. Rigorous self-evaluation is part of the school's culture. The outstanding and determined leadership of the headteacher, who values every member of staff, encourages them to bring new ideas and develop new initiatives. As a result, the school has improved significantly since the last inspection. Parents are delighted with the fantastic progress their children make both academically and personally. 'We are proud that my child is part of the Thornhill community' is a typical comment from parents.

Children enter the Reception classes with skills and abilities that are well below those typical for this age group. They make very good progress to reach challenging targets though their skills and knowledge are still below expectations by the time they begin Year 1. Very good progress continues and by the end of Year 2 most pupils reach the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach standards that are significantly above average. An above average percentage of pupils achieves the higher levels. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress because they are supported and taught well to help them achieve their challenging targets. The school's data indicates that current pupils are achieving better in reading and writing in Year 2 and attainment in mathematics is improving in Year 6. The gap between the achievements of boys and girls is narrowing. The improvements are due to the extreme vigilance of senior managers in identifying weaknesses and immediately implementing improvement strategies.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary. Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are exceptionally polite, friendly and courteous, showing outstanding respect for adults and each other. In lessons they listen carefully to the views of classmates and collaborate very well during team activities. Pupils show high levels of social responsibility. Older pupils are extremely caring of younger ones at playtime and listen to them read each day. Pupils have great compassion for those less fortunate than themselves and support many charities. The choir sings at many community events. Physical activity is part of the every day routine. The very well organised school playground facilitates vigorous play such as football, skipping, an assault course and games supported by adults. The school offers specialist coaching and an extensive range of sporting opportunities during and after school. Pupils are very proud of their school and that they have not lost a football league fixture game for the last three years. The wonderful display of trophies is testament to their continued success. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a good diet. They are confident they will do well in their national tests.

Teaching and pupils' learning are outstanding because teachers know their pupils extremely well. Progress is carefully assessed each term. This valuable information is used to set challenging activities for pupils of all abilities. Work is meaningful and pupils experience success in all they do. This important factor underpins the school's excellent achievement. Pupils who have learning difficulties are supported well through individual learning plans. In addition, for one day per

week, each class has extra support. During this special day pupils who are particularly gifted are set additional challenging tasks. Pupils like and trust their teachers. They strive hard, even when learning is difficult, because 'teachers often set practical, but hard tasks for us and we learn best that way. We also really enjoy them.' This helps create confident and highly motivated learners. Well trained teaching assistants make a significant contribution to learning.

The inspiring curriculum and the extensive range of extra activities are planned so well that pupils are excited about coming to school. There is excellent enhancement for learning through local and residential visits. Visitors further extend pupils' knowledge of the wider world. Strong links with the community and the secondary school ensure pupils benefit from specialist teaching in some subjects. A recent, very successful, initiative to improve links between subjects is having a strong impact on the curriculum. For example, in history pupils learned about life in England during World War 2. They filtered water in science to demonstrate how to give the family dog a drink whilst in an air raid shelter and, in English, they acted out extracts from Anne Frank's diary. Pupils receive very high levels of care. All safeguarding systems and procedures are in place and well adhered to by a fully trained staff. Teachers track pupils' progress well, make sure they remain on target and mark pupils work carefully so all know what they have done well and what they need to improve.

Leadership is inspirational. The headteacher and senior managers are rigorous in their process of checking provision and performance. The impact of newly appointed and enthusiastic members to the senior management team is having a very positive influence on the school's excellent capacity to improve. Managers continually identify areas for potential improvement and act on them with great speed. This is one of the reasons why attainment in reading and mathematics has improved so quickly. Staff are talented, hard working and totally committed to providing the very best for the pupils. This is reflected in bright, stimulating classrooms, good quality resources and inspiring yard and garden areas. Standards have risen considerably since the previous inspection and all key issues have been addressed. Governors are knowledgeable, loyal and experienced. They take an active and critical part in managing and leading the school. They care deeply about pupils' academic and personal achievements. The school knows its strengths and knows exactly what it needs to do to maintain high standards.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Children get off to an excellent start in their education. Leadership in the Foundation Stage is strong and has recently reviewed provision and made extensive changes. Children make rapid progress because of very good teaching, an inspiring indoor and outdoor curriculum and high levels of care. Induction procedures take full account of parents' knowledge of their children. Many parents confirm that their children settle well and clearly enjoy their education. Planning gives good emphasis to personal development and takes full account of the interests of young children. There is a very good balance between activities that are directed by adults and those from which children can choose. The interaction between adults and children is very effective because adults work with children in very small groups. By the end of the Foundation Stage children are confident learners and extremely well behaved. The strong emphasis on number, early sound and letter recognition ensures children make very good progress in their mathematics, reading and writing skills. This means they are well prepared for Year 1.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- There are no points for improvement that the school has not already identified.

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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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	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?	1

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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



## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thornhill Primary School, Durham, DL4 1ES

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to me when I visited Thornhill. You are extremely well mannered and very helpful. I know you are very proud of your school and truly care about each other. I was delighted to see you enjoy yourselves at playtimes. You have such good fun, yet older pupils make sure everyone keeps safe and no one is left out. The football game and other games you play keep you very healthy. I was very impressed with those of you who came to talk to me about your school. I can see you are taught very good manners and to respect everyone. I was pleased to hear how much you like your lessons. Your teachers will be pleased to know that their strong efforts are much appreciated.

Do you know that your school is in the top ten percent in the country? How brilliant is that? Mind you, I am not surprised because when I looked in your books I was amazed at how hard you work and the good standard of your stories and your number work. In lessons I was thrilled to see you collaborate with each other to find solutions to hard problems. That's exactly how grown ups behave at work, so you are already prepared for that. You listen very well to your teachers and to each other. You are not afraid to ask questions when you are unsure and this delights your teachers because they know you are following the lesson very carefully. It is wonderful to know that you value your education because you explained to me that it is through this you will get jobs. You should succeed in life because you are all getting off to a fantastic start in your school.

You certainly enjoy the way the school makes learning very practical. The science experiment outside was fascinating. You thoroughly enjoy sport and the school makes sure you are taught by experts. That is why you keep winning so many trophies. I was touched by the compassion you show to charities that support those less fortunate than you. You attend an outstanding school. Standards are very high at Thornhill because your governors, headteacher, teachers and assistants have your interests at heart. You must continue to work very hard to keep up the very high standards. You must also take part in all the new ideas the school has for you. That will help your school continue to move forward in an interesting and exciting way.

I hope you do well in your national tests and that you settle well into secondary education.

With very best wishes

Gianna Ulyatt

Lead inspector