

# Thornley Primary School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114146
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	311501
<b>Inspection date</b>	30 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Linda Buller

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	170
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Jim Scurfield
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jennifer Pearce
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 June 2004
<b>School address</b>	Cooper's Terrace Thornley Durham County Durham DH6 3DZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01429 820280
<b>Fax number</b>	01429 820280

---

<b>Age group</b>	3-11
<b>Inspection date</b>	30 June 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	311501

---

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

This was a reduced tariff inspection carried out by one Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the impact on learning of pupils' below average attendance
- the impact of the revision to the curriculum on pupils' achievement and enjoyment of school
- the impact of the provision for higher attaining pupils.

Evidence was gathered from national published assessment data, attendance data, the school's own records of pupils' progress, parents' questionnaires, lesson observations and interviews with staff, pupils and governors. 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 judgements, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average size school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. An above average proportion of pupils are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. None of the small number from other minority ethnic groups is in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The school has undergone alterations and refurbishment in order to create a Children's Centre which opened in October 2006. The school is part of a pilot scheme which provides three nursery sessions each week to two-year-olds from the term after their second birthday. As well as the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the school has been awarded the Artsmark, the Activemark and holds Healthy School status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Thornley Primary provides a good education for its pupils. It is well thought of by parents and carers; those who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed a high regard for the school. In response to an atmosphere of high quality care and support, pupils' behaviour and relationships are both good. They play together well, are friendly and polite and take good care of one another, for example, through the buddy system. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise, although, as discovered by the Year 3, 4 and 5 pupils in their survey, this is not always reflected in packed lunch choices. Pupils are aware that bullying does occur occasionally, but are confident that it is dealt with well. Pupils have a good understanding of the skills necessary to keep themselves and their community safe, benefiting greatly from informative visits such as that from the local fire fighters.

Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attitudes to learning. Despite this, attendance levels are below the national average. A significant minority of pupils have low levels of attendance for various reasons including the number of parents who take their children out of school for holidays in term time. The absence of pupils often reduces their overall progress and achievement. For example, in the week prior to the inspection, almost a third of Year 6 pupils were absent from school due to holidays. Not only do these pupils miss important learning opportunities, but this also disrupts the learning of others on their return because of the need to help them make up lost ground. The school does all it can to encourage parents to ensure the regular attendance of their children but as yet this has met with little success.

Pupils are pleased that their views are taken into account. Following a survey of their views about the quality of what the school provides for them, the headteacher has instigated a major revision to the curriculum. This has resulted in good curriculum provision which contributes effectively to pupils' good levels of achievement. Pupils say their enjoyment of school has increased because there are increasingly more interesting things for them to do. They talk enthusiastically about their topic work which has involved them in exploring the world of the circus and the setting up of the 'Feel Good Café'. These activities ensure that much of the curriculum has meaning and relevance to pupils and, as many parents and pupils commented, makes learning 'fun'. This vast array of outstanding enrichment experiences including good progress in the development of basic skills, prepares pupils well for life beyond school.

By the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly in line with the national average. Given their starting point to school, this represents good achievement for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children enter the school with skills that are below those typical for their age, especially in language and literacy. The good progress made in the Foundation Stage is successfully maintained throughout the rest of the school, although better progress in writing has been a priority for the school for a number of years. In response, there are now more planned opportunities for writing across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 have been provided with many varied opportunities to extend their writing skills while working on the topic of the 'Circus'. Plans are now in place for pupils to develop their writing further from first-hand experiences, such as visits to places of interest and this is beginning to raise standards. However, some literacy lessons do not provide pupils with enough varied opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their literacy skills in new and challenging situations.

Teaching is good overall. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. There are high expectations of behaviour to which pupils respond well. Teaching assistants play a valuable role in ensuring that pupils who find the basic skills of literacy and numeracy difficult make good, and often, very good progress. The support and guidance these pupils receive for their learning are strengths of the school. The overall quality of planning by teachers is good, although teachers' expectations of the more able can at times be low. When this occurs, too much time is spent consolidating learning rather than extending their existing knowledge and understanding. Pupils' work is marked regularly and often identifies for pupils what they need to do to reach a higher level. However, not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to act on this in future work.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, ably supported by her deputy, has established a clear direction for improvement and correctly identified the school's priorities. Their monitoring has helped to improve the quality of provision. This is evident in the way that pupils now make steadier and more consistent progress as they move through the school, whereas in the past, rates of progress have been more uneven. The school is aware that this level of monitoring now needs to be extended to include other staff, in particular those with subject responsibilities. Governance is good and ensures that all required safeguarding procedures are in place. Governors monitor and challenge the school's work and are fully involved in it. The school has successfully tackled the issues raised at the last inspection and has a good capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good overall and particularly effective in developing children's speaking, listening and early writing skills. This, together with a well planned curriculum, ensures that children get off to a positive start to their learning. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection. Staff track children's progress carefully and provide them with a good balance of child-chosen and teacher-directed activities. Interaction between staff and children encourages children to think for themselves and to become independent learners. As a result, children in the current Reception class have made good progress across all areas of learning and the majority are working at levels similar to those found nationally.

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

- Improve levels of attendance.
- Raise teachers' expectations of higher attaining pupils.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

### 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 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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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	2

### 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	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 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?	2

<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>	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	3
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**

1 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thornley Primary School, Durham, DH6 3DZ

Thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school recently. I enjoyed talking to many of you. You helped me a great deal to find out what happens in your school and what you like. You told me that it is a good school and I agree with you. You are rightly very pleased with the wide range of opportunities that the school provides for you to ensure that you enjoy your time at school and achieve well. It was really interesting to see how much you had found out about life in the circus and to watch the recording of you all performing. You did really well.

The work carried out by the Year 3, 4 and 5 pupils really showed how much you all know about healthy eating. It was good to see how well you all get along and that your behaviour is good in lessons. Your teachers take good care of you and you told me that this helps you to feel safe in school.

It was clear from my time in your school that you enjoy learning but too many of you take time off school which can hold back how well you learn. I have asked the school to find ways of encouraging those of you who are often absent to try harder to come to school and attend regularly. I have also asked the school to make sure that those of you, who at times find your work too easy, are challenged to do even better.

Thank you again for your help during the inspection and I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Linda Buller

Lead inspector