

# Thundridge C of E Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117408
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	312604
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ruth Frith

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>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	90
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Sheila White
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Christine Grant
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 March 2003
<b>School address</b>	Ermine Street Thundridge Ware Hertfordshire SG12 0SY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01920 462642
<b>Fax number</b>	01920 462642

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a small, four-class rural school, which serves the villages of Thundridge, Wadesmill and others nearby. It also receives some children from the town of Ware. Pupils come from families representing a range of socio-economic backgrounds and the percentage receiving free school meals is well below average. Children enter school with attainment that is typical of children nationally. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.

The school has the Healthy Schools award, the Active Mark, an Eco School award and the Hertfordshire Quality Standard award for the Foundation Stage, in recognition of its good work.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and attendance is excellent. The warm and friendly atmosphere, together with good teaching, helps pupils to achieve well so that by the time they leave school, standards are typically above average and sometimes higher. Parents show by their comments that they are pleased with what the school offers. 'I can't sing this school's praises enough,' 'It provides an excellent all round education,' and, 'The school is like a family - everyone knows each other and they look out for each other,' are typical. Good improvements since the last inspection, together with good leadership from the headteacher, the commitment of staff and governors, and support from parents indicate that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Teaching is good because it helps pupils' learning to develop systematically over time. Work is matched well to pupils' abilities so they gain confidence and self-esteem, as they feel able to succeed. Teachers challenge pupils to work hard on interesting tasks and pupils respond extremely well. The curriculum is stimulating. Recent developments about learning through linked subjects and encouraging investigation have had a significant impact on motivating pupils and on developing their attitudes and learning. Pupils are becoming more independent, but are not always clear about what they should do to improve their work and learning.

The successful personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme ensures that pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and healthy, and how to get on with others. Pupils readily make friends and support each other well. They respect others and this helps to create a harmonious atmosphere in the school. Pupils' personal development is outstanding and results in excellent behaviour and a very sensitive attitude to others. Pupils also make an excellent contribution to the school community and beyond through their work in the student council and involvement in local events. Pupils' very good social skills and their progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) help prepare them well for the next stage of their education and beyond. Care, guidance and support are good. As pupils commented, 'Everyone is helpful, teachers are kind, make everything fun and encourage pupils to do their best.'

Good leadership, management and governance result in the school providing good value for money. The headteacher gives good direction for school improvement. The views of all members of the school community are taken into consideration and acted upon, when appropriate. Good self-evaluation procedures have helped the school community to reflect on how well they are doing and judgements match well with the inspection's findings. Staff work hard in this small school to cover all the leadership and management roles in addition to their teaching, but have had insufficient opportunities to develop their monitoring and evaluation skills fully.

Consequently, now and again it takes time for issues to be specifically identified in order to raise standards and improve pupils' progress further. However, the consistency of approach by the staff team and their focus on improving teaching and learning are key factors in the school's success and pupils' achievement.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Significant improvements have been made to the provision and organisation of the Nursery and Reception. Consequently, children's learning and development are now good. Children

settle quickly because expectations are clear and routines helpful. Good arrangements between Reception and Year 1 ensure a smooth transition and a continuation of effective learning. Good planning and organisation result in a range of interesting activities that stimulate children's interests and encourage them to realise that learning is fun. Staff have a good understanding of how young children learn and use this well to ensure a good balance between children working under their close direction and working independently. Parents, both in class and by helping their children at home, also provide good support. Staff gain a good understanding of what children know and achieve through regular observations and assessments. Provision in the Foundation Stage is based on high aspirations and a clear understanding of what children can achieve.

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

- Improve pupils' understanding of themselves as learners by ensuring that they know how they can improve further.
- Extend opportunities for subject leaders to develop their roles of monitoring and evaluation in order to increase pupils' progress and so raise standards.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils of all abilities, including those who find learning difficult, achieve well and make good progress. By the time they enter Year 1, nearly all children reach the standards expected for their age in all areas of learning and sometimes standards are above those expected. Continued good progress in Years 1 and 2 results in pupils typically reaching above average standards in national assessments. In 2007 standards were broadly average, which reflected their lower starting points. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 continue to build on previous learning, which resulted in Year 6 pupils reaching high standards in English and mathematics and above average standards in science in the 2007 national assessments. The school broadly met its challenging targets. Currently, pupils in Years 2 and 6 are working at levels above those expected for their age.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding and has a high priority in the school. Pupils' excellent behaviour stems from high expectations, consistency of approach and the example of staff. Pupils' great sense of enjoyment makes a strong contribution to the quality of their learning and helps to create an extremely positive school ethos. Pupils are very supportive and considerate of each other, and show respect for those from backgrounds and cultures different from their own. This results, for example, in the strong links with a school in Uganda and the raising of funds to help these pupils. Pupils made an excellent contribution to the community through the bi-centennial celebration of the work of a key anti-slavery campaigner and their knowledge and sensitivity of this issue is far beyond that usually seen in pupils of this age. Pupils recognise unacceptable behaviour such as bullying, and understand the impact of their actions on others. They develop an excellent understanding of road and water safety, healthy living and first aid.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching is good because staff regularly check pupils' work and progress and use this information effectively to plan lessons, which builds well on previous learning. Teachers have a clear understanding of what they want pupils to learn, and share this with them. As a result, pupils are clear about what they must do and feel able to succeed. They are curious to know more and helpful questioning by staff develops their thinking well. Typically, there is a buzz of excitement in lessons as pupils express their enjoyment in learning. Pupils respond well to the challenges set by staff. The use of learning partners successfully encourages pupils' greater involvement and development of better speaking and listening skills. The pace of learning is nearly always good but sometimes slows towards the end of an activity. ICT is used skilfully as a teaching aid and pupils use computers well to gain information, create music and record their work.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The key strength of the curriculum is the way in which it creates excitement in pupils' learning, which in turn, results in them thoroughly enjoying their time in school. This aspect supports pupils' good progress. Often, several subjects are taught through a topic with a focus on learning through enquiry, and links between subjects are very effective. This is motivating pupils well and raising their levels of interest. Pupils also say they thoroughly enjoy their French lessons. The effective PSHE programme and sports and physical education activities result in pupils' excellent understanding of how to stay safe and lead healthy lives. Staff have begun to use the new national frameworks for literacy and numeracy. This development is at an early stage and staff are reviewing the effectiveness of this change. Popular clubs, visits, visitors and activities help pupils to develop new interests and extend skills.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Good support, care and guidance helps to develop pupils into happy and confident learners. Good relationships between staff and pupils result in pupils being confident to ask for help when needed and to ask questions to follow up their own interests. Pupils who find learning difficult are supported well due to the effective work of teachers and teaching assistants, and good links with outside support agencies. Procedures for safeguarding pupils, child protection, reporting incidents and health and safety are all secure. Pupils' academic guidance is good in lessons and they are aware of what they are expected to learn. However, some pupils are not always clear about how they can make their work even better.

## Leadership and management

#### Grade: 2

The headteacher provides a good lead for colleagues. They work as a strong team sharing her vision for the school and its values. Within this small school, staff successfully take on a wide variety of responsibilities. However, there are insufficient opportunities for subject leaders to

be active in all aspects of subject leadership, so that they can make a more significant contribution to the school's self-evaluation. Good systems, used mainly by the headteacher and governors, are in place to check how well the school is doing and to identify what it could do better. These have been instrumental in the significant improvement since the last inspection. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's effectiveness by keeping a check on how well pupils are doing, for example, through asking questions about standards and achievement.

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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 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	2
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?	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	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	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	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

17 January 2008

Dear Children,

Inspection of Thundridge C of E Primary School, Ware, SG12 0SY

You may remember that I recently visited your school to talk to you about what you do and what you learn. Thank you for making me feel so welcome. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit and have listed below some of the good things I saw.

- Because you work hard you make good progress, and your standards of work are above those in many schools.
- You really enjoy school and behave exceptionally well because you are interested in the work, particularly the topics.
- I was really impressed with all the sporting and physical activities you take part in. You have a particularly good understanding of how to keep healthy.
- Nearly all of you come to school regularly and on time. Well done!
- You get on well with each other and make good friends. The older pupils look after others very well.
- All staff work well as a team and teaching is good.
- You feel safe in school. I was pleased to hear that you talk to a friend or a member of staff if you have problems and know what to do if there is any bullying.

Your headteacher manages the school well and staff and governors give her lots of help. They have all agreed to focus on two things to make the school even better. Teachers will help you to discover more about your learning so that you know how to improve your work. They will also be given more opportunities to check how well you are doing in different subjects. I know you will respond well to their efforts and try as hard as you can.

I left your school confident that it will continue to improve and wish you all well.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Frith Additional Inspector