

Thurton CofE Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121063
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	313860
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Julie Winyard HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	74
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Maria Todd
Headteacher	Mrs Sonia Innes
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2006
School address	Ashby Road Thurton Norwich Norfolk NR14 6AT
Telephone number	01508 480335
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Thurton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a much smaller than average rural primary school serving three villages. A number of pupils come from outside the designated catchment area. There are very small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups and none who have English as an additional language. The number of children identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. However the number of children with statements of special educational need is above average. A new school is being built next to the current site. This is causing some disruption because of a lack of space in the outside play area. The school has had considerable turbulence in staffing since the last Section 5 inspection in December 2006. The school had a Notice to Improve. It was monitored in July 2007 and was judged to be making satisfactory progress in meeting the issues for improvement. The school has recently achieved Investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with Section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The school currently offers a satisfactory quality of education. This is due to the good leadership of the headteacher, the commitment of all current staff and the full support of parents and governors. The school has worked extremely hard to bring about the necessary improvements since the last Section 5 inspection. This is seen in pupils' satisfactory progress in their academic work and in their good personal development. Through better teaching, a satisfactory curriculum and good relationships at all levels, pupils respond well and make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Although teaching has improved recently there are still occasions when pupils are not fully engaged and do not have sufficient opportunities to develop independent learning skills. Children in Reception make satisfactory progress from their attainment on entry and by the end of the year are achieving the levels expected of other children nationally. Satisfactory progress continues through the rest of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and pupils are now on track to attain average standards for their age in reading and writing according to the school's recently implemented, robust tracking data. In mathematics attainment is below the national average and pupils make slower progress throughout the school. This is related to staffing turbulence and also because, in general, marking is not always linked to targets and is not always as effective as it could be in ensuring pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve their work. Teachers' assessment has improved over the last year although it is not always accurate in evaluating the level children have attained in their writing. Careful planning and good support for the pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to do well and school data shows that they have started to make good progress.

The school has worked extremely hard to secure the support of parents and they are very pleased with how the school has improved. One parent writes, 'We have been delighted with the progress the school has made since the last inspection. We are kept well informed about our child, progress made and the events of the school. We have been particularly impressed by the development of layered targets. We now know what our child's targets are, if achieved and next steps. We have been given lots of opportunities to learn more about how these work. The school has grown in standing in the community.' The pastoral care and support for pupils are good and the staff provide a safe, secure and caring environment. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils have a growing sense of social responsibility and make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. They have good attitudes to school and clearly enjoy what they do. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and what it means to have a healthy lifestyle. They have good social skills. The average standards they achieve in literacy, and information and communication technology (ICT) and below average standards in mathematics, mean they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education and their future lives. Teaching seen during the inspection was mainly good or better. However the judgment of satisfactory overall is because of the considerable staffing turbulence the school is currently experiencing and the impact this is having on standards.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher gives good direction to the work of the school and a strong lead to the staff. The rigorous monitoring of the school's performance by the headteacher results in accurate self-evaluation. The school's improvement plan, clearly based on this monitoring, is detailed and comprehensive. However, the role of subject leaders in monitoring their subjects is not yet fully developed because they have only

just begun to observe teaching and are not yet having sufficient impact on improving standards, achievement and progress in their subjects. Governance is good thanks to the strong leadership of the chair of governors. The various committees work closely with the school and individual governors have clear roles and responsibilities and ensure that the work of the school is carefully monitored. The good progress made since the last inspection shows the school has a satisfactory capacity for continuing development.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Standards on entry to the Foundation Stage are in line with those expected. Children make satisfactory progress and enter Year 1 having achieved broadly typical levels. Provision is satisfactory in the mixed age class and the school uses this opportunity well to support more able and less able children through flexible grouping. Targets are used well and children know and understand the target they are working on. The current Foundation Stage Leader has been in post since September and has introduced effective systems for assessing how well children are getting on. Work is carefully annotated and photographs support the evidence of achievement. However, currently work selected does not show a clear progression of skills, knowledge and understanding from when children start to when they enter Year 1 for example in mathematics or writing. Teaching seen during the inspection was good and was well supported by the work of the teaching assistant.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement, standards and improve progress across the school especially in mathematics.
- Continue to improve consistency in the quality of teaching so that pupils are actively engaged in learning and develop independent learning skills.
- Further develop the role of subject leaders to ensure that they have an impact on raising standards, achievement and improving progress in their subjects.
- Improve the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' writing.
- Develop a consistent, whole school approach to marking and feedback.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The school's performance data for 2007 indicated that standards at the end of Year 2 had dropped since 2006 to below national expectations in reading and writing. They had also dropped to being in line with national expectations in mathematics. However, the intensive support programme, implemented from September 2007, has enabled the school to establish more robust assessment procedures and more rigorous tracking records. These clearly show that pupils are currently making satisfactory progress overall through the school. However, pupils still do not make sufficient progress in mathematics and there remains work to be done on ensuring that teacher assessment in writing is always accurate. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. This is evident through the good records kept by support staff in consultation with classteachers and closely monitored by the headteacher.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good and are strengths of the school. One parent writes: 'This is a warm hearted school and my child feels safe and happy coming here.' Both pupils and parents say there is no bullying. Pupils say they feel they can talk to staff and that if they have a problem it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Their enjoyment of school is evident in lessons and on the playground, and is supported by attendance figures, which are above the national average. Behaviour is good. This is particularly evident in the sensible manner in which they deal with school life in the midst of a building site. The frequent loud banging does not distract them and they move very carefully along what are currently very restricted walkways. Pupils are very pleased with the new behaviour policy, which they say has made a big difference. Older pupils clearly make a positive contribution to the school community. They play with younger pupils at break times, putting into practice the skills they are learning at the Young Leaders course. All pupils are involved in termly fund-raising events. The school council is a force to be reckoned with and has no qualms about approaching the headteacher about issues which pupils think should be brought to her attention. Pupils are prepared for their future economic well-being in a satisfactory manner.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have respect for one another and for the adults who work with them. They work well together in class, in pairs and small groups. Pupils' cultural awareness is developed through frequent visitors and through their links with a school in India.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall because pupils' attainment and progress are currently satisfactory. The majority of the teaching seen during the inspection was good or better and this is having a positive impact on improving the progress pupils make during lessons. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support learning during lessons. Those who support pupils with statements of special educational need, with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are gifted and talented, are well trained and give good feedback to teachers about pupils' progress. The intensive support programme has improved planning and teachers make clear reference to layered targets in their daily plans. They also make it clear to pupils how their target relates to the learning in the lesson and most teachers also explain carefully how pupils will know they have achieved their target at the end of the lesson. However, these improvements have not yet had sufficient time to make enough impact on raising standards. The assessments of writing are not always accurate. During the continuing uncertain staffing situation, the school still needs to ensure that teaching across the school remains consistently good or better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has worked very hard and is now providing a satisfactory curriculum for pupils. Displays around the school celebrate the many visits and visitors that enhance the curriculum and bring subjects to life, such as, for example, the visit to a local museum where pupils learnt

about the clothes that were worn in Victorian times. Good links have been made with the local high school to enhance the science curriculum. Pupils talk very enthusiastically about a recent 'forensic science' day when they had to determine who had committed the murder in a very realistic 'Crime Scene Investigation'. The company who are building the new school have also been involved in curriculum activities. One class investigating materials were able to experiment with different cement mixes to find which was the strongest. A wide range of lunchtime and after school clubs, including for sport, enrich the curriculum. All these are well attended. During the inspection the school choir was rehearsing with great enthusiasm for a concert with other local schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This is satisfactory overall. Pastoral care and support are good because of the good relationships between pupils and with staff. Safeguarding procedures are robust and fully in place and the school has an effective health and safety policy. Risk assessments are carried out for all out of school activities and the buildings committee of the governing body have been particularly active, working with the school, in ensuring that the school site is safe throughout the current building works.

Pupils know their layered learning targets well and agree that, 'They've helped us because when we read them we know what we've got to do.' However, detailed academic guidance is still developing. The school has not yet established an effective, consistent, whole school approach to marking and feedback. Books are regularly marked but teachers' comments do not always refer to the learning target for the lesson and pupils are not yet given time to re-draft work having read the teacher's comments.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Parents say, 'We have every confidence in the headteacher who is determined to improve standards.' The headteacher's good leadership is endorsed by inspection evidence. She knows the school well and has put in place strategies which are having a visible impact on improving standards, achievement and progress. She is ably supported by an effective governing body. The chair of governors provides strong leadership which is clearly focused on school improvement, 'I am like a dog with a bone,' she says of her determination to raise achievement and standards. All governors now play an active part in school improvement through regular visits which include discussion with subject leaders and classroom observations. They offer good support and challenge to the headteacher. The headteacher has developed an effective working relationship with parents who say that 'Communication is brilliant!' The school has received good support from the local authority since the last inspection. The school has set appropriately challenging targets for the current year and 2009.

However, whilst there are good aspects to leadership and management the overall judgement remains satisfactory because of the very high level of staff turbulence the school is still experiencing and the need to improve subject leadership so that those in post have a clear impact on raising standards in their subjects. The decision to remove the notice to improve has been made because of the following points: the good leadership of the headteacher and governors; the demonstrable improvements in pupils' progress; the decision by the governors

to strengthen the leadership team of the school by creating the post of assistant headteacher and the local authority's guarantee, received during the inspection, that they would continue to give the same high level of support to the school, until current staffing turbulence is fully resolved.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	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?	3
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	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	3
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

29 February 2008

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Thurton Church of England Voluntary Controlled primary School, Thurton, Norfolk, NR14 6AT

Thank you very much for the wonderful and friendly welcome you gave me when I visited your school. It was great to be able to talk with quite a lot of you and find out how well you are getting on.

I was very pleased to be able to join you for some of your lessons and to talk with the school council. I was particularly impressed with your behaviour, which is good, and with how well most of you know what your layered targets are and why they help you to learn better. I expect you are really looking forward to moving into the new school and I was particularly pleased to see how sensibly you behave when walking around the buildings when you have such a small amount of space. You also do well not to be distracted by the building work going on around you especially the loud banging, which always seems to happen in the quiet moments in assemblies!

Here are some things that your school can work on to be even better than it is now and I am sure that you will be able to help with some of them:

- Raise standards and improve progress across the school especially in mathematics
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching so that pupils are actively engaged in learning and develop independent skills
- Further develop the role of subject leaders to ensure that they have an impact on raising standards and improving progress in their subjects
- Ensure assessment of pupils' writing is always accurate and that pupils' work is carefully moderated in line with national curriculum levels of attainment
- Develop a consistent, whole school approach to marking and feedback

Thank you again for such an interesting and enjoyable time and many good wishes for your future lives.

Yours truly,

Julie Winyard HMI