

# Thurlbear Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123849
<b>Local Authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	314740
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janet Simms

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	203
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	32
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Roger Millard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mike Amos
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 January 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Thurlbear Taunton TA3 5BW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01823 442277
<b>Fax number</b>	01823 442277

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a one-form entry school where pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Reception class in September. The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school club until 6.00 pm. The majority of pupils come from outside the immediate catchment area. Almost all are from White British backgrounds and very few are eligible for free school meals. The headteacher was new to the school last year. The school holds both the Healthy Schools and Active Mark awards.

## 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. It has improved significantly in the last year and continues to move forward quickly under the effective leadership of the new headteacher. There are outstanding aspects, including areas of EYFS and of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Pupils are highly respectful and reflective in assembly, for instance, and work together extremely well in groups, pairs and teams. Their understanding of healthy lifestyles and fitness is outstanding.

As the result of good teaching and learning, standards are improving across the school. Pupils' achievement is good overall. In the most recent national tests, standards at the end of Year 2 were above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in Year 6 are average, but improving. For the oldest pupils, there is a legacy of prior underachievement, which impacts on the standards they reach. However, in lessons they make very good progress, which allows them to make rapid gains in catching up on previous gaps in knowledge, skills and understanding. Very recently implemented procedures are improving teaching and the school has accurately identified some excellent practice. Planning to support vulnerable pupils, such as those with learning difficulties, is good. However, assessment information is not used consistently to plan work to stretch the more able who are not always challenged enough.

A good and improving curriculum provides an interesting framework for study, with an increasing range of popular extra-curricular opportunities and enrichment. Breakfast and after-school provision is good and is much appreciated by parents. Parents greatly value the excellent pastoral care their pupils receive across the school. Pupils are provided with good academic guidance, but the school recognises this could be improved even further in order to ensure that pupils always know how they can help themselves to improve.

Leadership and management are good. Targets are challenging, and the new headteacher provides clear educational direction, which has put a lot in place in a short time. This is successfully improving academic standards and achievement, while maintaining the school's existing pastoral strengths and strong Christian ethos. Parents' main concern is about alterations to the start of the school day, which can cause difficulties. Governors are aware of this and are reviewing these arrangements. The effectiveness of the governing body has improved significantly of late. Their previous good support for the school is increasingly enhanced by a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for development, which leads to greater challenge and useful help to move the school on. From a satisfactory position at its last inspection, the school has made good improvement. Self-evaluation accurately identifies the school's current position and prioritises the same issues as this inspection. Lesson observations are carried out as part of performance management systems and have led to some recent improvements in the quality of teaching. However, present arrangements do not help to provide a complete view of strengths and areas for development which can be shared across the whole school.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children's skills when they start school are somewhat above those usual for their age. Good induction arrangements, including secure links with playgroups and nurseries, help them settle in quickly. Excellent care from staff and the warm friendly atmosphere provide an environment

where children quickly feel safe and confident. They make good progress in all areas of learning because teaching and leadership are good. Staff create a very wide range of well-planned, interesting activities and take full advantage of the well-resourced spacious classroom and outside area to provide good learning. Personal development and well-being are excellent because staff make sure children become increasingly independent learners. They behave well, feel safe and acquire good personal routines. There is a good balance of adult-led activities and those which children choose. This is a large group, but children are well supported by relatively few staff who take an active part in their learning, including careful monitoring of progress. By the end of the EYFS, most children achieve the levels expected, and many exceed these.

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

- Ensure that assessment information is used to consistently to challenge the more able pupils and guide pupils even more clearly about how to improve their work.
- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning across the school by extending current arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching so that information can be used more effectively to share best practice across the school.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good progress made by children in the EYFS means they start Year 1 with standards that are above national expectations. Good progress continues in Years 1 and 2 so that pupils reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The successful teaching of letters and sounds has had a significant impact on improving standards in reading and writing. Pupils in Year 3 show similar high standards, with significantly improved achievement in mathematics and writing. Most pupils now achieve well across the school because the quality of teaching is improving following recent actions, for instance through experienced staff providing model lessons in mathematics.

Year 6 standards were average in 2007 and 2008 national tests, which represented satisfactory progress against their starting points in Year 2. Inspection evidence shows that older pupils are catching up rapidly on previous gaps in knowledge, skills and understanding because of strong teaching in Years 5 and 6, which results in good progress in lessons. In turn, this good progress impacts on improving achievement and standards. Progress is accelerating across the school and is augmented by good achievement in other subjects, including art, French, music and physical education, where standards are good.

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

#### **Grade: 2**

Good personal development includes excellent relationships between pupils which create dynamic learning when they work together in a wide range of circumstances. Their understanding of the diversity of society is limited, however. Pupils feel safe and happy and enjoy learning from the earliest age. Many pupils have the capacity to develop more independence in their own learning, for instance in understanding how to help themselves to achieve targets. This aside, academic skills to prepare pupils for future education are improving rapidly, and other strong skills such as cooperation and collaboration give pupils excellent grounding for future work. Pupils relish opportunities to contribute to school life and take very seriously responsibilities such as leading 'Wake and Shake' sessions, or being on the school 'Task Force'.

Those with learning difficulties respond well to the support they receive, which enables them to achieve as well as others. Attendance is good because pupils 'love coming to school', as several parents commented, and appreciate the good balance of 'competition, authority, respect and heaps of enjoyment', as one said.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good and improving. The school is successfully improving learning through action taken to improve the quality of teaching, although it recognises more can be done to make the quality even more consistent. Lesson planning matches work well to the needs of less able learners but, in a minority of lessons, does not always provide enough challenge for more able pupils. Parents appreciate the much improved provision for gifted and talented pupils, in mathematics for instance, which is improving their performance. Staff are now increasingly accountable for the progress of pupils in their classes and groups. Systems to ensure that this happens are new, but have already created a positive impact on achievement. Parents greatly appreciate increased opportunities to understand their children's work, and many have attended recent useful workshops on phonics and mathematics.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

A good stimulating curriculum is now well organised to match most pupils' interests and needs. This is because systems provide better information about prior attainment in key subjects and the majority of teachers use this well to plan work. However, a minority do not do this so thoroughly, which results in some mismatch. The curriculum promotes good interesting references between subjects. A Year 5 history project about Greece, for instance, has a good focus on literacy skills, and includes art and music. This creates good understanding of the links between all these areas. The range of extra-curricular activities is good, with many sports available which keep pupils fit and healthy. Other clubs are well attended and numerous visitors and residential visits extend pupils' range of experience increasingly well.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pastoral care and support are highly valued strengths of the school. Staff and pupils themselves create an atmosphere where new arrivals quickly feel welcome, cared for and supported. Parents commented about the 'very caring ethos at the school' which makes newcomers able to learn happily. Vulnerable pupils benefit from early identification of their needs and swift actions to meet these. Safeguarding is secure and staff know pupils very well, responding quickly if issues emerge. This results in increasingly confident pupils who are happy to discuss their learning and successes, and to ask for help if they need it. Academic guidance is good. There is some good practice in marking and most pupils know their English and mathematics targets, but sometimes do not know how to improve to achieve these, so the school is working on ways to make academic guidance even more clearer.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The impact of many recent improvements initiated by the new headteacher is becoming evident in improved achievement and standards. He has successfully maintained the school's existing strengths by managing changes sensitively. Experience in an extended senior leadership team has provided valuable professional development for some staff who now have an increased role in school management. The headteacher has analysed very accurately what needed, and still needs, improvement. However, he has been so involved in carrying out improvements at a practical level that school improvement documentation lags somewhat behind the action. This extremely clear view is increasingly shared by governors. Senior managers' good understanding of assessment data now forms the basis for staff action and there are good examples of this resulting in improved achievement. Subject coordination is improving, particularly in English and mathematics, and these managers are now involved in monitoring their subjects. Together with senior staff's evaluations, this is improving the quality of teaching and learning. However, the school does not have a full enough picture of the strengths and areas for development which can be shared with all staff.

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**Annex A**

**Inspection judgements**

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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**

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	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/or disabilities make progress	2

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<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 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	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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

3 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thurlbear CE VA Primary School, Taunton TA3 5BW

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school. We very much enjoyed being at Thurlbear, meeting and talking to many of you, looking at your work and being in your lessons. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

- Yours is a good school where things are improving quickly.
- Children make a good start in Reception and younger pupils' progress is improving.
- We were impressed with the excellent ways you work together in pairs, teams and groups. You listen to each other's views really well and learn from each other.
- Teaching is good and you have lots of interesting things to do in lessons and before and after school. Many PE and sports activities keep you fit and healthy. We enjoyed seeing Year 6 pupils leading the 'Wake and Shake' sessions, too.
- The school looks after you well.
- The new headteacher has put many new things in place to improve the school and these are starting to make things a lot better.

Even in a good school like yours, there are things which could make it better still, so we have asked adults to do the following.

- Ensure that all of the work that the teachers plan for you challenges some of you even more and make sure that all of you are clearer about exactly what you need to do to improve your work. We think you could help yourselves to improve even more if you all knew this.
- Make sure that teaching gets even better for all of you, and we have suggested that adults watch your lessons more often to find out how to do this.

Thank you again.

Yours sincerely

Janet Simms

Lead Inspector