

# Thorns Community Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125550
<b>Local Authority</b>	Warwickshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	315258
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Derek Watts

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>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	176
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ed Hart
<b>Headteacher</b>	Liz Bradbury
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 February 2005
<b>School address</b>	Blackthorn Road Kenilworth CV8 2DS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01926 853875
<b>Fax number</b>	01926 853875

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects: how leadership, management and provision are leading to exceptional high standards in reading and writing and mathematics; the school's performance in science and information and communication technology (ICT); personal development and well-being, the curriculum and care, guidance and support. Evidence was collected from lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work and school documentation. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. 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 assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Thorns Community Infants is a smaller than average primary school. Most of the pupils come from a White British background. A small number of pupils speak English as an additional language but none is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Thorns Community Infant is a good school with outstanding aspects to its work. Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and an excellent curriculum. By the end of Year 2, standards are exceptionally high. Good quality care, guidance and support lead to outstanding personal development and well-being for pupils. Good leadership and management contribute significantly to the school's effectiveness and improvements. The relatively new headteacher provides good direction and is successfully building on the school's success. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher and other leaders. Teamwork among the staff is strong and there is a positive culture of continuous improvement. The leadership of English and mathematics is highly effective. Other leadership roles are developing well through teamwork, training and support. The governing body possesses a wide range of expertise. Governors are committed, supportive and have a good understanding of the school's performance. New governors are well supported and inducted into their role.

Teaching and learning are good with elements of outstanding practice. Children start school with a good base of skills and knowledge. From the Reception Year onwards, they make good progress. As a result, by the end of Year 2, standards are significantly higher than average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in science are also high because pupils are provided with good opportunities to discuss and share ideas. They acquire and develop a range of scientific skills through investigative work. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who respond exceptionally well to their teachers' high expectations of learning and behaviour. Teachers' clear instructions, demonstration and explanations promote learning well. Assessment is used effectively to match activities and tasks to pupils' abilities and needs. As a result, pupils are challenged well and make good gains in their learning. Pupils show high levels of concentration and take pride and care in their work. Teaching assistants are well deployed and make a valuable contribution to learning, particularly for those pupils who need a bit of extra support. The marking of pupils' works is effective because praise and encouragement is given for good work. Constructive comments help pupils to improve. In some instances, pupils are given good opportunities to evaluate their own work. However, this practice is not established in all classes and the school has identified that there is scope to further extend pupils' learning by involving them in self-review.

An interesting and stimulating curriculum contributes to pupils' good progress and excellent personal development. There is a strong emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics. There are also good links between subjects, which add meaning, relevance and enjoyment to pupils' learning. Provision for ICT has improved considerably since the last inspection. This is now good and is used widely to support teaching and learning in a range of areas. Music provision is another strong feature of the school. Pupils sing with enthusiasm and have good opportunities to learn to play the recorder or violin. The school's indoor pool is regularly used and swimming contributes well to pupils' healthy lifestyles and to their physical skills. An exceptionally good range of clubs, visits and visitors enriches pupils' learning. Pupils thoroughly enjoy all aspects of school life.

Most parents are pleased with both the care and education provided for their children. Typical parental comments include, 'we are very pleased with the care and teaching provided'; 'very impressed with the wide range of trips and extra activities' and 'Thorns has a lovely atmosphere for both for both pupils and parents'. A significant number have concerns about the number of teacher changes in a Year 1 class caused through maternity leave and a long-term illness.

The school is sensitive to these concerns and is working effectively in unusual circumstances to maintain pupils' good learning.

Exceptionally good care, guidance and support make a valuable contribution to pupils' academic and personal development. Pastoral care is excellent and there are good systems to assess and monitor pupils' attainment and progress. Pupils are set clear individual learning targets in English and mathematics so they know what they are working on to improve. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. From the Reception Year onwards, pupils thrive in the school's very positive atmosphere. Through visits and visitors, they acquire very good understanding of different faiths and festivals. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected in their enthusiastic participation in all activities and their good attendance. Pupils are courteous, friendly and helpful to others. Behaviour is generally very good because of the high expectations of all staff and outstanding relationships between adults and pupils. Children in the Reception Year have very positive attitudes to learning and this is successfully built on in Years 1 and 2. Throughout the school, good behaviour contributes significantly to pupils' good achievement and the high standards attained. Pupils show an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating, exercising regularly and keeping safe. Pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education because by the time they leave, they are very competent in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Their personal and social skills are also exceptionally well developed.

Although the school has been modest in judging aspects of its work, its performance is systematically reviewed and findings are used very well to guide planning for improvement and to set challenging targets. The maintaining of high standards and improved provision for information and communication technology (ICT) demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Good quality teaching and an exciting curriculum enable all children to make good progress in all areas of learning. The wide range of activities that are planned around exciting topics, such as dinosaurs, 'minibeasts' and growth, motivates the children very well. Teachers and assistants provide an effective blend of adult-led tasks and opportunities for children to explore, be creative and work independently. However, the school has identified the need for more direct instruction and demonstration of basic writing skills to support the many opportunities provided for creative writing. By the end of Reception, children have acquired levels of knowledge and skills that prepare them very well for the next stage of their learning.

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

- extend opportunities for pupils to assess and review their own progress
- increase the attention given to the teaching of basic writing skills in Reception to support the wide range of opportunities for children to write independently.

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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	1
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	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	1

### 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?	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>	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

22 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thorns Community Infant School, Kenilworth, CV8 2DS

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school and showing me your work. I enjoyed my visit and would like to tell you what I have found. Yours is a good school with some outstanding features.

These are strengths of the school:

- children in Reception get off to a really good start
- you all thoroughly enjoy school and your attendance is very good
- the school is an extremely friendly, caring and pleasant place to be
- behaviour is good in lessons and around the school
- teaching is good, which is why you are learning so well
- by the end of Year 2, standards are high in reading, writing, mathematics and science
- an outstanding range of learning activities is provided for you
- music, ICT and swimming are strong areas of the school
- you show an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe
- the school is well led and managed by your headteacher and other senior staff
- you show considerable care and respect for other pupils and adults
- staff take excellent care of you and give you outstanding support
- your parents are pleased with the care and education provided.

There are two areas that the school could work on to make it even better:

- you could be given more opportunities to check and review your own work to see how well you are doing
- in Reception, you could be given a bit more help to improve your writing skills.

Finally, thank you once again for all your help. I wish you all the very best for 2008.

With kind regards

Derek Watts Lead inspector

**Annex B**

22 January 2008



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Derek Watts  
Lead inspector