

Thorne Green Top Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130293
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	315608
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith Bardon

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	404
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Singleton
Headteacher	Miss Helen Rudkin
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2004
School address	Southfield Road Thorne Doncaster South Yorkshire DN8 5NS
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Green Top is a large primary school serving the local community in and around the small South Yorkshire town of Thorne. The social and economic indicators of the area are a little below average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion who speak a language other than English at home is very small. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average for a school of this size. An average proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational need. The school has achieved a number of awards including Basic Skills, Gold Sportsmark, Activemark, Supergrounds and a local award for design and technology. Since its last inspection, the school has experienced a large number of staff changes and has had several headteachers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Having experienced an extended period of disruption with frequent changes of senior staff, the school is settling down under the leadership of the current headteacher and getting to grips with its main priorities for development. There is further work to do to make the school more effective, but staff and governors are realistic about the task in hand and share a common vision for its future.

Pupils are happy at school and have confidence in the staff. Pupils expressed the views that 'Teachers are friendly and helpful and are always willing to listen.' Although parents' opinions of the school are a little mixed, most hold positive opinions of the education their children receive and of the improvements being made. 'My Daughter is much happier in school than she has ever been,' is typical.

As a result of improvements to the quality of teaching and learning, pupils in Key Stage 1 are achieving more than at any time since the last inspection and by Year 2 attain standards close to the average for their age. Variations in the quality of teaching produce uneven progress in Key Stage 2, with pupils achieving best in Years 5 and 6. Overall, in this key stage and across the school, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are average.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and some is good. Teachers make clear to pupils what lessons are about and what they are expected to learn. Teachers' use of assessment is developing but on too many occasions tasks are pitched towards average attaining pupils. They do not, therefore, reflect well enough the needs of the more able and, in particular, the lower attaining pupils. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They listen attentively to staff and try hard to answer the questions put to them. While the curriculum covers all the required subjects, the content is rather mundane and does not enliven pupils' learning sufficiently. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall.

The school takes good care of its pupils and has satisfactory systems in place to measure and track their progress. Pupils are well behaved, friendly and polite. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and become increasingly self-confident as they grow older. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils have a sound awareness of their responsibilities as part of the school and wider communities. Most pupils appreciate the need for a healthy lifestyle and show a good understanding of what to do to keep safe. They acquire a satisfactory range of basic skills in preparation for the future.

Management at all levels is satisfactory and the school runs smoothly. The scope, detail and accuracy of the information gathered about the school's performance is increasing. However, the responsibilities of senior staff are not specified clearly enough, reducing the effectiveness of their work and making the process of self-evaluation less efficient. The work of the governing body is satisfactory and is becoming more effective as their understanding of how to hold the school to account increases.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Links between home and school are good. Children enter Nursery with levels of knowledge, skills and understanding broadly typical for their age, although a significant minority have poor speech and language. Good quality care ensures that children settle quickly into a routine, begin to develop independence

and enjoy their time in school. Relationships in the classroom are happy and positive. Children make satisfactory progress and most are working at the expected level by the time they join Year 1. Overall, children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. However, their general progress is hindered by the limited outdoor facilities and this reduces opportunities to gain independence and become less reliant on adult help. Throughout the Foundation Stage there is an appropriate balance between activities that children choose for themselves and those directed by teachers. Although teachers provide stimulating activities to help pupils learn they do not plan these activities together as much as might be expected. Under the leadership of the temporary coordinator, management of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the overall quality of teaching to ensure that pupils of all abilities have work that is closely matched to their needs.
- Enliven the curriculum by giving pupils more interesting activities.
- Provide senior managers with more clearly defined responsibilities to ensure more effective use of the information from school self-evaluation.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter Key Stage 1 with knowledge and skills that are broadly as expected for their age. Assessment data shows that in the recent past pupils have underachieved in this key stage. As a result of better teaching, they are now making satisfactory progress. Standards are rising and pupils' attainment in Year 2 is close to the national average. Pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory overall and by Year 6, standards are average. Pupils make faster progress at the end of this key stage than at the beginning because teaching is more challenging and better organised. Standards in the Year 6 national tests are average and school targets are generally met. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar steady progress to other pupils. Across the school as a whole pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Nevertheless, the work they are set does not always closely match their needs and this slows down some pupils' progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory overall and there are some good features. They enjoy coming to school citing the good relationships they have with staff and each other. They are keen to participate in all aspects of school life and especially enjoy the 'cheer leader' club. Pupils say they feel safe in school and can discuss any problems they may have with an adult. Most pupils arrive on time and overall attendance is average. They behave well in lessons and around the school and treat adults and each other with respect. They readily take on responsibilities, value the opportunities provided through membership of the school council and work together well. Pupils' understanding of their place within the wider community and of the diversity of life in modern Britain is satisfactory. While pupils are aware of the importance of a healthy living lifestyle, some have still to apply this fully to their own lives. They develop a satisfactory range of basic

skills in preparation for future learning and life. Pupils develop into sensible young people with good personal values.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers manage behaviour well and good relationships between adults and pupils ensure that lessons progress smoothly. New ideas are introduced thoroughly and questions used productively to aid pupils' understanding. Clearly displayed objectives help pupils understand what they are expected to learn. However, on occasions, teachers use language that is too complicated. While the better lessons have momentum and purpose, some teachers do not generate sufficient pace or they spend too much time talking to pupils. Classrooms are generally organised well and teachers collaborate effectively to ensure that pupils in different classes in the same year group are taught the same things. Well trained teaching assistants work effectively in supporting pupils' learning, both in the classroom and when withdrawing them from lessons in groups. Although assessment is satisfactory, its use is inconsistent. In some lessons work is not matched well enough to meet the needs of the higher attaining and particularly the lower attaining pupils, adversely affecting both groups' progress. The best marking gives advice to pupils about how they may improve their work but marking does not uniformly do this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements but is only moderately stimulating. Many tasks pupils are set are quite ordinary and while they provide pupils with satisfactory knowledge and skills they do not promote a fast enough rate of progress. This has been recognised by the school and some improvements, such as making better use of the links that exist between different subjects, have begun, but require further development. The curriculum has strengths, such as the enrichment provided by educational visits and visitors, including residential visits for pupils in Years 4 and 6. These, and an interesting range of out-of-class clubs and activities, add to the pupils' enjoyment of school. Theme days such as an annual book day, where pupils dress up as characters from their favourite story, add further stimulus. The curriculum provides equal opportunities for all learners, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with gifts and talents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

A caring and supportive ethos is embodied in all aspects of the school's work and appropriate procedures to protect and safeguard pupils are in place. These, combined with positive relationships, ensure that pupils are safe and know where to turn if they need help. The school has good strategies to monitor and manage behaviour and these are having a positive impact. Incidents of bullying are rare and pupils are content that any that do occur are dealt with firmly and effectively. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported by clearly focused individual education plans and well trained teaching assistants. The quality of the academic guidance pupils receive is satisfactory. They are given clear individual targets and their work is marked regularly. Pupils' understanding of how to use their targets and teachers' comments to help them improve is also satisfactory. The systems used to track pupils' progress

are thorough but contain limited information because they are quite new. Teachers' use of this information to target support for pupils is satisfactory and developing well. Strategies to help pupils check on their progress during lessons are being introduced, but are not yet fully in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

As a consequence of the disruption the school has experienced since the last inspection, there has been insufficient progress in raising standards and addressing the key issues from the last report. Under the focused leadership of the present headteacher the school has stabilised and the pace of improvement is picking up. Senior management has been reorganised and staff share a common sense of purpose. However, many of the procedures needed to raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress have been put in place quite recently and are only just starting to have the desired effect. Management systems provide an accurate overview of how well the school is performing and help staff to identify the areas that need further development. The leadership team of headteacher and senior teachers works well collectively, but their individual roles are not clearly enough defined and there is some repetition or unnecessary sharing of responsibilities. The quality of teaching is checked regularly and teachers are guided on how to improve. Systems to track pupils' progress provide a clear picture, but some targets the school sets lack sufficient challenge to support a rapid increase in standards. Governors are closely involved with the school and support its work. Their understanding of how to challenge the school to help it improve is satisfactory. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

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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	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
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	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
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

Thank you very much for the very friendly greeting you gave the inspectors when we visited your school recently. Lots of you smiled and chatted to us which made us feel comfortable and welcome. We thoroughly enjoyed finding out about the work you do and a special thanks to those who talked with us about the school.

Green Top is a satisfactory and improving school. We were pleased to hear that you enjoy school and find your teachers kind and helpful. Your behaviour in and around school is good and you listen carefully to your teachers during lessons. It was nice to see pupils helping each other in class and trying hard to answer the questions teachers asked. Please keep this up.

Most of you are making satisfactory progress in the things you learn and the skills you develop. We think that you can do much better. It is important that the work given to different pupils in lessons is just right for them. We have asked teachers to make sure that this always happens. The regular visits and visitors the school provides are very interesting and it was good to hear how much you enjoy the after-school clubs. What you do in lessons is OK, but the school agrees with us that it could be improved. We have asked staff to look at ways to make your lessons more interesting and lively. You can help by thinking very carefully how well your work meets your targets and always look for ways that you could make your work even better.

The most important decisions for the school are made by a group of teachers called the senior leadership team. Sometimes what each individual member of this team has to do is not as clear as it might be and we have said that this needs to be easier to understand.

Thank you once again for a very enjoyable two days and I wish you lots of luck in the future.