

Thorntree Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100142
Local Authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	323231
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	212
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	30
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Julia McDonald
Headteacher	Ms Richenda Fenwick
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Thorntree Road Charlton London SE7 8AE
Telephone number	020 8858 0268
Fax number	020 8293 0998

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Thorntree Primary School is an average sized school. The school has a Nursery class, which, with the Reception class, forms the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school has an onsite, privately run, breakfast club and after school care club.

Pupils who attend the school come from a very varied range of social, cultural and religious backgrounds. Most are from White British families. The next largest groups are from mixed heritages or Black African and Asian backgrounds. About one in ten pupils come from affluent homes although a quarter of all pupils receive free school meals, which is higher than average. Since the school was last inspected the number of pupils who speak English as an additional language has risen and is now higher than average, although only a few pupils are at the early stage of learning to speak English. A high proportion of pupils have some kind or form of learning difficulties and often these relate to difficulties with reading and writing. A few pupils have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. Three classes are being covered by either newly qualified teachers or a job share due to maternity leave. The school has won a number of awards including the Activemark, Silver Eco Award for environmental care and the Travel Plan Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Thorntree Primary School is a very happy and caring school, which provides a satisfactory and improving education for its pupils. The dedicated headteacher and all senior leaders and staff are very keen to do the best for the pupils. The strong team ethos and clear leadership has helped to improve standards to the national average by the end of Year 6 in 2008. Achievement is satisfactory.

Leaders and staff have developed strong relationships and partnership with pupils, parents and the community. This enhances pupils' enthusiasm for learning and promotes good community cohesion. As one parent put it, 'It's like a family'. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school because the curriculum is interesting and supported by a wide range of extra activities.

Pupils commented that 'Everyone in the school is nice' and inspectors agree. This, together with high expectations for pupils' good behaviour and interesting cultural activities, means that pupils respect each other. In particular, the school is a racially harmonious place. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is especially strong. As the headteacher put it, 'Everyone is a wonder in their own right'. Pupils do especially well in gaining an outstanding understanding of how to be healthy and they make a very valuable contribution to the wider community. They know about how to be safe in the world around.

In the last year, standards have improved following a period when they had fallen. By the end of Year 6, standards are now broadly average. The school's assessment information indicates that standards are likely to continue to improve in 2009 and beyond. From pupils' varied starting points they make steady progress overall but it is better in some year groups than others. This unevenness is evident in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders know that improved achievement is an important aspect for further development and they are beginning to address this.

The quality of teaching and learning is varied, but satisfactory overall. In some lessons and classes, teaching and learning are good but there is not enough good learning. Sometimes, lessons could be more challenging. Leaders appreciate that there is room for further development of the way in which they check the quality of learning to help more teaching to become good in the future. This is an important factor in further raising achievement to become good.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and rightly focused on raising standards. Governors hold the school to account well. In particular, clear leadership has resulted in an important improvement in the way that leaders track and check pupils' progress, this is helping standards and achievement to rise.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Currently, provision is satisfactory, with particular strengths in the Nursery class. Maternity leave has recently affected the overall provision. As a result, staff expertise is not as strong as it was and the headteacher is acting as the EYFS leader. Steady developments are taking place to implement the most recent guidance for the EYFS curriculum. The headteacher is fully aware that this is not ideal for her to be the leader, as she is not working directly with the children. Other staff within the EYFS are keenly developing their roles. Particular strengths include children's personal development. Adults are highly caring and show considerable respect for the children. The good partnership with parents enhances this. Children have a 'Key Person'

with whom they link on a day-to-day basis; this helps them to grow in confidence and enjoy school. Children's health and well-being are well promoted.

Teaching and learning, including the learning environment are satisfactory overall. The Nursery has good inside and outside learning space and resources. This enables the youngest children to actively explore things for themselves and develop their social and physical skills well. This is more restricted in the Reception class as space is extremely cramped. Adults make suitable links between different areas of learning. Sometimes activities could be more exciting to enliven children's imaginations further. Staff promote children's speaking and listening well. The teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) help children appropriately with their reading. There is room for higher quality role-play and for further challenge when children do writing and mathematical problem solving activities.

Between 2005 and July 2008, children reached average standards by the end of the EYFS in almost all areas of their learning, although reading and writing were slightly lower. During this time, achievement was good. The school's recent evaluation, and sessions seen, suggests that progress is currently satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Rigorously monitor the quality of learning in the drive to lift the quality of teaching to at least good.
- Raise achievement to good. Making sure that pupils make even progress in reading writing and mathematics in all year groups.
- Ensure that learning is challenging for all groups of pupils.

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

Standards, over the last few years, had gradually been rising by the end of Year 2 until the summer of 2008. At that point, they dropped significantly. Overall, standards are lower than average. The drop in standards in 2008 was due to a legacy of past weaker teaching. Past underachievement at Key Stage 1 has now ceased because of the good improvements in teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2.

By the end of Year 6, standards fell between 2005 and 2007 and they were exceptionally low in 2007. This was partly due to having a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. However, the school's own evaluation identified that there was a need to improve the way that they checked pupils' progress. Added to this, they identified a need to improve the teaching of reading and writing. Improved assessment systems, target setting and teaching resulted in a significant rise in standards in 2008. Provisional data for 2008 indicate the expected Level 4 standard for most pupils. This trend is likely to continue for at least the next two years. Achievement is satisfactory but pupils make uneven progress year by year. Of note is the recent good progress and catch-up in learning by pupils in Years 2 and 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils follow rules very well, listen attentively and grow in confidence and self-esteem as they move through the school. They show very good respect for others. They enjoy taking part in the school and local community and show well developed ability to work collaboratively, for example, by helping to improve a local woodland area, working on recycling projects and by winning an anti graffiti competition. Pupils have a strong understanding of different faiths and cultural traditions, helped by parents, visits and school activities. Pupils actively take part in a wide range of sporting activities and competitions, with the girls winning the Greenwich Girls' Football League in 2008. They have an impressive knowledge about healthy eating and note such things as making sure that Omega 3 is included in the diet. Pupils gain a suitable range of academic skills for their future economic well-being. Since the last inspection attendance has improved and is now average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Initiatives such as the special writing project and the more focused teaching of phonics and reading are aiding improvement in pupils' achievement. Mathematics is developing steadily but there is still more to do to develop learning through investigation and problem solving activities. Pupils are excited by the interesting writing activities and teachers are very keen to make writing purposeful and fun. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic learners. Sometimes teachers talk too much at the beginning of lessons and this limits independent learning. For example, there are some missed opportunities to ensure that pupils have enough time for writing, editing and extending their work. There is often a good focus on discussion work, which helps pupils to clarify and develop their ideas and understanding well. Some lessons are not challenging enough to ensure that all pupils of different abilities and backgrounds make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has improved the curriculum for reading and writing and this is helping standards to rise. They recognise that there is room for more investigation work in mathematics as a way of improving achievement. The good range of clubs and extra activities enhances pupils' personal development well. For example, specialist teaching of music helps pupils to enjoy drumming and singing in particular. Links with Charlton Athletic Football Club enrich all pupils' lives. Links with a local Woodland organisation and residential visits extend pupils knowledge skills and awareness of life in the wider community. Sports and health are promoted especially well and help pupils to be fit and understand the importance of commitment and teamwork. The curriculum is well organised to promote enjoyment and links between subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is very good and pupils feel that they are listened to. They say, 'Everyone is given a fair chance'. This ethos begins with the headteacher and spreads through teachers, support

staff and learners at all levels. Interactions between pupils and staff are excellent and lead to pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes. Links with parents and outside agencies support the care provided well. Parents have great confidence in the care provided. One parent noted, 'Staff bent over backwards to help us come through a traumatic experience. Their help has been invaluable'. Pupils with learning difficulties benefit from effective out of class support and this helps them to make good progress whilst working in small groups. Overall, they make satisfactory progress in class. In the last year, leaders have been working well to improve the academic guidance given to pupils and catch-up support is given to pupils when needed. Pupils know their targets in literacy and mathematics and use these to improve their work. They usually meet their targets. The marking of pupils' work often shows pupils when they have met their target or the learning intention of the lesson. However, it is not yet consistent in telling them how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides very caring leadership. The senior leadership team work well together and they are quickly developing their skills in evaluating the work of the school. Governors call the school to account well. In the last year, leaders have introduced a more robust way of checking pupils' progress. More frequent discussions about pupils' progress and improvements in the teaching of English, helped standards to rise by the end of Year 6. The school has a sound capacity to continue this improvement. Leaders recognise that there is still more to do to make self-evaluation better still. There are plans in place to improve the assessment system to ensure that the progress of all different groups of learners can be analysed to best effect. Target setting has improved in the last year and targets are now realistic and suitably challenging. Currently, not all leaders monitor learning. Senior leaders appreciate that they have been monitoring teaching more than learning and this is a factor in why progress is uneven in different year groups. A strength of leadership is the way in which all staff and governors promote community cohesion. Currently, a good project on 'respect' is helping pupils to understand others, value diversity and promote shared values.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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

How good are 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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	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 learners' needs?	3
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

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

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

07 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thorntree Primary School, London, SE7 8AE

You may remember that two inspectors came to your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly and telling us about your school. From the moment that we walked into the school, we found it to be a happy and caring place. You also agree and so do your parents. Your school is satisfactory overall. This means that most things are suitable for you, some things are particularly good and a few aspects need to be better. Your school has improved in the last year because your headteacher, staff and governors have been busy trying to make it better for you. These improvements mean that most of you are now reaching the level that we expect in English and mathematics. In particular, you are doing better in English because the school has improved reading and writing activities and you enjoy these. You make steady progress overall. You do better in some classes than in others.

We were impressed by your behaviour and very pleased to hear that you enjoy coming to school. Well done for improving your attendance, please keep this up! We are very impressed by how you are trying to become fit and healthy. Your headteacher and all of the other teachers and helpers do a great job in looking after you. We especially like the activities they give you to do. We were delighted to hear about your successes in football and in the way that you help your community by doing eco projects. Congratulations for winning the local anti graffiti competition. In particular, we would like to say well done for showing such respect for others, this is important as you live and learn in a culturally mixed community.

Your headteacher, other adults and governors are keen to try to do the best they can for you. We want to help them. We have asked them to do the following things.

- Carefully check how well you are learning so that more lessons are good.
- Help you to make good progress in all classes in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Make sure that you are always given activities to do that help you to think hard. (We call this challenge).

Thank you for singing so nicely, it was a pleasure to listen to you.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Simmons

Lead Inspector