

Thurstonland Endowed Voluntary Controlled First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107717
Local Authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	324632
Inspection dates	22–23 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Marie Cordey

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	56
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tim Difford
Headteacher	Mrs J Martin
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Marsh Hall Lane Thurstonland Huddersfield West Yorkshire HD4 6XD

Age group	5–10
Inspection dates	22–23 October 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small, rural school draws pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds. There are three mixed age classes comprising Reception and Year 1, Years 2 and 3, and Years 4 and 5. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is lower than average. All pupils are White British. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision (EYFS) includes one Reception class. The school has gained Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark for its sports provision.

There is a privately run out of school club on-site, but it did not form part of this inspection.

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 with outstanding features. The overwhelming majority of parents agree. They say, for example: 'There is a sense of family, of nurturing and caring'; 'We feel very fortunate to have such a lovely school in the village', and, 'My children reach high standards because of good teaching and care.' Pupils' personal development is outstanding: their behaviour is exemplary and they are confident, and articulate young people. The inspirational headteacher works with committed and supportive governors to improve standards through careful planning to match individual need and by regularly reviewing challenging targets.

Pupils achieve well from their starting points in Year 1 to attain significantly above average standards in English, mathematics and science when they leave at the end of Year 5. Pupils' skills in problem solving and spelling and punctuation have improved because of the school's focus on raising standards in mathematics and in writing. There is still a gap between standards in reading and writing and the school has prioritised the need to improve pupils' skills in extended story writing. Recent improvements to the tracking of individual pupils' performance have meant that the headteacher can clearly pinpoint where children are performing less well; for example, the small numbers of pupils whose progress is not as good as others. The school accurately identifies the need to involve teachers more in precise monitoring of pupils' progress in order to ensure further improvement.

Pupils are respected and valued by staff and, in turn, they are exceptionally tolerant and mindful of the needs of others. Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning and their outstanding relationships reflect the school's commitment and care for their personal and academic development. Pupils make outstanding contributions to the community through hosting community events and participating in the Village Association, the cricket club and in numerous cultural and sporting activities. Pupils are exceptionally committed and generous fund-raisers both for the local area and internationally. Good quality teaching makes learning enjoyable and relevant to pupils' lives. As a result, pupils are stimulated and excited by well planned lessons where they are active and involved. Consequently, most pupils learn well, although some are not aware of precisely how to improve their work. This is because marking is occasionally vague and does not guide pupils specifically towards improvement. The school takes good care of its pupils and is very effective in supporting those who are more vulnerable. Pupils and parents appreciate the many advantages a small school brings and good planning by school leaders ensures that pupils have as many learning experiences as those in a larger school. To this end, the good curriculum is carefully planned so that individually tailored work is planned for each pupil and includes the full range of National Curriculum subjects. There are outstanding opportunities for pupils and their parents to enrich their learning beyond the school day through a wide range of sporting and cultural activities.

The headteacher has a dynamic vision for the school's success and there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Governors are clear about their role in school improvement and do not hesitate to ask challenging questions. The school regularly and accurately evaluates school performance and has good capacity to improve still further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception class with skills that are mostly above those typical for their age, especially in their communication and language skills. They make good progress in most areas of learning because of very effective teaching and leadership. Their personal development is outstanding and children are considerate, welcoming and confident. Good admission arrangements ensure that children settle quickly and happily into school life. This parent's comment reflected the views of many others: 'The introduction my son had to school was excellent. He had a photograph of staff and pupils, the Reception class teacher visited him at home and he had the chance to visit the school before he started.'

Children are well cared for in an attractive indoor classroom. Thorough planning and assessment ensures that activities are well matched to their needs. By sharing their class with Year 1, children in Reception strive to be as skilful and independent as the older pupils. In turn, Year 1 pupils improve their learning because they relish opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and explore their learning. Children thoroughly enjoy their work and play because of the skills of the teacher and support staff in providing a wide variety of activities. Nonetheless, outdoor provision is limited because the playground is small and equipment needs to be moved so that other pupils in the school can use it. This restricts their day-to-day opportunities to explore nature and extend their physical skills. Teaching assistants are valued for their commitment and their sensitive focused support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. By the time children leave Reception most are working far beyond expected levels in most areas of their learning and are well prepared for Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve resources for outdoor provision in the EYFS to deepen children's knowledge and understanding of the world and extend their physical development.
- Involve teachers more in tracking pupils' progress to improve standards and achievement, particularly in writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are significantly above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 5 as they have been for a number of years. Regular and careful review of pupils' attainment leads to swift action to improve gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Last year, for example, the school worked successfully with the local authority to plan lessons to improve pupils' problem solving skills. Drama lessons improved pupils' speaking and listening skills. Story writing has improved at a slower rate because planning is at an earlier stage and information and communication technology (ICT) resources are only just beginning to be used to support writing. There are no marked differences between the achievement of the various groups of pupils, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or boys and girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and their attendance is excellent. They feel safe in school and know who to turn to if they are troubled. The social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. They think carefully about social issues and have a keen

sense of fair play. They have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and are very keen to talk about why people should eat healthily and exercise regularly. One of the parents summed up the views of pupils and staff in the comment, 'The food is outstanding'. It is. Fresh ingredients are prepared every day and served by the chef in a 'bistro' style environment designed to respect the value of good conversation and enjoyment of well cooked food. 'Posh nosh' on Fridays imitates that of a restaurant with tablecloths, glasses, napkins and good quality cutlery. Pupils take exceptional care of each other and are proud to help others and to take responsibility through an active school council. Pupils are well prepared for the move to middle school because they are confident and secure and reach good standards in basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good quality teaching ensures that pupils learn well. They are delighted to say how much they enjoy learning because, 'It's fun and we do lots of different things. Then we find out we have learned a lot as well.' Pupils learn particularly well when they are active and involved. Occasionally, teachers speak for too long which limits pupils' participation. Most pupils know exactly what they are doing in their work. In a Year 2/3 class, for instance, pupils moved their thumbs up, down or sideways to indicate the depth of their understanding. This speeded up learning as well as enabling staff to attend to pupils' needs very quickly. Pupils are challenged through good quality questioning which encourages them to think critically. Shared planning with teaching assistants and good support enables pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make very effective gains in their learning. Good assessment means that most pupils know how to improve their work, especially when their targets are changed as soon as they achieve their aims.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A rich and creative curriculum very effectively meets the needs and interests of pupils, including those who are more vulnerable. It reflects the many external awards received as well as the school's commitment to variety and enjoyment. A major investment in ICT provision is beginning to improve research skills as well as the presentation of pupils' work. This is at an early stage and has not yet led to its regular application in a wide variety of subjects. Themed weeks, visits, visitors and educational visits make learning exciting and bring it to life. Pupils effectively link their learning of geography and biology, for instance, when describing the 'mysterious' nature areas on their visit to the 'Forbidden Corner'. A vast number of activities both before and after school are very well attended and pupils are particularly proud of their successes in cross country competitions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are stimulated to enjoy learning and good arrangements are in place to ensure pupils' safety. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported through effective systems designed to provide appropriate support. Excellent systems to promote pupils' personal development ensure that pupils become responsible and valued members of their community. Parents are made to feel welcome in school and a great many of them help individual

pupils to improve their work. The headteacher has an accurate overview of pupil's progress through the use of data, and new systems to track pupil's achievement are beginning to be used by teachers to accelerate achievement. These are not yet fully effective because staff are at the early stages of using data to set appropriate work and targets for individuals. As a result, a small number of pupils do not match the fast progress made by others, especially in writing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a clear view of the school's performance and celebrates pupils' achievements through outstanding, reflective assemblies; she also teaches classes on a regular basis. Priorities for further development are based on detailed knowledge and a firm commitment to pupils' care and education. Recent steps to improve standards in writing are shared with all staff to ensure that any gaps in pupils' learning are speedily acted upon. This is reinforced by professional training and support that is closely matched to the identified areas for school improvement. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion through its work with parents and in the local environment. Governors are very involved in school life and provide constructive support. Relationships with local authority partners, neighbouring schools, local theatres and museums make a positive contribution to pupils' personal development.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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 learners' needs?	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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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**

Inspection of Thurstonland Endowed Voluntary Controlled First School, Huddersfield, HD4 6XD

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to me when I came to inspect your school. You were very helpful and made a point of looking after me. I would especially like to thank the pupils who met with me to share their views about school and the many others who made a point of speaking to me in lessons, in the playground and around school. You played a big part in making the inspection so enjoyable and I would like to share with you what I found out about your school.

Yours is a good school and in some parts it is outstanding. You learn well because you enjoy it and your work is above average in all subjects. You are encouraged to eat healthily and keep fit and you enjoy the many opportunities to take part in activities before and after school. Yours is a small school but you still manage to take part in lots of sporting activities. Well done on your recent successes in cross country! One of the best things about your school is the way you look after each other and respect the many different types of people in the world. This is because you are respected and helped by all the staff in the school.

I have asked the school to help you to improve your story writing to match your very good reading and speaking and listening skills. I have also asked your teachers to look closely at how you are doing in your work so that if, at any time, you slow down you will be helped to catch up. I know you will enjoy improving your work even more.

Children in the Reception class settle down quickly and make good progress when they join the school. Like you, they take care of one another and enjoy school life. I have asked the school to provide more space and equipment outside. This is to give children in Reception class a bit more choice in what they want to do and so that they can develop their understanding of the world and improve their physical skills.