

Thorner Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107994
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	324683
Inspection date	15 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Roger Gill

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	137
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	Dr Bruce Pollock
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Wrigglesworth
Date of previous school inspection	14 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Kirkhills Thorner Leeds West Yorkshire LS14 3JD
Telephone number	0113 289 2541

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	15 October 2008
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Fax number

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievement in mathematics and writing; the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); and the way that leadership and management tasks are distributed among staff. Evidence was gathered from the school's judgements about attainment on entry, evidence of standards and achievement held within school, observations of teaching, pupils' current work and discussions with senior managers, pupils and governors. 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, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school situated in a relatively advantaged area. Most pupils live in the immediate locality but, increasingly, others travel some distance to attend the school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British origin. A below average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of pupils eligible for a free school meal is well below the national average. The EYFS comprises a Reception class. There is a privately run pre-school facility on-site, but it did not form part of this inspection. A new headteacher and two teachers have been appointed since the last inspection. A major building project is taking place in the school grounds to provide new accommodation for child care, the pre-school group and Year 2 pupils. The school possesses the Healthy School, Active School and Eco (Bronze) Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Thorner is a good school with outstanding features. The first-rate care provided for pupils is as effective as it was when the school was last inspected in 2006. This high level of support and guidance still produces outstanding personal development among pupils. 'A good village school.' typifies the opinion of the vast majority of parents. They often use words such as 'stimulating' and 'supportive' when talking about the quality of teaching provided for their children. Inspection findings agree with these sentiments. Good, and occasionally outstanding, teaching makes sure that pupils progress well in virtually all aspects of their learning.

Current standards, as demonstrated by inspection evidence, are above the levels expected for pupils' age at the end of Year 2 and well above them at the end of Year 6. This represents good achievement. Pupils' progress in reading and mathematics is good but in science, at Year 6, where standards are very high in relation to expected levels, achievement is excellent. The progress made by pupils in mathematics has quickened lately owing to the school's successful diagnosis of some relative weaknesses in teaching. Pupils make satisfactory progress in writing. The school has identified, correctly, that achievement in this area could be better and has implemented some measures to tackle the situation. Nevertheless, there is not yet a common understanding among pupils about how to compose a greater variety of sentences with powerful vocabulary and apt punctuation.

Pupils speak enthusiastically about the school in every respect. Behaviour is often impeccable and pupils are industrious and conscientious in lessons. They are quick to applaud a curriculum that encourages them to be healthy, keep safe, enjoy specialist work from experts in sport and music and learn about issues like environmental sustainability. Pupils take great pleasure in composting apple cores, for example, and entering competitions for collecting the most telephone directories for recycling. The pride with which older pupils mention being house captains or members of the school council also demonstrates how well adults inspire them to get involved. The school is a thriving community with very regular contacts within the community and with some local schools. Pupils' horizons are broadened by frequent trips out of school and well established links with a school in Sri Lanka. As a result spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Teachers are skilful at planning work to suit pupils' particular needs, which makes learning relevant and enjoyable. Tasks for pupils, for example in English and mathematics, are generally tailored equally well for higher attainers and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A team of well qualified teaching assistants makes sure that pupils who need extra help get good quality support. For example, in one lively English lesson, a group of pupils in Year 1 received beneficial help to catch up in their reading. Demands on pupils' writing in some lessons are not high enough, but these are balanced by occasions when teaching is superb at helping pupils to produce mature pieces of writing. For example, in a Year 5/6 lesson pupils were inspired to write very well by the teacher's expert use of the interactive whiteboard to present them with a range of stimulating advice.

Good leadership and management have ensured that teaching has improved since the last inspection. Furthermore, the headteacher and governors have instigated a major extension to the accommodation and the number of pupils is growing. Parents praise these improvements. A few are concerned about the effect that part-time teaching or large mixed-age classes might have on their children's progress. Inspection findings reveal that the headteacher and governors

make sure that learning progresses at a similar rate for all pupils in Years 1 to 6. Management is good partly because governors take a keen interest in the school, work well to evaluate its progress and plan constructively for the future. All of these positive aspects demonstrate good capacity for further development. Subject leaders are beginning to take on more responsibility for evaluating pupils' standards and achievement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Standards are in line with nationally expected levels by the end of Reception. This represents sound achievement from entry levels that are broadly typical for children's age. Leaders have a good knowledge of strengths and aspects for development in EYFS, but have satisfactory impact because work to improve the setting is only partly accomplished. Care for children's welfare is excellent, which accounts for their good personal development. It is only the occasional lack of opportunities to show independence that prevent personal development from being outstanding. Learning is more accomplished when children are taught directly by an adult. In this way, children do well, for example, in learning about letters and their sounds and gaining information about healthy lifestyles and the world around them. In one session children discovered a lot about their senses by conducted tasting experiments with an adult and by spotting materials with different textures. However, the statutory requirements for a play-based education are not fully in place. The space outside the classroom is not established to enable children to re-enforce all aspects of their learning through educational play. This also applies to a lesser extent to opportunities for play indoors. Teaching by all adults is good at providing knowledge and asking questions to check understanding but not quite as good at helping children to think for themselves.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing to at least match those in reading and mathematics.
- Provide more and fully effective opportunities, inside and outside the classroom, for children in EYFS to learn through educational play.

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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?	1
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?	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?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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	2
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	2

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?	1

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**

Thank you for your help when I inspected your school. I thoroughly enjoyed my day. You go to a good school in which standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average by the end of Year 6. This means that you learn well and make good progress. Your rate of progress in writing is not as good as it is in reading and I am asking the school to make sure that this difference is tackled as soon as possible.

Some things are excellent such as your personal development and the way you are cared for and supported. I found it fascinating to talk to many of you about your work and what you enjoy most. You certainly have a healthy attitude, feel safe from bullying and take part in school activities with enthusiasm. What impressed me greatly was how positive you all are about what is on offer at Thorner such as sport, residential trips, information and communication technology, and global links. Getting involved in the work of the school council and learning how you can contribute to saving the planet equips you with valuable skills for the future. Many of you are conscientious about your homework and trying to achieve your targets in English and mathematics, which makes me optimistic about your future academic success.

You say that teaching is good and it helps you to learn well and I agree. You do your best by behaving thoughtfully and keeping positive. You are all growing up to be caring young people who participate very well and are concerned about the world around you. The school's links with Sri Lanka give you great opportunities in this respect.

I know everyone wants to do even better and I have asked your school to do two things to help. I have already mentioned improvements in your writing. Secondly, children in Reception need more opportunities to practise all aspects of their learning through play. This will mean more things to make and do outside and in the classroom. You can all help the school do better by taking a keener interest in achieving your targets in writing.