

Thorney Close Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108828
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	324841
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Christine Inkster HMI

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)	238
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 Colin Short
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Jones
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Torquay Road Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR3 4BB
Telephone number	0191 5536093
Fax number	0191 5288199

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average size primary school situated in Sunderland. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage with a very small minority from a minority ethnic background and for whom English is not their first language. Approximately one third of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and there is a higher proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need than found nationally. There are 16 pupils with hearing impairments who travel to the school from other areas within the local authority. The school has achieved the Sports Activemark and the Football Association Charter Standard Status.

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. There are some good features. The personal development and well-being of pupils are good reflecting the good care, support and guidance provided for them. A major strength of the school is the way in which it works with other partners and agencies to ensure that there is a high level of care and support for pupils and particularly those who are the most vulnerable. There is a very positive and welcoming ethos in the school and everyone is valued. Pupils have very good relationships with staff and with one another. This is demonstrated by the positive way in which pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with hearing impairments are included in all aspects of school life. Both staff and pupils have learned British sign language (BSL) so they can communicate effectively with hearing impaired pupils. The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is good, giving children a good start to their education.

Achievement is satisfactory although standards are below average. Standards are mainly below the national average at the end of Years 2 and 6 in English, mathematics and science. This represents satisfactory progress from their low starting points. Few pupils attain the higher levels. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same rate of progress as their peers, but those who are in the hearing impaired unit make good progress because the provision for these pupils is good. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with some that is good and a small amount that is outstanding. Evidence seen in lessons and in pupils' work during the inspection indicates that pupils' progress is accelerating but remains satisfactory. There are some good features in lessons, for example, the way in which teachers consistently explain to pupils what they are to learn and how they can achieve their goals. However, although there is high quality marking in some classes, it is not yet consistent throughout the school.

Academic guidance and pastoral care and support are good. The school has established good systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. This information is being used well to set targets which help pupils understand how to improve their work. The curriculum is satisfactory and all requirements are met. The school has taken positive steps to revise curriculum plans to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to practise their basic literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Nonetheless, whilst some improvements have been made, this task is not yet fully completed. The curriculum is enhanced through a wide range of visits and visitors and this provides some valuable first hand experiences which extend pupils' knowledge and enjoyment.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Information on pupils' performance has been used well to devise a good quality improvement plan that is focusing on tackling the right priorities but the full impact of this work has yet to be seen. Teamwork amongst staff is good and they are keen to help and support one another as well as share good practice. Some senior staff are new to their roles and whilst they are working hard to make improvements, their work has not yet had an impact on raising standards. Governance is satisfactory and improving because they are committed to increasing their knowledge of the school through regular monitoring visits. These generate good quality reports which are shared and discussed with the rest of the governing body. This is enabling them to question the staff and challenge the work of the school more effectively. Self-evaluation procedures provide an accurate picture of the school's current position. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and

this demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision in the EYFS is good and children are provided with a good start to their education. Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities which are variable, but mainly well below those typical of children their age. They quickly settle in and make good progress in all areas of learning across the EYFS because of the good quality of teaching and interesting curriculum they receive. By the time they enter Year 1 most have achieved slightly below the goals expected for their age. Teachers plan well for children's development in all areas of learning and there is a good balance of child initiated and adult led activities, both indoors and outdoors. The EYFS provides a welcoming environment and promotes children's welfare very successfully. As a result, they become confident and eager learners. Children's behaviour is good and they demonstrate a caring attitude towards one another. There are close partnerships with parents, external agencies and the children's centre which ensure that all children are well supported. The Early Years Foundation Stage is managed well, and staff work together effectively as a team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Complete the task of integrating key literacy and numeracy skills into curriculum plans to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to practise their skills.
- Ensure that marking is consistently good.

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

Achievement is satisfactory although standards are below average. Children begin school with skills and abilities which are variable, but mainly well below those typical of children their age. They make good progress in all areas of learning across the EYFS. By the time they enter Year 1 most pupils have achieved slightly below the goals expected for their age. Between Year 1 and Year 6, progress is satisfactory overall partly because of a legacy of underachievement. Standards in teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2007 were below average in reading and writing although standards in mathematics improved and were in line with the national average. In both key stages, few pupils attain the higher levels. At the end of Year 6, standards were below average in mathematics and science but were well below average in English in 2007; this represents satisfactory progress from their low starting points as over half of this group of pupils were identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, provisional results in 2008 and evidence of work seen during the inspection show that current pupils' progress is accelerating, particularly in English, but remains satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress in line with their peers. However, those in the unit for hearing impaired pupils make good progress because of the good, intensive support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The majority of pupils enjoy and some say they 'love' school and this is evident from improvements in attendance. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils say they feel safe, they collaborate well and form good relationships with each other. The inclusive nature of this school is reinforced through the mixed corridor and mixed playground environment where girls and boys from different year groups are encouraged to work and play well together. In this environment, older pupils take responsibility for caring for younger pupils. There is a strong family atmosphere, particularly in assemblies where hymns are sung with accompanying sign language by all pupils. Behaviour is good in and around the school which enhances learning. Pupils have a clear sense of how to live healthily and this is reflected in the healthy choices they make at lunchtimes. Pupils take responsibility for improving their own school community through the school council which has had a strong voice in the development of the playground and other areas of the school. Pupils instigate fundraising events for the wider community. Effective links with local secondary schools promote good transition.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are some good features. During the inspection many lessons observed were good with a small number of outstanding lessons. There are still variations in the quality of teaching and this largely explains why pupils' achievement is not yet good. In the better lessons teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned. Teachers consistently make clear to the pupils what they will learn and what they have to do to achieve their goals. Good use is made of talk partners and pupils have good opportunities to comment upon their own and other's work which supports independent learning. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly those in the hearing impaired unit is carefully monitored and specific targeted support is provided. This has contributed well to the good progress made by those pupils in the unit. The consistent application of the token reward system is motivating for pupils, promotes good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. There is evidence of some high quality marking in some classes but this is not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets all statutory requirements. The curriculum is broad and balanced and there is a focus on developing basic skills. Whilst the curriculum has been revised recently, plans for developing pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects, are not yet fully in place. Provision for the creative arts, including music is effective in promoting pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to promote learning. The impact of the good personal, social and health curriculum and the social and emotional aspects of learning programme (SEAL) are evident in pupils' good personal development and well-being. The curriculum is enhanced through a range of visits and visitors into school which pupils enjoy. A valuable partnership with the local secondary school provides pupils with French lessons and does much to improve transition. Pupils have the opportunity to visit France to extend their language skills even further. Some good quality

extra-curricular activities are provided but these are not always as well attended as they might be.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Senior staff are focused on improving the progress pupils make as they move through the school. They have initiated some good strategies which are beginning to have an impact. Pupils' progress is now tracked more rigorously and those who are underachieving are quickly identified. Appropriate support is given and consequently pupils are beginning to make better progress. Pupils know their learning targets well and this helps them to understand what they have to do to improve. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet all recent regulations and parents appreciate the support that the school provides for their children. The breakfast club provides a good start to the day for some pupils. The experienced and skilled support staff are well led and effectively deployed to provide high quality support for pupils who find aspects of school difficult. Pupils' needs are identified at an early stage and a multi-agency approach to support them is well embedded. Consequently, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included in all aspects of school life. The unit for hearing impaired children provides an environment for bespoke learning which can be blended with mainstream education as appropriate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school evaluates the quality of leadership and management as satisfactory and this is confirmed by inspection evidence. The headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school and ensures that the school is responsive to the needs of the local community. This has aided community cohesion. However, the school has not yet developed links in order to strengthen pupils' global awareness although there are plans in place to do so. The headteacher and other school leaders and managers work hard to create an inclusive school where all members of the school community are valued. Some leaders and managers are new to their roles and are developing their management skills but it is too early to assess the full impact of their contributions in improving standards and achievement. Systems to monitor and evaluate the school's planned actions are in place and are carried out regularly. This has resulted in the leadership team having an accurate view of their strengths and areas for improvement. Governors are knowledgeable about the work of the school, bring a range of expertise to bear and are beginning to ask challenging questions about the school's work, but the impact of this is not yet seen in the academic achievement of all pupils.

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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?	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?	2
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?	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	2
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?	3
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

20 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thorney Close Primary School, Sunderland, SR3 4BB

Thank you for making me and Mrs Taylor welcome when we inspected your school recently. We would like to thank those pupils who spoke to us in lessons and around the school. Please thank your parents for completing the questionnaires and tell them that we have taken all their views into account. We think your school is a satisfactory and improving school. There are some things which are good. Here is a summary of what we found, which I hope will be of interest to you.

- You care very much for one another and there is a good family atmosphere in the school where everyone is made to feel special.
- Your behaviour is good and you have good attitudes to learning.
- Your teachers look after you well, you say you feel safe and know you can go to a member of staff if you have a concern or worry.
- Pupils who are hearing impaired make good progress because of the good support they receive.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have a good start to their education.

The headteacher, staff and governors carefully check to see how well you are doing, and they want to make the school even better for you. Most of you make satisfactory progress but the standards of your work are below average. These are some of the things we have asked them to improve.

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Complete the task of planning the curriculum to ensure there are more opportunities for you to practise your skills in literacy and numeracy in other subjects.
- Ensure that marking is consistently good.

You can help by coming to school every day and by working as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster

Her Majesty's Inspector