

Thornborough Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110253
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	325117
Inspection dates	3 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Steven Hill

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	36
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steve Rumsey
Headteacher	Mrs Brigid Howard
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2006
School address	High Street Thornborough Buckingham MK18 2DF
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited four lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at samples of pupils' books, and their work on display. Examples of the school's documentation were studied, particularly the assessments made of pupils' progress.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the range and quality of work undertaken in information and communication technology (ICT)
- how well the assessments made of pupils' standards are used to plan tasks that are matched to their individual needs
- how well the school promotes community cohesion.

Information about the school

This is a very small, rural, village school. Pupils come both from the village itself and from the surrounding area. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with a small minority coming from other backgrounds. All pupils have English as a home language. No pupils are known to be entitled to free school meals. Relatively few pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although these pupils' problems vary considerably. There have been some substantial changes to staffing recently in the context of such a small school. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught together in one class. The school caters for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class. There is provision for younger children in the Early Years Foundation Stage at a pre-school on the site. This is operated by a private provider, and was inspected and reported upon separately.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Pupils excel both socially and academically in this outstanding school. Its many successes stem from the way every pupil is known and treated as an individual. As a result, pupils' needs are met extremely well. Staff are very skilled at ensuring that both boys and girls, regardless of their ability or background, are fully involved in the life of the school and make good progress. Pupils get off to a flying start because of outstanding provision in the Reception class, and build on this very well as they progress through the school. At the end of Year 2 standards are consistently high in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school has an outstanding capacity to maintain and improve on its strengths. It has very strong systems to evaluate its own effectiveness, and addresses any shortcomings rigorously. Despite disruptions to staffing, excellent leadership has ensured that teaching and learning are good and improving, and lessons taught by established staff are often outstanding. Care, guidance, support and, in particular, the curriculum have improved significantly since the last inspection. These aspects of provision are excellent. As a consequence, there have been major improvements in the outcomes for pupils. Achievement, behaviour and pupils' contribution to the community are now outstanding, for example. The pupils' 'voice' is very strong and their views are respected and acted upon by the adults.

A good contribution is made to community cohesion. The school itself is a thriving, harmonious community where pupils feel completely safe, and get on extremely well together and with the adults. One told an inspector that the best thing about Thornborough was 'the kindness in the school'. Pupils are happy and thoroughly enjoy learning. The school is at the heart of the local community, and pupils are involved in many aspects of village life, as well as making close links with other local schools that benefit their learning. The school has also made a variety of links with communities overseas, which extends their knowledge and understanding of other people. However, in comparison little has been done to help pupils understand the diversity of different communities in the United Kingdom.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the promotion of community cohesion by providing more extensive and systematic ways for pupils to understand the wide range of communities in the United Kingdom, and ensure that the impact of this work is evaluated carefully.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' consistently positive attitudes to learning, excellent behaviour and hard work mean that they make good progress in lessons. They know what they are expected to achieve, both in individual lessons and over time, through the personal targets they are given. They try hard to meet their teachers' high expectations, concentrate well and take a delight in their accomplishments. Their enjoyment of school is strongly reflected in their attendance, which is well above average, having been just average at the last inspection. Overall, pupils start in the school with attainment that is above expectations. The consistency of their learning leads to high levels of attainment. Pupils who struggle with aspects of their work make good progress in the light of their difficulties because of support that is carefully tailored to their needs. Virtually all pupils, regardless of ability, ethnic background or gender, reach the expected levels in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2, and very many exceed them. High standards are also apparent in pupils' work in art and physical education. Standards in writing have improved since the last inspection, although pupils' handwriting and presentation do not always match the often very high standard of the content. Pupils also do well in ICT, an area identified for improvement at the last inspection.

Pupils are confident in expressing their views in class, and develop high levels of independence. They are extremely proud of the contribution they make to the life of the school, particularly through the impact of the school council. Pupils undertake responsibilities conscientiously, to the extent that Year 2 pupils agreed that any disagreements at playtimes seldom need adult intervention, as playground leaders resolve most disputes effectively. Pupils show a high degree of concern for those less fortunate than themselves. For example, the school's involvement in Red Nose Day was initiated and organised by the pupils. Pupils have a very good knowledge of the need for a balanced diet, and throw themselves enthusiastically and energetically into exercise, such as the daily Skip 2B Fit sessions. They develop a very good understanding of moral and social issues, exemplified by one girl who said she enjoyed everything about the school, 'even being told off' because then 'I know what I should do'. Pupils' excellent personal skills and their very high standards of literacy and numeracy prepare them extremely well for their future lives, in education and beyond.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

The key to the effectiveness of provision is the way in which pupils' individual needs are assessed and addressed. Staff use a wide range of assessment information to track pupils' attainment. The results are used well to set challenging but manageable targets, and to make sure tasks are closely matched to specific needs. In class adults develop very positive relationships with pupils and set a very positive ethos for learning. As one pupil said, 'The teachers make the school really happy.' Teachers monitor pupils' progress carefully during lessons, and are quick to intervene if anyone is puzzled or goes astray. Very good use is made of extra skilled adults to ensure that all pupils are involved and supported. Some good use is made of discussion between pupils to share and clarify their ideas, although occasionally such opportunities are missed. A good start has been made in getting pupils to evaluate their own and each other's work, and plans are in place to extend and develop this further.

The greatly improved curriculum contributes strongly to pupils' enthusiasm and learning. It is matched well to pupils' interests and needs, and there is a wide range of exciting enrichment activities that generate interest and involvement from pupils. The curriculum is greatly enhanced through the many effective links with other local schools. In particular, these add to the variety of sports and other physical activities provided, boosting very effectively pupils' health and enjoyment. The use of ICT to support work across the curriculum, a relative weakness a few years ago, is now a strength.

The exemplary pastoral care underpins pupils' academic success and their outstanding happiness, enjoyment and behaviour. Very close links are made with parents, who are able to work in unison with the school to support their children.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

Parents greatly praise this aspect of the school, and how well their children are helped to cope with difficult or distressing events. Vulnerable pupils are supported well and the school draws very well on support from partners outside the school to tailor provision very closely to each individual's needs. Staff provide extremely sensitive support so that pupils who initially find it difficult to conform make great strides, and take an increasingly full part in the life of the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides extremely successful direction to an effective and hard-working team, who are focused strongly on improving outcomes for pupils. This has been very successful, despite some disruptions to staffing which might have had a major impact on such a small school, were it not for the excellent leadership and secure management systems in place. The staff team is well supported by governors, who have a good understanding of the school and are well able to hold it to account for its performance. A strong emphasis on equality of opportunity means that the needs of all individuals and groups are analysed and met extremely effectively. Excellent relationships with parents greatly support this. Safeguarding procedures meet national recommendations, and are carried out meticulously. Training for staff is regular and well planned. Work with other key agencies to support vulnerable pupils is exemplary.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has an in-depth understanding of the needs of young children, which ensures that provision is outstanding. The uniqueness of each individual is strongly recognised and their particular needs addressed very well. This means that all children achieve extremely well during their time in the Reception class, reaching high standards by the time they go to Year 1. For example, excellent opportunities that link speaking and writing in different activities mean that children rapidly develop into confident, independent writers. A wide range of exciting activities, indoors and outside, provide a stimulating environment where children are absorbed and enthused by their learning. This was exemplified during the inspection when children became totally involved in designing, making and flying kites, making excellent progress in their skills and understanding. Children's play is enhanced by very effective questioning from the adults, which gets them to think and to be independent in developing their ideas. The excellent provision to support children's welfare is reflected in their enjoyment, enthusiasm and the very positive relationships they have with each other.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and how their children are getting on. Replies to questionnaires typically (and accurately) described the 'wonderful nurturing environment', with one parent writing, 'I can't sing the praises of the school enough.' Several parents praised, in particular, how well and sensitively the school had dealt with their own children's specific needs.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thornborough Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 30 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 33 families of parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	3	0	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



15 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thornborough Infant School, Buckingham, MK18 2DF

Thank you for your very warm welcome and all your help when we visited your school. You told us you really enjoy school, and we could see why. This is what we found out.

Thornborough is an outstanding school. This means it does a lot of things really well. These are some of the most important.

- Your behaviour is excellent, you all get on really well together and you work hard.
- You are making good progress and are reaching very high standards because your teachers are good at helping you to learn.
- You play a big part in making the school an exciting and friendly place to be, and are very good at joining in events in the village.
- You know a lot about keeping healthy, and you take part in exercise with a lot of enthusiasm.
- You get lots of exciting things to do in all the different subjects, and the school has got much better in using information and communication technology since the last inspection.
- All the adults keep a very careful eye on how you are doing, and make sure that anyone who needs extra help gets just what they need.
- The adults are very good at managing the school, and making it better.

We have agreed with the headteacher that, to help you learn even more, they are going to teach you more about all the different communities that live in other parts of this country.

We hope you carry on enjoying school and making it such a fantastic place to be.

Yours faithfully

Steven Hill
Lead Inspector

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