

Childer Thornton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111083
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	325292
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2009
Reporting inspector	David Law

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	163
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 David Baldwin
Headteacher	Miss Liz Pitchford
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	New School Lane Childer Thornton Ellesmere Port Cheshire CH66 1QY
Telephone number	0151 338 2170
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Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Childer Thornton is a smaller than average school serving an area where social deprivation is lower than average. The number of pupils in receipt of free school meals is below average. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. There are no pupils from ethnic minorities and none at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises Reception only. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award, Activemark and the Dyslexia Friendly School Award.

There is a privately managed pre-school and after-school club on the school site. These provisions were inspected separately and receive a separate written report.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Childer Thornton Primary School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and some aspects are good. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and they reach broadly average standards. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are cared for well, feel safe and enjoy school. An extensive range of activities in art, music and sport enrich pupils' experience and help them to learn. Satisfactory teaching enables pupils to make satisfactory progress. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well managed and helps them to make good progress.

Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of skill generally at or above those expected at this age. They settle well in the Reception class and their achievement is satisfactory. Satisfactory progress at Key Stage 1 enables pupils to attain average standards by the end of Year 2 and this continues at Key Stage 2. Provisional results in English and science in the 2008 Year 6 national tests were broadly average, but mathematics was below average. These overall results were not as good as in previous years, with staff absence over the last three years contributing to this. The staffing is more stable now and pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 are on course to achieve better results, particularly in mathematics. Throughout the school, too many pupils do not build well enough on their prior learning in this subject, because there are insufficient, relevant opportunities for pupils to explain their thinking and assess their learning.

The school is a happy place and enables pupils to acquire positive attitudes. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Pupils are proud of their achievements and eager to talk about places they have visited and how they help each other, for example, as buddies in the playground. They are confident in approaching adults if they have a problem and know it will be dealt with sensitively. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and describe how they take exercise to keep well. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and pupils learn to tolerate difference and respect the needs of others. Attendance is above average and pupils are eager to come to school.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and supported by positive relationships between adults and pupils. Classrooms are well organised and enhanced by attractive displays of pupils' work. The best teaching at the school challenges pupils and they are actively involved, for example, when they are able to explain their thinking by talking to a partner in the class. Assessment, including the marking of work, is not used consistently enough to show pupils what they need to improve or to plan work that is matched to pupils' needs. Care, guidance and support are good and pastoral systems ensure pupils' needs are understood and met. Methods have been introduced to track pupils' progress as they move through the school. Despite this, within the classroom, pupils are not secure in knowing their personal targets. The curriculum is satisfactory and provides many opportunities that add to pupils' enjoyment.

Satisfactory leadership and management promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination by enabling everyone to feel valued and to develop well personally. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. School leaders recognise the need to raise achievement in mathematics and planned strategies are in place to support this. Progress is reviewed and evaluated and all leaders are being increasingly involved. However, the school's self-evaluation is not sufficiently underpinned by a robust and accurate analysis of evidence of the quality of provision and pupils' achievement and is too positive as a result. The governing body, where there have been some recent appointments, is still developing its role in checking

on standards. Staff and other resources are managed efficiently. A particular challenge for school leaders and governors has been the management of staff absence and this contributed to results in 2008 not being as good as previously. The school runs smoothly day-to-day. Safeguarding meets current government requirements. Improvement since the last inspection and value for money are both satisfactory. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Good relationships are formed in a warm and caring environment where children feel secure. Adults show a firm commitment to promoting children's well-being. Achievement is satisfactory and children participate in learning with obvious enjoyment and make the progress expected of them. Regular assessment is used to plan learning to meet children's needs and there is a balance between what adults direct and what children choose for themselves. Although children follow instructions well, sometimes opportunities are missed for them to discuss learning, extend their understanding and improve their level of skill. Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development, becoming increasingly confident and independent. They play together exceptionally well and take responsibility, for example, in choosing activities and when tidying away. They enjoy being outdoors particularly, where they are able to learn about the natural world. For example, a group of boys explained how they were making 'worm soup' by mixing mud and water. Although the area is not readily available outside the classroom adults ensure there is regular access to it. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory, with a strong focus on promoting children's welfare. Good induction arrangements help children settle quickly. Parents/carers are actively involved in their children's learning and one said, 'My child loves school and his teacher and is very enthusiastic about what he is learning.' Adults plan the curriculum as a team to ensure progression in learning and the day-to-day organisation is smooth and efficient.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in mathematics by providing relevant opportunities for pupils to explain their thinking and assess their learning.
- Improve the use of assessment to plan work that matches pupils' needs and helps them understand what they need to do to achieve their personal targets.
- Improve self-evaluation at all levels of leadership and governance through rigorous analysis of the quality of provision and outcomes in terms of pupils' achievement.

A small proportion of 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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. They enter Year 1 at or above the levels of skill expected for their age and make satisfactory progress across Key Stage 1. The 2008 Year 2 assessments showed broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents a dip on previous years, when standards were above average. Pupils make the most progress in reading because of the emphasis put on teaching this key skill. Pupils do not do as well in mathematics because they are not always challenged sufficiently. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress across Key Stage 2. The 2008 end of key stage provisional results

showed pupils reached broadly average standards in English and this was similar to performance in 2007. The standards reached in the mathematics tests were below average and showed a significant drop on the previous year. Standards in science were average and also showed a dip in performance. For the current Years 5 and 6, school assessment information and work in pupils' books indicate an improvement in both mathematics and science. These pupils reached above average standards at the end of Year 2 so their overall progress across the key stage is satisfactory. Pupils across the key stage make better progress in English than in mathematics, where work is not matched as well to their needs. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good throughout the school. The needs of these pupils are accurately assessed and met through good intervention programmes that are managed well by the special needs coordinator.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils respond in a mature and articulate way. Their spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good. When given the opportunity, they contribute effectively to whole class discussions. They are particularly confident in doing this when they get the chance to explore ideas with a partner or a small group, before sharing their thinking with a wider audience. They have a good understanding of other cultures demonstrated, for example, through their artwork, drama and dance. Relationships are good and pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Older pupils take responsibility as play leaders, school councillors, buddies and running the 'Eco team'. All pupils take pride in their school and their achievements and are concerned about others. They say they feel safe and that any incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively and promptly. They show a good understanding of how to stay safe, for example, when using the Internet. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average. Pupils settle quickly in lessons, listen attentively and, when they are given the opportunity, they work together collaboratively to solve problems and usually organise themselves well. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and are able to make sensible choices, for example, eating healthy fruit and salad. Younger pupils have less opportunity to take responsibility, for example, as representatives on the school council. The development of workplace and other skills that will contribute to pupils' future economic well-being is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Classes are managed well and resources are organised efficiently. Displays of pupils' work are bright and attractive and help to support their learning. There are good relationships between pupils and teachers and personal development is promoted well in all lessons. This helps pupils to be cooperative and they show positive attitudes to learning and good levels of concentration. In the best lessons at the school, they have the opportunity to share their thinking and assess their progress but there is not enough of this and pupils do not have enough knowledge of their personal targets and what they must do to improve. There is a good level of challenge in some lessons but in most the rate of learning is satisfactory rather than good because assessment, including marking, is not used well enough to tailor work accurately to pupils' needs. This explains why pupils do not make better than

satisfactory progress. The tracking system that has now been introduced and further staff training are enabling teachers to have a better understanding of the progress pupils are making.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum with a number of good features. It enables pupils to enjoy learning and achieve satisfactorily. Statutory requirements are met and the curriculum is organised so that pupils see the relevance of the skills they learn, for example, through links with local businesses. Their experience is enriched through opportunities to take part in themed activities, engage with artists, story-tellers and dancers from their own and other cultures, as well as drama and music. There are frequent opportunities for pupils to enhance their learning and broaden their understanding through visits and contacts abroad, as well as through learning French. Opportunities for pupils to be trained as mentors, play leaders and road safety officers contribute to their personal development and their capacity to stay healthy and safe. They develop the self-confidence and skills to achieve their future economic well-being through problem solving activities and group work, planning and carrying out their own investigations. However, opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and use key skills in other areas of the curriculum are applied inconsistently. Teachers are not always well versed in how much children already know and understand, so that there are some gaps in pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and make a positive contribution to pupils' personal development. Teachers and other adults in the school are committed to promoting learners' health and safety. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils meet government guidelines and are regularly reviewed, and health and safety is managed carefully. The school provides a safe and supportive environment. There are efficient systems to ensure the good attendance of pupils. Pupils take pride in their achievements and the school promotes successfully opportunities for everybody to learn. Any pupils at risk of underachieving are identified early and effective arrangements put in place to keep them engaged in learning. A good tracking system is now in place, which enables the school to target support for underachieving pupils, for example, through teaching assistants. The school works well with other agencies and partner institutions, for example, to provide extra challenge for gifted and talented pupils and to remove any barriers to learning. Not all pupils understand how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve their work and the quality of academic guidance varies across the school. Assessment information is not always used effectively to ensure individual needs are met in lessons so that progression from one stage to another is sometimes uneven.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. While school self-evaluation is satisfactory, it is too positive in its assessment. However, senior leaders recognise rightly the need to improve assessment and standards in mathematics and staff and governors share this view. Both assessment and standards in mathematics are priorities in the school development plan and relevant actions are in place. All leaders plan for improvement but subject leaders do not have enough opportunity to develop a whole school view. Targets for pupils' attainment and progress

are suitably challenging. Information from assessments is used to track pupils' progress but the school has only recently begun to link this to a systematic checking of work in pupils' books. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities and the Chair is particularly supportive of the school. However, not all governors are involved sufficiently in school self-evaluation to act to best effect as critical friends. Steps are taken to promote equality and eliminate discrimination and the contribution made by the school to community cohesion is good. Pupils' personal development is promoted well and the school is a harmonious community. There are extensive links with local organisations, including other schools, and international links are strong. Most parents are positive about the school and commented on the happy, family atmosphere and enthusiasm of staff. A small proportion felt their children had not made enough progress. The school has had to manage significant staff absence recently and the effect of this on their children's learning, particularly in mathematics, has concerned some parents. The deployment of resources, including staff, is satisfactory: the school successfully manages its budget and achieves satisfactory value for money.

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	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?	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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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	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**

My colleague and I enjoyed our visit to your school and you made us feel very welcome. Thank you for talking to us and telling us about your school.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. You tell us that you feel safe in school. My colleague and I were most impressed by your excellent behaviour. You work hard in your lessons. This is helping you to make satisfactory progress. We have asked the teachers to help you achieve better in mathematics by giving you more opportunity to use your thinking skills. The teachers and other adults take good care of you and the teaching and learning you receive is satisfactory. It is good that your teachers give you chances to work cooperatively with other children and you are very sensible when you have to do this. This helps you to enjoy your learning and make better progress. Sometimes, the assessment and marking of your work tells you how you can do better but there is not enough of this so we have asked your teachers to improve the guidance they give you. I would also like school leaders to improve how they check on the progress you make so they can use the information to help you to learn even more.

You told me and my colleague that you enjoy coming to school and we know that your attendance is good. Congratulations on achieving the Healthy Schools Award. You show an excellent understanding of the importance of exercise and a proper diet to keep healthy. We hope you will play your part in helping to achieve the improvements. You can do this by continuing to work hard, especially at your mathematics, and by trying to reach the targets your teachers set for you.