

Throston Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111612
Local Authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	325413
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Linda Buller

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)	423
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	Mrs Amanda O'Connell
Headteacher	Mr Mark Atkinson
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Flint Walk Hartlepool TS26 0TJ
Telephone number	01429 288291
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This school of above average size has few pupils from minority ethnic groups and currently there are no pupils who have a first language other than English. The proportions of pupils claiming free school meals or identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are below the national average, although this can vary significantly between different year groups. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises of Nursery and Reception. A new headteacher was appointed to the school in September 2008.

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, where pupils' pastoral needs are extremely well met and achieve outstanding levels of personal development. The drive and ambition of the headteacher are at the heart of the school's success. His clear vision for future improvement is fully supported by staff, governors, pupils and parents who are confident that recent changes to the school's provision will in time provide pupils with an outstanding standard of education. The positive impact of recent changes to school provision demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement.

The excellent pastoral care of pupils is sustained through a strong commitment by all staff to ensuring equality and to the development of pupils' personal, social and health education. As a result, pupils are confident and sociable individuals who have an excellent understanding of keeping healthy in body and mind. Pupils say that they are proud of the school, enjoy coming, and feel safe and secure. Their behaviour in class and around school is excellent. Levels of attendance are rising and are now above the national average. Older pupils are trained as 'buddies' who successfully play their part in helping to make the school a harmonious and happy place in which to learn and play. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning; they are caring and thoughtful to each other and have a keen understanding of what is right and wrong. These responsible attitudes together with good achievement prepare pupils well for their future learning.

Pupils' achievement is good. Good, varied teaching and an engaging curriculum are improving the rate of pupils' progress and resulting in higher standards. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully implemented good curriculum strategies to improve the quality of pupils' learning in Key Stage 1. For example, the programme to help pupils understand letters and sounds is now impacting well, resulting in above average standards in the current Year 1 and Year 2 classes. Although standards in the current Year 6 remain average, due to a significantly higher proportion of pupils who have difficulty with their learning than is usual for this school, this represents good achievement for these pupils from their well below average standards when they were seven. In the small minority of lessons where teaching is satisfactory, the pace is slower, expectations are not as high and pupils, particularly those of average ability, make satisfactory rather than good progress. Therefore, although the progress which pupils make in Key Stage 2 has improved year-on-year, it is not yet consistent in all year groups or subjects. In all key stages pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make at least good progress. This is mainly because of early identification of their needs followed by good quality support including good partnerships with other agencies.

Leaders and managers operate good systems of monitoring and evaluation. Consequently, the school is largely accurate in its self-evaluation and has the information needed to set challenging targets for further improvement. The analysis of the progress which pupils make towards these targets is less rigorous and not yet used well enough to ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress. The school contributes well to community cohesion; close attention is given to developing pupils' understanding of equality and diversity and to developing excellent methods of communication to meet the needs of hard to reach families.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management have resulted in considerable improvements to provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children enter the Nursery with skills that are similar to those expected for their age. Achievement is good. Children currently in Reception have made good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage and standards have risen and are now above average. They have made particularly good progress in their personal and social development. Children are outgoing, articulate and friendly. They play and work well together. Provision for children's learning and development is good. Activities are planned with children's interests in mind, for example, children in the Nursery demonstrate a keen interest in emergency vehicles while those in the Reception are enthused by pirates and jungles. However, it is not always clear what children are expected to learn from those activities they have chosen for themselves. Staff are generally good at supporting children's learning using questioning well to extend their understanding during focused activities. Better checks are being made on children's learning and assessment information is becoming more accurate. However, this information is not always used as well as it might be to inform planning for groups and individuals. Nevertheless, children with significant learning needs are generally being identified at an early stage and receive good support. Children are looked after well and welfare requirements are met.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that the pace of all lessons is brisk and the level of demand on pupils is consistently high.
- Improve planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure that those activities which children choose for themselves have a clear learning purpose.
- Improve the analysis of the information gained from monitoring activities to ensure all pupils make consistently good progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and standards are above average overall. From average standards when they entered Year 1 pupils in Year 2 have made good progress to reach standards which are above average overall, although standards in writing remain lower than those in reading and mathematics. This good progress continues in Key Stage 2 with more than 50% of Year 5 pupils already working at the level expected for pupils at the end of the key stage. Although standards in the current Year 6 are average, due to an above average proportion of pupils who experience difficulty with their learning, this represents good progress given the well below average standards attained by these pupils when they were at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good and at times outstanding progress due to well targeted support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. A Year 6 pupil summed up pupils' views when saying, 'It's not just a school – it's a happy place where we make friends.' Relationships at all levels are

outstanding. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils care for and respect each other, and know right from wrong. They value each other, and through their fundraising show it is important to help others. 'We are all exactly the same', commented one Year 5 pupil. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their good attendance. Pupils feel safe, know how to look after themselves and who to turn to if they have a problem. They recognise the value of staying healthy and keeping fit, and thoroughly enjoy the wide range of sporting activities. Pupils take their responsibilities, such as buddies, very seriously. This was evident in their care of younger pupils at playtimes and lunchtimes. Pupils have a strong voice in their school and in the local community. They are confident that they can really make a difference and are rightly proud of their efforts in looking after the environment. This enables pupils to successfully gain an insight into the responsibilities of adult life. Pupils are confident and have excellent social skills, which prepares them well for future learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons benefit from the extremely positive attitude of learners and very good relationships between pupils and staff. Teachers have a good understanding of the importance of utilising different methods of teaching and learning and this is reflected in their detailed planning. Teachers make it clear to pupils what they are required to learn in each lesson. Work set for pupils is usually well matched to their ages and abilities. A minority of teaching, while satisfactory, lacks consistency in pace and challenge particularly for average attaining pupils in Key Stage 2 when pupils are taught in groups according to their ability. As a result, there are times when pupils spend too much time recapping on what they already know and are not given enough time to put their knowledge and skills into practice.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum caters effectively for pupils' needs. Pupils are provided with excellent opportunities to promote their personal development. A well-planned programme of visits and visitors adds extra enjoyment and makes a good contribution to pupils' moral, spiritual, cultural and social development. Additional activities are a strength of the school. The pupils appreciate the extensive range of opportunities to learn new skills, for example, the jewellery and knitting clubs, which extends their learning. The school's commitment to the creative arts is reflected in the good standard of pupils' work displayed throughout the school. The curriculum is greatly enriched by experts in areas such as music, French and sport. The school has implemented a range of curriculum changes particularly in writing which are beginning to impact on standards. Currently, this is having a more immediate effect on younger children than those in Key Stage 2 who did not have the benefit of these initiatives when in Key Stage 1.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Very high standards of pastoral care ensure that pupils feel very safe and secure and this supports their excellent personal development and good achievement. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. Vulnerable pupils are well cared for and this good support is enhanced by effective links with outside agencies. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are

fully included in the life of the school. They receive good support, which promotes both their outstanding personal development and good academic progress. While pupils do at times receive good guidance during lessons the guidance in pupils' books is inconsistent. In particular, more able pupils are not always told exactly how to improve their work. While pupils are often aware of their targets they are not always referred to in lessons or in teachers' marking.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's thoughtful and perceptive leadership is a major factor in improvements since the last inspection. There is a strong sense of common purpose based upon improving achievement and raising standards. The roles and responsibilities of the senior and middle leadership team are well defined. They are confident, skilled and undertake rigorous monitoring and evaluation of their areas of responsibilities. The quality of the school's self-evaluation is good. The school clearly and accurately identifies areas for improvement and establishes plans for development. The school has established a clear system to assess and track the standards which pupils reach. This information is used well to set challenging targets. However, analysis of the rate of pupils' progress towards these targets is less rigorous leading at times to inconsistent progress within year groups and in different subjects. Governors are supportive and have clear procedures to ensure that they fulfil all their statutory responsibilities. They have fully assumed their role as critical friends and hold leaders to account. Community cohesion is good. There is a strong involvement in the local community, well supported by the active Parents' Forum. The good curriculum promotes community cohesion at international level through the well planned cycle of subjects although there is less focus on promoting Britain as a multi-cultural society.

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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?	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?	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?	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**

12 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Throston Primary School, Hartlepool, TS26 0TJ

Thank you very much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We very much enjoyed our visit and would like to share with you what we found. You and your parents told us that this is a good school and we agree. Everyone at the school makes sure that you are safe and that your needs are met. We were very impressed with your excellent behaviour and the way you helped and supported each other to work and play. We were very pleased to see that you are becoming very responsible young citizens who are aware of the importance of respecting other people who have different traditions and those who may be less fortunate than you.

The children in the Nursery and Reception classes thoroughly enjoy all of the equipment and activities which they can choose to play with and get along with each other well. We have asked the school to make sure that everyone knows what it is the children can learn while they are playing so that they can reach even higher standards.

You told us that you are thrilled with the amount of extra activities which are now provided for you to attend after school. We could really see how much this is helping your work in lessons, for example, the speaking and listening skills of those of you who attend drama club. Your teachers make lessons fun and interesting. We were pleased to see how much this helped you to enjoy learning new things. We have asked the school to help you all to do even better by making sure all your lessons provide the time you need to practise what you know and that you are all challenged to do as well as you can. Your parents told us how pleased they are with how well your headteacher leads and manages your school. All of the staff are very keen to improve what they provide for you and we have asked them to make even more checks that you are making good progress in all of your lessons.

We hope that you will continue to enjoy school as much as you do now and wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Linda Buller

Lead inspector