

# Thorntree Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111633
<b>Local Authority</b>	Middlesbrough
<b>Inspection number</b>	325419
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Shearsmith

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	311
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Pastor Paul Howells
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sue Picknett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	The Greenway Thorntree Middlesbrough TS3 9NH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01642 242309
<b>Fax number</b>	01642 250476

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 February 2009
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school, that takes pupils from areas of significant deprivation and is situated on a large estate of social housing. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very high. A high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic groups or are in the early stages of learning English. A small number of pupils come from families of refugees or asylum seekers. The numbers of pupils joining or leaving the school at times other than is usual is high. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the Nursery and Reception classes. The school has the Healthy Schools award (Gold) Activemark (Silver) and Artsmark (Silver). The school is subject to reorganisation proposals.

## 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 which has made significant improvements since it was last inspected. Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development and relationships between pupils and teachers are very positive. Behaviour is excellent; pupils listen carefully to their teachers, talk confidently and in a mature manner and try hard with their work. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and keep healthy. Despite an extensive range of strategies to ensure pupils attend, attendance remains satisfactory due to the high level of persistent absence of a small group of pupils. The quality of care the school provides is excellent. All members of staff are diligent in making sure pupils are well cared for and that safeguarding procedures meet current requirements. They are also rigorous in ensuring pupils achieve well, with outstanding support for their academic progress through excellent procedures for feedback and personal targets. Standards have risen in English and pupils achieve well overall. The pupils are very keen to do well and they talk about their work knowledgeably and confidently. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion and has a good understanding of the needs of the community.

Pupils come into school with very low starting points and make good progress in catching up and improving their basic skills in all key stages. However, standards reached at the end of each key stage although improving are usually below average.

Standards at the end of Year 6 were below average in 2007, but the 2008 unvalidated test results show they rose in English and are now close to average. Standards in mathematics were relatively weaker, leading the school to take appropriate actions to broaden approaches to teaching. Inspection evidence shows that standards are improving. Given pupils' very low starting points, this progress indicates good achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as they are well supported in school and by a range of external agencies.

The quality of teaching is good. Well-managed classrooms promote good learning. Interesting tasks are usually provided that engage and motivate pupils, although teachers do not consistently challenge higher attaining Key Stage 1 pupils to produce work at a higher level. The teaching of writing has improved significantly and this results in pupils making good progress in writing as they move through the school. The good use of feedback develops pupils' understanding of how to improve their work. Marking also makes a significant contribution to improving pupils' writing as pupils are given excellent guidance on how to improve. Pupils benefit from a good curriculum and good opportunities are provided to practise the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) using topics that appeal to, and meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils also have access to a wide range of before and after school activities that support their learning well.

The school is well led and this is recognised and appreciated by parents. The senior management team is well led by the headteacher, who provides strong leadership and has moved the school forward significantly since the last inspection. The clear vision for improvement is recognised and supported by all staff. The school's development plans are good and provide strategies that have improved standards in English and in the EYFS and actions taken are beginning to have an impact on progress in mathematics. Governors both support and challenge the school well and carry out their statutory responsibilities conscientiously, and the school has a good capacity to improve.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children make good progress from very low starting points, although they are still well below nationally expected levels in all areas of learning, particularly communication, language and literacy and mathematical ability by the end of Reception. Improving children's personal development and well-being is a particularly high priority and this is a strength. Children develop extremely well in their relationships with others by taking turns, working in small groups and playing well alongside others indoors and in the outdoor area. Assessment procedures are rigorous and individualised learning is clearly based on the outcomes of systematic observational assessments and shared discussion. Children's welfare is promoted very well and ensures children develop confidence. Liaison with parents has become a strong feature with parents actively encouraged to be involved with their child's learning. Leadership and management are good and well planned professional development is helping staff to develop good provision further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Continue the work started on broadening and refining approaches to teaching and learning in mathematics in order to raise standards.
- Improve the level of challenge for more able pupils in Key Stage 1.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Achievement overall is good, although standards remain below average. Pupils make good progress from a very low starting point. A significant group of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and they make good progress. There are few higher attaining pupils however, their progress could improve. Teacher assessments for Year 2 indicate that standards have been well below average over time and few pupils reach the higher Level 3. None did so in the national tests in 2008. National assessment records for Key Stage 2 show that pupils have consistently made significantly better progress than that generally found. Nonetheless, the 2007 results of national tests for Year 6 pupils were below average overall although standards were closer to average in English than in mathematics. The 2008 unvalidated results show a similar picture overall but with a further clear improvement in English due to a strong focus on writing. Standards in English are rising faster than in mathematics. The school has rightly recognised the need to raise standards in mathematics, and has taken action to broaden approaches to teaching and learning in mental calculation and using and applying mathematics especially. It is too early to assess the impact of this action on standards. Currently, most pupils are making good progress in lessons and achieving well. Work in pupils' books and the school's own monitoring data indicate that most pupils are on track to reach their targets this year and that standards are rising. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language make good progress because work is well matched to their needs and they receive skilled individual and small group support.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils enjoy their education and say that they find learning interesting, resulting in excellent attitudes to learning. The school has

a strong commitment to healthy eating and provides a free breakfast club and a 'fruit for break time' scheme that successfully promotes pupils' healthy eating. Pupils choose to eat healthy foods and take regular exercise and learn well because of this. Pupils know how to stay safe in a range of situations including safety when using a range of technologies. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary; they are polite, confident and show increasing maturity as they move through school supported well by trained pupil mediators at play times. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They know about other cultures and how to make the right choices in a range of circumstances. Pupils know the importance of being able to use their basic skills and annually take part in a 'Children Challenging Industry' project. Pupils also have a very good interaction with the local and wider communities. They take part in many community events such as the local 'Democracy Week', and have a good understanding of the school in the context of the wider community. Their outstanding personal development and improving basic skills ensures that they are well prepared for their future lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. In lessons very good relationships and behaviour contribute to a purposeful atmosphere where pupils work hard and are productive. New skills and knowledge to be learnt are clearly explained by staff and pupils know what they have to do to succeed. Pupils' understanding is enhanced by probing questioning and pupils learn at a good pace. In some lessons, insufficient time is given to allow pupils to learn independently and here the pace of learning slows. Marking is effective because there are clear criteria for each piece of work. Pupils know where they have been successful and what they need to do to improve. They have opportunities to assess their own work systematically and know how to improve. Teachers know the pupils well and match work to meet their individual needs, although this is less the case in Key Stage 1 where there is insufficient challenge for more able pupils. Effective support from well informed teaching assistants helps pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. Basic skills are a priority and good links are made with other subjects to develop a wide range of skills. The curriculum is enriched through visits and visitors to the school and the impact of these first-hand experiences can be seen in the quality of art and written work that pupils produce. This makes a contribution to the improvement in standards as pupils understand the context of their learning and why it is important to learn. Pupils enjoy their residential visits and the opportunities for outdoor learning and personal development. Global links are being developed through the Comenius Project and this enhances the school's commitment to community cohesion. In Key Stage 2 French is taught and all pupils learn to play a musical instrument. ICT is well provided for in the school and pupils and staff are confident in using technology to promote learning. The school offers a wide range of out of school activities which pupils enjoy, indicated by the high level of take up of activities.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is outstanding, particularly in supporting pupils' personal development. The school has a clear focus on improving outcomes for pupils. The needs of each pupil in school are analysed and appropriate provision is made to meet identified emotional, social, behavioural and learning needs. Accurate assessment systems are giving a very clear picture of how well pupils are doing and are being successfully used to identify those areas where improvements can be made to raise standards. Provision is systematically reviewed each half term and progress is monitored each term for evidence of impact. Comprehensive procedures for child protection and risk assessments are in place and health and safety procedures are regularly reviewed. Most parents agree that their children enjoy school and are safe and well cared for. The school has responded appropriately to low attendance at parent/carer consultation meetings and the new arrangements saw an increase in attendance. As a result, parents/carers are better able to support their children's learning. Very effective links with external agencies ensure that vulnerable pupils, including those from refugee backgrounds and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive the help they need. The school also has a wide range of strategies to support pupils with a range of specific needs and as a result these pupils make good progress.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The leadership of the headteacher is good. She is dedicated and determined to enhance the quality of education, and has a clear vision for further improvement. She is ably supported by the two assistant headteachers who work very effectively as a team by creating a shared responsibility for leadership setting challenging targets. As a result staff at all levels are focused on making the necessary improvements. The school improvement plan identifies appropriate areas for improvement across all aspects of the school's work and has significantly improved provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Other successes of school actions can be seen in the rising standards in English. In mathematics, appropriate actions are also in place and progress is improving, although they have not had sufficient time to raise standards significantly. The school's effective evaluation also means that it has a clear understanding of the needs of its community and the action it has taken to promote community cohesion is good. The governing body is very supportive of the school and is determined to improve the school further by holding school leaders to account and as a result, the school has good capacity to improve and gives good value for money. Pupils are well supported by a multidisciplinary team of external professionals and make good progress.

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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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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

<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

9 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thorntree Primary School, Middlesbrough, TS3 9NH

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and finding out about what you enjoy doing in school. We know that you think Thorntree is a good school, and we agree with you. Your personal development and behaviour are excellent, you enjoy your work and you try hard to look after each other. We think that your school is well led and managed so that everyone at Thorntree works hard to make sure that you are safe and well cared for in school.

We have asked the school to do two things.

- Help you to improve your work in mathematics so that it is as good as your work in English.
- Make sure more able pupils in Year 2 have chances to work at the best level for their age.

You can all help by continuing to work hard and doing your best.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

David Shearsmith

Lead inspector (on behalf of the team)