

Thurlow CofE Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124698
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328194
Inspection date	25 November 2008
Reporting inspector	David Speakman

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	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	54
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 Patricia Banks
Headteacher	Mrs Ros Bunting
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Little Thurlow Haverhill Suffolk CB9 7HY
Telephone number	01440 783281

Age group	4–9
Inspection date	25 November 2008
Inspection number	328194

Fax number

01440 783864

Age group 4-9

Inspection date 25 November 2008

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues in detail: current levels of attainment at each of the key stages, how effective the school is in improving attendance, and how well assessment data is used to check on achievement from year to year. Inspectors gathered evidence from observations of lessons and pupils' work, parental questionnaires, school self-evaluation documents and discussions with the headteacher, staff with responsibility, governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a small school. Fewer pupils claim a free school meal than is usual nationally. Children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in the September after their fourth birthday. Children attend part-time until the beginning of the term in which they are five, when they start full-time. Children's attainment on entry is similar to that normally expected of children of their age in most years. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about the same as in other schools, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The identified needs include autism. The number of pupils coming from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than in most schools and none is at an early stage of learning English. Since the previous inspection, the entire teaching staff has changed, with a new headteacher joining the school in January 2007. The school is subject to reorganisation and is due to become a primary school for 4-11 year olds in September 2010.

There is a pre-school provision on site providing before and after school care. This setting is run independently of the school.

The school has had its Investors in People status renewed recently and has secured the Activemark in recognition of the quality of its provision for physical education.

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. Pupils achieve well because of the consistently good quality of education evident throughout the school, the exceptionally good start children make in the EYFS and outstanding levels of care and guidance. Since joining the school in 2007, the headteacher has quickly established strong teamwork amongst staff. She has initiated a range of key initiatives that are leading to improvement and has clear plans for more that will build upon established strengths. She has been effective in establishing a strong sense of community, developing the school's relationship with parents well. The school plays an important and successful role in bringing people from outside into the local village community.

Pupils achieve well. From their starting points, pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 is good and there is an improving trend in attainment showing in teachers' assessments. Current standards in reading and writing are well above average and are better than the results of the 2008 assessments. Standards are above average in mathematics. Pupils continue to make good progress in English in Years 3 and 4, particularly in the breadth of their understanding. They make satisfactory progress in mathematics. By the time they leave, standards overall are above those expected for pupils of this age. In science, investigative work is of a high standard. Standards in pupils' creative work are high across the school. Good quality artwork, for example, abounds in corridors and classrooms and standards in music are above those expected, particularly singing in assemblies, which is excellent.

Parents are exceptionally pleased with both the quality of education provided and the high levels of care shown for each individual, which is outstanding. Teaching is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach and guide pupils carefully so that pupils' learning is accurate. Assessment information is used well overall to match tasks to the needs of pupils. This is now having an impact of ensuring standards are more consistent. However, although the progress of each individual pupil is monitored carefully, group assessment information is not analysed to give the leadership a clear enough view of the performance of each year group from year to year and show whether they are on track to meet their targets.

Teachers ensure most tasks are challenging for pupils. However, there are too few problem solving activities for pupils in mathematics and therefore not as great a level of challenge for higher attaining pupils. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution in supporting the progress of pupils in their focus groups. They are skilled and know their pupils well. Pupils receive very good information on how to improve their own work through marking, which is good and incorporates clear developmental suggestions. Targets for pupils are written in child friendly language, including those in the education plans of pupils who find learning more difficult. The school has developed this area of its work well. All pupils know and understand their targets. These are displayed in the classrooms and in books, so pupils have a constant reminder of what they are aiming for and know what they do well and how to improve.

Pupils enjoy school a great deal. The curriculum enables teachers to make lessons interesting and engage pupils' attention and enthusiasm to learn. It provides well for pupils' academic progress, their creative development and for their emotional well-being through effective personal, social and health education and citizenship. Attendance has improved and so far this year only a small number of pupils have less than 95% attendance. Pupils like the special days and trips that add meaning to what they learn in school. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good overall, and their spiritual development and relationships with other pupils

are very good. They understand the importance of keeping to a healthy lifestyle, both in terms of healthy eating and staying physically fit. Pupils contribute well to helping create a safe environment. Behaviour is good in lessons and at play.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher works well with the staff and governors. All staff contribute to the well rounded and rich learning experience the school offers, and are equally committed to providing challenge and enjoyment for pupils. The needs of all individual learners are of high importance and the school ensures that all pupils have the chance to make good progress. Whole school targets for pupils' achievement are challenging and contribute directly to the school's success. Governors are effective. They are organised and work in close collaboration with the school, giving them a good knowledge of how well the school is doing. They provide appropriate levels of support and challenge and are fully involved in the strategic planning for development. The school has a good strategy for promoting and assessing the success of pupils' contributions to community cohesion. There are good opportunities for pupils to value differences and challenge prejudice in many areas of the curriculum. Pupils' understanding of how other people live, not only within the local community but also in the wider world is good. The pupils' achievement, the range of new initiatives implemented under the headteacher's leadership since the previous inspection, good teamwork and school self-evaluation lead to accurate identification of areas for improvement. The school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children this year achieve exceptionally well in the Reception class, making rapid progress in all areas of learning. A number of parents of children in Reception commented on this. 'My son has been in school part-time since September, and can already read, write and count to 80,' writes one parent. In addition to this excellent academic progress, many parents commented on how happy their children are in school. When they move into Year 1, standards are often above those expected for their age and the great majority of children exceed the goals set nationally for this age group. Several children this year are working comfortably at the standards expected in Key Stage 1. A strength in children's attainment and in their personal development is the level of curiosity and the enquiring minds they develop. They ask questions spontaneously and suggest further lines of enquiry. This quality contributes significantly to the excellent start they make to their education. Children's personal, social and emotional development is very strong. Children are confident and very happy, showing excellent levels of enjoyment in all aspects of learning and high levels of motivation.

Adults work exceptionally well together and show excellent teamwork. Teaching assistants are knowledgeable and are very efficiently and effectively deployed. Teaching is excellent; expectations are high and tasks challenging. Adults are skilful in turning all play activities into very effective learning situations and in developing a wide range of language, counting and measuring skills. The quality and range of learning opportunities are outstanding. The curriculum shows an excellent balance of inside and outdoor activities and of those that are teacher-led or child-initiated. Children's choices are monitored carefully to ensure a proper balance for all. The accommodation and resources for learning are good. The highly effective use of these provides an exciting learning environment with interesting and engaging role-play areas, both inside and out. These support the curriculum very effectively. Although there is further development and expansion planned for the outdoor area, staff are very effective in creating a stimulating and well-equipped outdoor learning environment.

Assessment is thorough and rigorous. It is built into planning and there are frequent observations of all children learning at play and in more formal assessment situations. Information and communication technology is used very well by adults to improve the effectiveness of teaching presentations and by children in learning activities. The Foundation Stage leader has some very good ideas on how to improve and develop the outdoor learning environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the progress pupils make in mathematics, particularly in Years 3 and 4.
- Develop the self-evaluation process to ensure that school leaders monitor the progress made by different year groups towards their targets.

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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?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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?	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	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	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?	1

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**

26 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thurlow CofE Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Little Thurlow, CB9 7HY

Thank you all for making us welcome when we visited your school recently. We both appreciated your support in helping us find out all about your school, especially those pupils who gave up some of their time to talk to us. We enjoyed meeting you and your teachers, visiting lessons to watch you work and speaking to you. We found out a lot about the school and how you contribute to making it a very enjoyable place to be.

Since the previous inspection, there has been a lot of change, but all the adults have made sure that the school continues to provide a good quality of education for you. Mrs Bunting is very pleased with the way in which you are helping in the school's continued development. You have good attitudes to your school. Your behaviour is good and it is clear that you all enjoy being at school because your teachers are so good at making lessons interesting. Those of you who are in Reception get an excellent start to school life. All of you progress well and do better than expected for your ages. However, there is still work to do to make sure that standards in mathematics are as good as they are in English.

I am asking the staff and governors to:

- help you achieve as well in mathematics as you do in English
- use the information the school has about your standards of work to check on your progress in all years more closely.

I hope you will all help make the school even better by continuing to cooperate with your teachers.

I wish you all the best in the future.

Yours sincerely

David Speakman

Lead inspector