

Thornhill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100425
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	335538
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2010
Reporting inspector	John Earish

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	399
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lucy Kilborn
Headteacher	Matt Chapple
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They saw 20 lessons taught by 14 teachers and looked at pupils' work. The school's work was observed as well as documentation including the school plan and information about pupils' progress. The inspectors also talked to members of the governing body, pupils and staff in leadership positions. The views 74 parents and carers expressed in their responses to questionnaires were also taken into account.

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

- whether pupils are making enough progress particularly in reading and writing
- the way the curriculum has been adapted to reflect the needs of the many diverse groups represented within the school community
- the opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning through assessing their own progress so they develop a better understanding of how well they are doing
- the impact of the new arrangements for distributive leadership on pupils' progress and achievement.

Information about the school

Thornhill is larger than most primary schools. About a third of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups and a number are at the very earliest stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. Their wide range of needs includes physical disabilities, autistic spectrum disorder and behavioural, language and emotional difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are included in the Nursery and Reception classes. Extended services include breakfast and after-school clubs which were evaluated as part of this inspection. The school has been awarded Healthy School status and is recognised as a Food for Life Flagship School.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Thornhill is a good school. It has maintained the many strong features recognised at the time of the last inspection and has improved markedly in others. The very large majority of parents and carers recognise these achievements. This was summed up by one parent who wrote, '...each year the school gets better and better – standards, behaviour, extra-curricular opportunities – all improving all the time. It's a great school'. This is because the leadership of the headteacher and his leadership teams is outstandingly effective and has secured rapid improvements in a number of areas since the last inspection.

School leaders have worked tirelessly to ensure that pupils make good strides in their work and are exceptionally well supported and cared for. They have been very successful in these endeavours especially for those pupils who are vulnerable. At present, leaders are focusing on improving teaching and learning to ensure they too are outstanding. It is this relentless pursuit of excellence, coupled with self-evaluation that is perceptive and accurate, that is driving improvements forward. All members of staff and governors have as their ambition for the school to become outstanding in every way. As a consequence, the school has good capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and learning and an exciting curriculum. Indeed, all but one of the parents' and carers' questionnaires indicated that teaching was good. Children quickly become eager learners in the Nursery and Reception classes and make good progress in all areas of their learning. Pupils' accelerating progress in Years 1 to 6 is also the result of good learning and a new and creative curriculum that engages and motivates them. Attainment of the current Year 6 is well on track to be above average by the end of the year. Attainment in reading and writing by the end of Year 2 is also higher this year as a result of a focus on improving progress in these areas.

Pupils work purposefully and productively in lessons. All are keen to do well and say that personal targets are helping them improve their performance. This is a particularly striking feature of many lessons. However, teachers occasionally miss opportunities for higher attaining pupils to explore their own ideas or do not give them enough time to do so. This means that their progress is not always as rapid as it could be.

Pupils enjoy school and all that it has to offer. The school's strong emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles, recognised in its national awards, ensures pupils have an exceptionally good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Their attendance is average. The school has been very successful in dramatically improving the attendance of a small number of persistent absentees. However, some parents and carers still do

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not appreciate the importance of their children's regular attendance at school despite the school's very best efforts to encourage them to do so. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and local community and are broadening their horizons through projects such as the links with schools nationally and globally. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding and is manifestly seen in the harmony, tolerance and friendship shared amongst them all.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers capitalise on opportunities during lessons for pupils, especially the higher attainers, to work independently to explore their own ideas and use their initiative in order to sustain their rapid progress.
- Ensure that all parents and carers appreciate the importance of their children's regular attendance at school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Throughout the school, pupils are now achieving well because learning is of good quality. All groups of pupils, including the most able, those most vulnerable and those speaking English as an additional language, make good progress from their well below average starting points. Last year, those pupils in Year 6 whose first language is not English exceeded the performance of similar groups nationally in English, mathematics and science as did those with special educational needs.

Pupils relish responsibility and their contribution to the community is outstanding. For example, children take on a wide range of leadership roles including peer mentoring, play leaders, pupil school improvement officers and members of the school nutrition action group. A considerable contribution is also made to the wider community and by raising substantial funds for charities.

Pupils have an exceptionally good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle reflecting the school's Healthy School status and its recognition as a Food for Life Flagship School. They know what constitutes a healthy diet and, for example, are growing organic potatoes using environmentally sustainable compost produced by the school wormery.

Pupils are friendly, polite and respectful towards others. Although there are pupils whose behaviour can be challenging at times, they respond very well to the school's support and make progress just as well as others. Pupils from all backgrounds mix well and the school is racially harmonious. All in all, pupils' good progress and ability to work together cooperatively mean pupils now leave the school as confident individuals and well prepared for future life and learning.

Attendance is satisfactory and rapidly improving because of the school's very rigorous monitoring of attendance and punctuality. The breakfast and after-school clubs offer a good start and end to the day and make a significant contribution to the improving levels of attendance and the pupils' enthusiasm for school.

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Pupils think deeply about their own and other cultures and are beginning to relate them to a clear set of personal values. Ethical issues are integral to school initiatives and, for example, pupils are challenged to think about the growing and procurement of food as part of the Food for Life project. Pupils are able to resolve conflict intelligently with the help of the peer mentors and school councillors. They also appreciate cultural diversity and are ardent supporters of the 'Give Racism a Red Card' initiative.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Learning is usually well planned so that the different needs of pupils are met successfully. Year 6 pupils, for example, thoroughly enjoyed developing ways of opening a story. They fully understood how their choice of words affects the reader and were able to assess their own writing against a set of criteria devised during the lessons. Teaching assistants usually provide good quality, targeted support. This means that those with additional needs are able to play a full part in lessons and achieve well. Teachers are good at sharing learning targets with pupils and giving them opportunities to talk about their progress. Pupils say they find this very helpful as it helps them

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

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understand what they need to do to make their work better. However, on occasions, introductions to lessons are too long and teachers miss opportunities for higher attaining pupils to explore their own ideas or do not give them enough time to do so.

The new inclusive curriculum is adapted well for the many different groups represented within the school. Pupils enjoy a very good range of additional opportunities through, for example, the gardening group and recycling club which develop their skills and interests as well as contributing to their health, well-being and enjoyment of their education. The school recognises, however, that the next step is to embed and evaluate this new venture to ensure sufficient balance between all the elements including information and communication technology.

The school has established a remarkably successful partnership with parents and carers to ensure all pupils’ welfare. For example, the school-home support worker supports families at school and home, the learning mentor helps children with specific learning needs and the inclusion manager works closely with a wide range of agencies and support groups. There is a volunteer group of parents who act as translators and interpreters and meetings for parents and carers from the Bengali and Turkish community to discuss their children’s education and well-being.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The impact of leadership is seen in how very effectively the headteacher, phase leaders and learning teams are embedding ambition and driving improvement. Staff now fully accept responsibility for the progress of pupils in their care, and all are working cohesively and seamlessly in pursuit of excellence. Team leaders are fully involved in moving relatively less effective teaching to a level as good as the best. There is still more to do but the governing body is increasingly rigorous in holding them to account for their performance. As a consequence, school development planning is accurate, thorough and insightful.

The school is a cohesive community in which diversity is valued and it is also outward looking. It has forged good links with communities locally, nationally and globally. The school’s promotion of community cohesion is good but, as yet, is still uneven across the three strands.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good. As a result, many pupils told inspectors that they feel safe, pointing out ways in which the security of the school site has

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improved. Action taken to move the school forward since the last inspection has ensured that the school is now good at promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination and at narrowing the gap in performance between different groups of pupils. The well-managed breakfast and after-school clubs add much to the pupils’ enjoyment of school, encourage punctuality and attendance and make a good contribution to their personal development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children join the school their skills and understanding are typically well below those for their age. They make good progress in all areas of their learning because teaching and learning are consistently good. However, most are still below average in reading, writing and physical development by the start of Year 1. Throughout the Nursery and Reception classes, children from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, quickly learn to cooperate very well and play together harmoniously. The well-established routines ensure that children feel safe and secure within this nurturing environment. Staff have a good understanding of how children of this age learn and they provide a good balance between the activities chosen by the children and those planned by the adults. The outdoor area provides an interesting extension to the classroom and is used well. The setting is well led and managed and teamwork between the adults is well developed. Staff make good use of the advice of outside agencies to support those who need extra help or are vulnerable. Parents and carers are kept well informed about their children’s progress and they are helped to support their children’s learning at home. Whilst the staff are effective at assessing the progress of all the

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children they are not always fully involved in planning the activities that children are to be engaged in next.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers are very positive about the school, its friendly atmosphere and the care given to pupils. The vast majority indicated that their children are happy at school and are kept safe. The inspectors fully endorse these views. There were many written comments in praise of the school. There were a very small number of constructive criticisms, none of which emerged as recurring concerns. These were shared and discussed with the headteacher.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thornhill Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 74 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 405 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	70	17	23	3	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	44	59	25	34	2	3	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	54	32	43	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	57	24	32	7	9	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	50	68	23	31	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	54	26	35	6	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	66	20	27	5	7	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	26	35	36	49	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	50	26	35	7	9	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	51	27	36	3	4	4	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	54	25	34	5	7	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	50	68	21	28	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	70	18	24	3	4	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thornhill Primary School, London N1 1HX

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed looking at your work, seeing you in lessons and talking to so many of you. We were pleased to hear that you like your school very much. Almost all your parents or carers are happy with the school, too. You get on well with each other and help the school to run smoothly. You listen carefully to what your teachers have to say and learn a lot in lessons.

Yours is a good school, where staff and governors are working hard to make it even better. This means that there are lots of things that it does really well, but also that there are some things that could be even better. Your headteacher and all the staff are doing a very good job and they want to make things even better for you. We have asked them to do two things we think might help.

We have asked them to give you even more opportunities to use your own initiative during lessons and to work independently so that you can make even faster progress. The school has really worked really hard to make sure your parents or carers bring you to school regularly. However, a few of you still have too much time off which means that you miss important work. We have asked the school to do even more work with your parents and carers to make sure they fully understand how important it is that you attend regularly. You too can play your part by always being ready for school in the morning and telling them about the exciting things you are going to do each day.

Yours sincerely

John Earish

Lead Inspector

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