

Thurcroft Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106898
Local Authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	336765
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Jane Hughes

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Malcolm Beech
Headteacher	Mrs Tracy Harper
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Fifty per cent of the inspection was spent on looking at learning. Inspectors visited 11 lessons or parts of lessons and observed eight teachers during the inspection. Inspectors held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, and parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's development plan, self-evaluation, policies, data from assessment and tracking systems, safeguarding procedures and pupils' work. Questionnaires from 33 parents and carers and from eight staff were analysed.

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

- how effectively the school is addressing the two-year decline in attainment in mathematics in Key Stage 1
 - how well the school supports the progress and attainment of different groups of pupils, particularly higher-attaining pupils and boys
 - how effectively the school addresses the relative weakness in boys' communication and language development in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - the impact of current strategies to promote regular attendance and punctuality
- how well the school has maintained any previously identified strengths, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, provision and leadership.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average infant school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is larger than average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Very few speak English as an additional language. A larger than average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has undergone an extended period of staff turbulence since the last inspection. All the teachers are new in post since the last inspection. Following a period with an interim leadership team, the current headteacher and deputy headteacher took up their posts in January 2009. The school has achieved several external awards including Healthy Schools, Activemark and the Financial Management in Schools Standard.

The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises Nursery (Foundation 1) and Reception (Foundation 2) classes. Children access 15 hours of nursery education weekly, in a combination of three-hour morning or afternoon sessions. There are up to 52 part-time places available.

The school runs a daily breakfast club which formed part of this inspection. A new children's centre has just been completed on site. Led by the headteacher, it is due for designation in January 2010.

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

Thurcroft Infant School is a good school. Pupils achieve well and reach average standards from well below expected starting points. This success is due primarily to the key strengths in leadership and teaching as well as early years provision. Parents and carers confirm that they are 'extremely impressed with the school and its staff' and typically agree that, 'The school is like an extended family – caring and supportive.'

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well as a highly effective team. Together, they are moving the school forward at a rapid pace. This is most evident in the impressive gains in children's performance in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Senior leaders and the supportive governing body place importance on developing the professional skills of the still relatively new staff team. Senior leaders are driving improvement rapidly and have made up much of the ground lost during the recent, extended period of staff turbulence, including more than 12 months without a substantive headteacher or deputy headteacher.

Despite the good teaching overall that is responsible for pupils' good learning and progress, there are inconsistencies with regard to teachers' use of assessment. This means that some pupils are unsure of their personal targets while others do not have the opportunity to assess how well they have done in a lesson or how to improve their written work. In some lessons the learning objectives are not expressed simply enough for pupils to understand clearly enough what it is they are learning to do. Another weaker area of the school's performance is the standards reached by higher-attaining pupils in mathematics. In addition, despite the school's work to promote community cohesion, pupils are not fully aware of cultural diversity in Britain.

Accurate self-evaluation provides senior leaders and governors with a clear view of what works well in school and key areas to develop. Improvements continue in priority areas such as raising attainment in mathematics, as well as continuing to narrow the gap in terms of the attainment of boys and higher-attaining pupils when compared with the national average. Although many members of staff are relatively new, there is a keen sense of team spirit and a shared willingness to do their very best. The school demonstrates good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in mathematics by the end of Year 2 by:
 - ensuring that tasks are always matched to pupils' abilities, particularly for higher-attaining pupils.

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- Improve the impact of teachers' assessment on pupils' outcomes in Key Stage 1 by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently offer pupils written guidance when marking their work in order to support their next learning steps
 - consolidating pupils' knowledge of their own targets
 - involving pupils more in the evaluation of their work
 - ensuring that pupils always understand what they need to learn in lessons.
- Develop pupils' awareness of diversity in modern Britain.

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

Pupils are keen to participate in school life and parents and carers generally ensure that their children attend regularly and on time. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve well and thoroughly enjoy their learning. They concentrate well in lessons and follow instructions carefully. Many pupils show good levels of self-discipline as they persevere with activities when working individually or in small groups. This is because they enjoy the links between subjects. For instance in Year 2, pupils were keen to share the set of instructions they were writing in a literacy lesson to illustrate what they had previously learned about circuits in science. As a result, they waste little time in lessons. Pupils attain broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2, although higher-attaining pupils do not do as well in mathematics as in other curriculum areas. The basic skills they develop equip pupils satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Pupils agree that Thurcroft Infant School is a friendly place where everyone usually behaves very well. Parents and carers confirm this. Pupils learn much about how to keep safe and to live healthily. They chat confidently about these important areas. For instance, they are aware that, 'Running can cause accidents,' and that, 'Milk and fruit are good for you.' Pupils are mature in their relationships and develop strong spiritual, moral and social awareness as they learn and play companionably together.

Nonetheless, they do not develop sufficient knowledge of diversity in British society. Large numbers of pupils regularly enjoy the wide variety of extra-curricular clubs such as gardening and healthy food.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Lessons move along at a good pace and teachers ensure that classrooms and corridors are attractive and informative learning environments for pupils. This helps pupils to become increasingly independent learners as there are many prompts and models around school for them to follow. Teaching assistants work very effectively alongside teachers to ensure that different groups of pupils receive the support they require in order to meet their individual needs and achieve well. Adults are aware of the need to stimulate boys' interest in their learning and they continue to develop effective provision in terms of adapting the curriculum and even involving fathers in, for example, the 'flashing astronauts' project. Although the majority of teaching is good, some inconsistencies remain, mainly because of changes in personnel. Notably, teachers' marking lacks consistency and rarely includes clear points for development. Pupils sometimes find it difficult to know what they are learning because teachers introduce a lesson using vocabulary that is too advanced. Pupils increasingly assess how well they have done in a lesson but this is still an inconsistent feature of lessons.

New themes and good links between subjects such as history, writing and art add relevance, interest and often excitement to the curriculum. This approach generates an enthusiastic response from pupils with regard to their learning.

Every adult works hard to ensure that pupils feel happy, secure and welcome in school. There are effective programmes in place to introduce pupils seamlessly to school life and to make them aware of whole-school expectations and daily routines. Relationships are strong and adults use praise and encouragement well to motivate pupils. Close links with other schools ensure that transfer arrangements are secure when pupils move on

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to the next phase in their education. There is impressive liaison between members of staff, including mentors and parent support workers, to ensure that all aspects of pastoral care link well and that pupils feel secure. For instance, lunchtime staff and teachers follow up concerns raised at breakfast club so that a clear picture can be reported to a parent or carer at the end of the day. The school continues to work proactively with parents and carers to help them understand the value of regular attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide energetic leadership and ambitious goals for the school. They took over following a time of considerable changes, not least within the staff team. In a relatively short time they have established a strong team spirit and a keen desire for continued improvement by all staff. Conscientious administrative and ancillary support ensures the school's day to day smooth running. There is assiduous monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leaders. This has a different focus each term, identifies inconsistencies and future training needs and involves all staff. Subject leaders demonstrate a secure overview of their areas of responsibility. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination satisfactorily, although more remains to be done to ensure that all groups of pupils reach their potential in all areas of the curriculum and that this is sustainable. The school has an accurate understanding of the local context in which it promotes community cohesion. Nonetheless, pupils have limited awareness of the different cultures and faiths that make up multicultural Britain beyond the immediate, largely mono-ethnic locality. The senior leadership team encourages active partnerships with a wide range of other organisations and schools and these help to ensure that pupils and families have access to high-quality support. The school meets current statutory requirements for safeguarding.

The school works hard to encourage parents' and carers' active involvement in their children's learning. For example, the provision of a breakfast club encourages parents and carers to bring their children to school on time. Increasingly, parents and carers sign up for family and adult learning programmes. These help parents and carers to provide better support for their children's learning at home.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a strong start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Key strengths of the setting include:

- sensitive pastoral care and nurture
- exciting learning resources that stimulate interest, particularly among boys
- plentiful opportunities for children to chat with adults and to try to solve problems
- high-quality leadership that helps the setting to improve apace.

Children enjoy their time here and are quickly absorbed in activities that hold their attention and provide the key building blocks for their future learning and success. For example, they sit and listen very well to each other's views during circle time activities and persevere well when counting or writing.

The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage brings expertise and key knowledge of early years to the setting. Other practitioners are rapidly developing their skills. The setting is moving forward at a fast pace with the strongest provision in Foundation 2. As a result, children make good progress from below and sometimes well below expected starting points, particularly in their personal, social, emotional, communication and mathematical skills. There is a sharply rising trend in the proportion of children now reaching a good level of development by the end of Foundation 2 (Reception) that is above the national average. The key focus on raising boys' communication and language skills is bearing fruit and the gap between this and other areas of learning is reducing rapidly.

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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

Approximately one sixth of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. Almost all appreciate the work of the school and confirm that their children thoroughly enjoy school and are well cared for. A very few questionnaires contained criticisms. There was no pattern to these and inspectors judge that these individual concerns were not representative of the school's overall provision. The school's own regular surveys of parents, carers and pupils also provide very positive feedback. Parents typically remark about the school, 'One of its many strengths is communication with parents.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thurcroft Infant 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 33 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 214 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	74	8	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	71	9	29	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	61	11	35	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	71	8	26	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	22	71	9	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	65	11	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	58	13	42	0	0	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)	15	48	12	39	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	65	10	32	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	55	11	35	2	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	52	13	42	2	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	65	11	35	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	81	6	19	0	0	0	0

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



28 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thurcroft Infant School, Rotherham, S66 9NT

Thank you for your friendly welcome and great help when I inspected your school with my colleagues. We enjoyed meeting so many of you and listening to your views. I am writing to tell you what we found out about your school.

We know that your school is a good school with lots of interesting things going on. You enjoy coming to school and learn well. You told us that you feel safe in school and that the adults always help you with any problems and we saw that for ourselves. You know a lot about how to stay fit and healthy.

Your headteacher and all the adults who run the school have got lots of good ideas about how to make Thurcroft Infant School even better. Part of our job is to help them with this. I have asked your headteacher to make sure that more of you do better in mathematics. This means that some of you might have harder work to do but we are sure you will do it well because you enjoy your lessons. You will also see that your teachers are going to write more in your books about how you could make your work even better than it is now. Don't forget to read what they write and remember to use that information when you do another piece of work. I have also asked that all the adults make sure that you learn more about the lives of the many different groups of people who live in Britain.

I send you my very best wishes for the future. Carry on enjoying all the clubs and activities.

Yours sincerely

Jane Hughes

Lead Inspector

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