

Thomlinson Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112125
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337847
Inspection dates	15–16 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Sue Sharkey

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robert Edgar
Headteacher	Mr Douglas Hardie
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2007
School address	The Goose Market High Street Wigton CA7 9PG
Telephone number	01697 342432
Fax number	01697 345761
Email address	head@thomlinson.cumbria.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons; 10 teachers were observed; meetings were held with governors, staff and groups of pupils; and there was a discussion with the local authority School Improvement Officer. No formal meeting took place with parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's system for tracking pupils' progress, pupils' books, safeguarding documents, key policies and assessments. Inspection questionnaires were received and analysed from 130 parents and carers.

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

- whether actions taken by leaders and managers were reversing the falling standards in English and the underachievement of boys
- whether teaching is sufficiently challenging to raise pupils' achievement
- how monitoring carried out shows impact and challenge on pupils' work in school
- how assessment is used to help pupils know how to improve their work.

Information about the school

This is a school of average size. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average and the vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school has a Special Integrated Unit for pupils with severe and multiple learning difficulties and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. A daily breakfast club and after-school club managed by an outside provider is available on site. The school has gained a number of awards reflecting the school's commitment to promoting pupils' healthy lifestyles and the arts.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. It has a number of good features. It is a very caring place in which pupils grow in confidence. This contributes well to their good personal development. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school because lessons are fun and the many activities after school help to keep them healthy. Good relationships between staff and pupils underpin the good behaviour and this means that pupils are confident in expressing their views and have good personal skills.

Throughout the school pupils make satisfactory progress. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. When they leave the school at the end of Year 6 pupils' attainment is broadly average. The school has a range of strategies in place to raise attainment and achievement, particularly in writing, and through good teaching these are beginning to be effective, although less so in writing for the higher attaining pupils. Despite good teaching in English and mathematics, pupils only make satisfactory progress because, due to the school's curriculum planning, they do not have sufficient regular opportunities to develop their skills in these two key subjects. The school's unit for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities works closely with a high proportion of pupils who make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Many attend the unit each day and a few travel to the school from further afield.

Pupils make a good contribution to the wider and global community, often setting up their own fundraising activities to support a wide range of different charities. The school makes excellent use of outdoor activities and the arts but as yet full use of skills learnt on these occasions are not transferred to the classroom to enable pupils to develop independent learning. Year 5 and 6 pupils have the opportunity to take part in residential activities. These activities help to raise pupils' awareness of different people's needs and life experiences, and provide sound preparation for their futures

The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory and given its record of improvement the school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement. The role of senior leaders has developed but this has not extended to middle leaders and managers, whose function is less defined. Monitoring of English and mathematics by subject leaders is limited as they do not have identified time outside the classroom to carry out this role and this restricts opportunities for effective curriculum planning. Governors and leaders work well together but the school's development plan is not tightly linked to monitoring and evaluating systems lack rigour.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve progress in writing and mathematics by:

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- ensuring that the English curriculum challenges the more able pupils
- ensuring that pupils have sufficient planned opportunities to develop their skills and make good progress in English and mathematics
- ensuring that the skills learnt in outdoor activities and the arts are fully utilised to enable pupils to make good progress in English and mathematics.
- Develop the capacity for monitoring and evaluation by:
 - defining and developing the role of middle leaders and managers
 - ensuring that there is regular allocated time away from the classroom for English and mathematics leaders to carry out their monitoring, evaluation and development responsibilities
 - improving school development planning.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress from their starting points in both English and mathematics. As a result, by the time they leave Year 6 attainment is broadly in line with the national average. In lessons pupils are confident learners and do well in developing their speaking, listening and reading skills. They work with enthusiasm and independence on outdoor activity tasks. A wide range of initiatives is being introduced to help pupils improve their writing. Recent assessment shows that these are gradually helping to raise pupils' achievement although this is less effective with the higher attainers because curriculum planning does not deal explicitly enough with their needs.

Pupils' behaviour throughout the school is good. They have positive attitudes and their enjoyment of learning is a key factor in their above average attendance. Pupils participate in the school council and develop a keen awareness of taking responsibility in the school and wider communities. Their enthusiasm for their cycling to school initiative has won the respect of the local community and will enable pupils in local schools to travel safely each day. Pupils quickly gain in confidence and enjoy the challenge of taking on responsibilities, which sets them up well for their future lives. They feel safe and secure and say that adults care for them and will always help them. Pupils are extremely kind and polite; they know the difference between right and wrong and the importance of helping others. Pupils develop a good awareness of how to feel fit and healthy and value the many opportunities they have to take part in sport and outdoor activities. Pupils enjoy opportunities to explore a number of festivals such as Diwali and Chinese New Year. They enjoyed a whole week devoted to India revelling in performing Indian dance, wearing clothes of the traditional style and making and eating samosas.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers make good use of assessment to plan for groups of different ability in classes. They identify pupils who need additional support well, although they do not all provide enough challenge for the more able pupils in writing. Teachers' planning mostly meets pupils' learning needs and, as a result, most pupils make good progress in lessons. Despite this, they make only satisfactory progress over time in English and mathematics because they do not have enough opportunities to develop their skills in these subjects. Sometimes pupils who are withdrawn from lessons for specific support lose ground as they do not enjoy the same continuity in learning as other pupils. Teachers manage behaviour well. In the best lessons there is a buzz of excitement when pupils learn independently from well-planned practical activities. In these lessons they make good use of the decision-making skills they have developed through outdoor and adventure learning but this is not yet developed in all lessons. Support staff make a good contribution to pupils' learning by encouraging and supporting pupils without making them over-dependent on adult help.

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum with strengths in outdoor learning, the arts and pupils' involvement in community projects. This provision gives pupils numerous opportunities to learn beyond the school and makes a strong contribution to their good personal skills. However, the curriculum's relative lack of opportunities to apply skills in English and mathematics constrains pupils' progress in these core skills. The range of

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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visitors, partnerships and extended opportunities available to pupils greatly enhances their learning as well as their personal development. Links between subjects are developing well through the more creative curriculum, but are not yet consistent across the school. Through the personal, social and health education programme, pupils are taught how to stay safe and lead healthy lives.

Links with outside agencies are used well in ensuring the well-being of all pupils, including those with additional learning needs. The good care that pupils receive is reflected in the way adults respond to pupils' needs both in the classroom and outdoors. Arrangements for pupils when they commence school are good and Year 6 pupils say that teachers are helping them well to prepare for secondary school. Year 5 and 6 pupils take their responsibility as pupil supporters seriously and say that this successful scheme helps others when they need a friend. Good pastoral care is provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities helping them to develop their self-esteem and acquire social skills.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has developed the roles of senior leaders since the last inspection, although the role of middle leaders is not yet fully developed. This is in part a result of changes of staff and some staff recently appointed to new roles. Currently the school's self-evaluation is satisfactory and broadly accurate through the work of senior leaders and local authority consultants. However, there is not enough evaluation of areas of known weakness in English and mathematics for the school to improve rapidly. This is because subject leaders in English and mathematics do not play a full part in monitoring the work of the school and are not given regular release from their classroom duties to carry out monitoring, evaluation and development activities. The school development plan is not well informed with sharp detail from monitoring and evaluation and lacks rigour in setting priorities. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement, with the quality of teaching and assessment improving, especially in the teaching of reading and writing, although more remains to be done to improve the achievement of the more able pupils. The deputy headteacher has given a good lead in introducing a new writing programme and an effective system for tracking pupils' progress. This is allowing senior staff to identify any underachievement quickly so that support is provided promptly. The headteacher has developed the outdoor curriculum

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well so that pupils have a wide opportunity to take part in a range of activities, for example canoeing or cross-country running.

Governors ensure that arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good and meet all requirements. They are very supportive of the school, although their role in evaluating its work and setting targets for improvement is underdeveloped. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and learning opportunities. If discrimination occurs it is robustly tackled. Community cohesion is good, the school knows its community well and involves it regularly in its work. The school has clear plans to extend its links with community groups beyond the school community. The school works closely with parents and carers, and the local community, and provides facilities and training for adults to develop their skills in information and communication technology.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are positive about the way the school cares for and educates their children, feel that their children enjoy school and are kept safe and are pleased with their children's progress. Some took time to add comments to the questionnaire they returned, many to reinforce the strength of their positive views and inspectors agreed with them. A few parents and carers were concerned about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that behaviour in school is good; the school does have a system in place that includes working with pupils and their parents and carers when pupils misbehave.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thomlinson Junior 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 130 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 242 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	53	59	44	4	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	63	47	67	50	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	55	41	73	55	4	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	64	48	65	49	3	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	65	49	63	47	5	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	50	38	72	54	9	7	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	39	78	59	2	2	1	1
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)	54	41	72	54	5	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	57	43	73	55	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	49	37	64	48	18	14	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	33	81	61	8	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	55	41	67	50	10	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	47	65	49	4	3	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



19 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thomlinson Junior School, Wigton, CA7 9PG

I'm writing to thank you for making us feel so welcome when we came to inspect your school. We really enjoyed talking to all of you and have good memories of how friendly you were. Thank you for holding doors open for us when we walked around school; this helped us to notice your good behaviour and how polite you were. Your good understanding of how to keep healthy and take lots of exercise also impressed us. It also looked as if many of you enjoy your healthy school dinners. It was good to see that you raise funds for charity and help your community. I think all the work you have done for the cycle path is brilliant. Good luck with this.

The school provides a wide range of activities for you, which I was pleased to hear you say you enjoyed. Teachers work very hard to help you learn and I think that teaching is good. The curriculum that teachers plan in your school is satisfactory. The clubs after school and all the chances you get to enjoy outdoor activities are excellent. We have asked the school to make better use of some of the skills you learn outdoors so that you can learn to work more independently in the classroom.

Adults know you well and you feel confident that they will help you if you have any worries. We have asked the school to make sure that the adults who lead English and mathematics have more time to check these subjects and that what they and other leaders find is always included in the plans to improve everything you do in school. We have also asked them to make sure that you have sufficient planned opportunities to develop your English and mathematic skills so that you can make better progress in your work. We hope these changes will help you all to improve your work.

Congratulations to all of you who did so well in the cross-country running when we visited you. I hope you all continue to work hard and enjoy school.

Best wishes

Sue Sharkey

Lead Inspector

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