

Thornhill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112165
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337856
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Pat Kime HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Dunbavan
Headteacher	Mr John MacKay
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors visited six lessons, and held meetings with staff and pupils and a representative of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation provided by the school, including policies, development plans, records of pupils' progress and curricular planning. The inspectors also analysed the 33 responses to the questionnaire for parents and questionnaire responses from the pupils in Key Stage 2.

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

- trends in pupils' attainment and progress
- the school's capacity for sustained improvement
- the use of assessment to support pupils' learning and progress.

Information about the school

Thornhill Primary School is a much smaller than average school where pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. The school serves an area which faces some social and economic disadvantage. An above average proportion of pupils receive free school meals. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average for this size of school. A very small minority is from minority ethnic backgrounds or learning English as an additional language. There are eight children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. These children in the Reception year are in a class with the Key Stage 1 pupils.

There is a privately managed nursery on the school site. This was subject to a separate inspection and will receive a separate report from Ofsted.

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

This is a good school where pupils flourish in a caring and orderly atmosphere. They greatly enjoy their lessons which are often fun, and they participate eagerly in the good range of extra activities on offer. Their attendance is good.

The school provides an attractive and stimulating environment in which pupils all through the school make good progress in their learning and personal development. Pupils are well cared for and they feel safe. They are well informed about healthy lifestyles.

Pupils' attainment, taken over the last few years, has been broadly average. Standards are improving. Test results rose to around average in 2008 and improved again in 2009.

The school has improved considerably in the three years since it was last inspected, notably in pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching, the curriculum, and leadership and management.

Teaching is now good, though the effectiveness of the use of assessment varies between classes and subjects. Most aspects of leadership and management are good. Governance, however, is satisfactory because, although governors are supportive of the school and keen to extend their involvement, they are not yet contributing fully to monitoring its performance and setting its future direction. The school promotes the cohesion of the school and the local community well but is less successful in tackling the wider community cohesion agenda.

Teamwork and commitment to further improvement are strong and the school evaluates its effectiveness accurately. Consequently, it is well placed to build on the improvements already achieved and go on from strength to strength.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the use of assessment to support pupils' learning and progress. In particular, embed the school's best practice consistently in all classes in:
 - marking
 - setting short-term targets for pupils
 - involving pupils in evaluating their own learning.
- Develop the role of the governing body in monitoring the work of the school and determining priorities for its future development.
- Improve the promotion of community cohesion by providing more planned opportunities, across subjects, for pupils to learn about cultural, ethnic and social

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diversity in Britain and in the wider world.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Achievement and enjoyment

All groups of pupils do well at Thornhill. They enjoy learning and like a challenge. They want to achieve well and they try hard in lessons.

Year groups are small and the pupils' attainment varies from year to year. However, there is a clear rising trend in both attainment and the rate of pupils' progress. Taken over three years, the results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 (the SATs) are broadly average. They were low in 2007 but improved to average in 2008. In 2009, most of Thornhill's pupils reached the standard expected for their age and there was a considerable increase in the proportion who reached an above average standard. For the last two years, standards have been markedly higher in science than in English and mathematics. The standards of attainment seen in pupils' exercise books and in lessons were broadly average overall. Pupils' attainment represents good progress from a below average starting point when they join the school in Reception.

The school's records show that pupils are generally making good progress in English and mathematics and a good number have made very good progress in Years 5 and 6. The school has introduced new approaches to the teaching of phonics in Reception and reading in Years 3 and 4. These have resulted in especially rapid progress, showing just how well the pupils can do.

Other outcomes

The vast majority of pupils are well behaved. They follow classroom rules and routines responsibly and are attentive in lessons. This contributes positively to pupils' learning as lessons run smoothly with no time wasting.

In their responses to the inspection questionnaire, pupils were unanimous that they feel safe at school and, in discussion with inspectors, pupils said they are confident to turn to adults in school about any concerns or problems they may have.

Pupils are knowledgeable about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, the importance of physical exercise and of eating 'five a day', and they have a sound understanding of the reasons for limiting their intake of fat, sugar and salt. A high proportion of pupils have the healthy school meals.

Pupils' positive relationships, behaviour and their thoughtful comments in lessons and assemblies show good spiritual, moral and social development. For instance, pupils responded reflectively to a presentation about creation and conservation. In lessons they listen respectfully to their classmates' contributions. They make a good contribution to the school as a community and willingly raise funds for a range of charitable causes. Pupils' cultural awareness is satisfactory. Though they learn about the local area and contribute well to the community, their knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity in Britain and the wider world is limited.

Pupils are well prepared for the future because:

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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	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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching

The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Typically, staff have very good relationships with pupils and manage them well so lessons are orderly and productive. They ensure that the classrooms are attractive places with displays which strike a good balance between supporting learning and showcasing pupils' work. Teachers plan activities that appeal to pupils and interest them in learning. For example, in one of the lessons seen, the teacher wanted pupils to learn about the history of the local area and to distinguish historical fact from opinion. She captured the pupils' interest by talking to them in the role of an elderly resident reminiscing about moving into the local estate when it was first built.

In the most effective lessons observed, expectations were very high for all pupils but the work was adjusted sensitively so all could succeed. Teachers introduced new work methodically and kept all pupils 'on their toes'. They assessed pupils' understanding carefully as the lesson progressed, adjusted their plans to attend to any misconceptions and questioned pupils astutely. For instance, in a lesson about measuring in centimetres

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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and millimetres, the teacher first ensured that all the pupils could visualise one, five and thirty centimetres before asking them to estimate the size of various everyday objects. When she noticed some pupils measuring inaccurately, she reminded the class where to start measuring from on a ruler. When one item measured 1.9cm she was quick to challenge the more able, older pupils to explain what the 0.9 represented.

Where the teaching is less effective and pupils' progress not quite so rapid, it is down to one or more of the following factors:

- work is less well tailored to pupils' varied needs
- there is less challenge for the more able
- the pace of learning is more leisurely.

The quality and effectiveness of assessment is good overall but variable between classes and subjects. There are very good examples where pupils have well-pitched individual targets which are to the fore in lessons, marking is perceptive and helps pupils see how to improve their work, and pupils review and evaluate their own work identifying strengths and areas for development. In other cases, these good features are not present consistently.

The curriculum

The curriculum covers all that is required and is enriched well with a good range of activities beyond lessons and activities with other local schools. It is planned to provide appropriate progression for all pupils in the mixed-age classes. Staff have embraced changes, notably in the English curriculum, which have led to rapid progress for many pupils. These include a strong emphasis on children's literature as a main plank of the reading curriculum.

The curriculum links subjects meaningfully around themes that appeal to pupils and lend themselves to first-hand experience. This helps to make learning coherent for pupils. For instance, older pupils studying medieval times visited Egremont castle; devising ways to estimate its height, following medieval recipes, learning about music and dance of the period, and studying 'The Lady of Shalott' in-depth in English lessons.

Care, guidance and support

As one pupil put it, 'the school is very protective'. Staff know the pupils well and pupils have confidence in their support. There are strong links between the Nursery and school which support children's smooth transition into the Reception year. The school works well in partnership with other agencies to support pupils and families. It has had a good degree of success in improving attendance and punctuality. A number of parents commented positively on the school's friendly, welcoming atmosphere.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<p>The quality of teaching</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</p>	<p>2</p>

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2
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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and staff have worked hard and successfully to improve the school. As a result, pupils' achievement and other major aspects of the schools' work have improved significantly. Staff have an accurate picture of the school's performance, what works well and what could be improved, and they have sound plans to tackle the latter. Since the last inspection, the school's two-year involvement in a programme of support for improvement has paid off handsomely. The close-knit staff team is now outward-looking, willing to innovate and keen to take the school forward. Crucially, they have developed the skills to do so.

Staff keep a close eye on pupils' progress and they intervene quickly to nip any underachievement in the bud. At the whole-school level, careful tracking and analysis of progress is used well to inform priorities for improvement especially in teaching and the curriculum.

The governors meet their responsibilities satisfactorily and are particularly vigilant in regard to safeguarding pupils. They are strongly supportive of the school and involved in its life. They are kept well informed by staff, especially the headteacher, and, therefore, have a sound grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development and contribute to planning for improvement. The governing body is not, however, fully involved in monitoring the school's performance and setting its strategic direction. That said, it has begun to rectify these shortcomings through training and a programme of visits to lessons and meeting with staff.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding and protecting the children in its care meet requirements fully. Risk assessments are thorough. The school's good partnerships with other agencies support pupils and families well. The success of all groups of pupils and the well-targeted support for those who have difficulties show the effectiveness of the school's promotion of equal opportunities.

The school knows its community very well and successfully promotes the cohesion of the school community. It makes a strong contribution to community cohesion in the immediate local area and more widely in West Cumbria. Pupils' horizons are broadened by educational visits, including a residential activity week in Scotland, and study of world faiths in religious education. There are some links with schools elsewhere but these do not have a high profile and do not extend beyond Britain. The school does not do enough to raise pupils' awareness and understanding of diversity.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

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	
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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

When children start in Reception the majority of them can do less than is usual for children of their age. They make good progress in this first year of school and, by the end of the year, their attainment is approaching average. They do best in their physical development, ability to use language, ability to link sounds and letters, and in reading. The children are taught and cared for well. Expectations are high and the children's progress is tracked carefully. The curriculum meets national requirements and includes sufficient first-hand experience and practical activity. There are good plans for further development, for example of the opportunities for learning out of doors.

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

Parents and carers have a generally positive view of the school. Parents commented positively on:

- the caring staff who offer a friendly welcome, listen to them, and arrange extra activities, especially sports for pupils
- the encouragement their children receive from the staff who help them to see how they can improve

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- the headteacher's commitment to the pupils.

Concerns expressed centred mainly on the way the school deals with misbehaviour, including bullying, and how much the views of parents and pupils are listened to.

The inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by parents and carers. The concerns raised do not represent significant issues for the school. There are several examples to show that the school does consult parents and take account of their views. There are occasional niggles between pupils but these are dealt with effectively by staff.

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 33 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 62 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	45	26	42	8	13	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	40	66	16	26	0	0	4	7
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	45	30	48	4	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	48	26	42	4	6	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	34	55	22	35	4	6	2	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	48	22	35	10	16	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	56	24	39	2	3	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)	36	59	20	33	4	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	55	20	32	8	13	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	45	20	32	10	16	4	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	43	22	36	10	16	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	36	60	14	23	8	13	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	65	14	23	8	13	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

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.



Inspection of Thornhill Primary School, Cumbria, CA22 2SJ

You may remember that Mrs Mawer and I came to your school recently to see how well all the children are learning. Thank you for your friendly welcome and for helping us with the inspection. We enjoyed seeing your lessons and looking at the work you have done. We also learned a lot from talking to you and looking at the questionnaires that you and your parents had completed.

You go to a good school where the teachers make learning interesting and fun in lessons, and on visits and trips. We were pleased to see how keen you are to achieve well and how much you enjoy learning. You are making good progress and standards are on the up. Well done! The staff take good care of you so I was not surprised to hear that you feel safe at school. You know a lot about how to keep fit and healthy.

Your school has improved a lot in recent years. Mr MacKay, the staff and governors all want to make it even better and they know what needs to be done. We agreed that they should concentrate on these three things.

- Making sure that in all the classes marking, setting targets for your learning, and involving you in judging how well you are doing are all really good.
- Giving you more opportunities to learn about the lives and traditions of people from different backgrounds in Britain and around the world.
- Involving the school's governors more in checking how good the school is and planning to improve it further.

You will probably have some good ideas about how to improve these things. Perhaps you could tell the school council about them.

The challenge now, for every one of you, is to always do your very best, to keep up your good attendance, and to keep up your healthy lifestyles – for good. You have my very best wishes for the future.

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