

Thornsett Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112600
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	337970
Inspection dates	28-29 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Terry Elston

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Barrow
Headteacher	Alice Littlehailes
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2009
School address	Aspenshaw Road Birch Vale High Peak Derbyshire SK22 1AT
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Age group	Error! Reference source not found.
Inspection date(s)	Error! Reference source not found.
Inspection number	Error! Reference source not found.

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 6 lessons, and held meetings with governors, pupils and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at safeguarding documentation, attendance records, evidence of pupils' progress and the 16 parental questionnaires.

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

- How well the leaders are tackling weaknesses in writing at Key Stage 2
- Whether pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work
- The extent to which the poor behaviour of some pupils slows down their progress and that of others in the class.

Information about the school

This very small school admits pupils from Birch Vale and surrounding villages. Compared with most schools, the proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and those who have a statement of special educational need are above average. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and none speaks English as an additional language. Pupils are taught in three mixed age classes.

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

Thornsett Primary School provides a satisfactory standard of education. Pupils make satisfactory progress and their overall attainment by the end of Year 6 is broadly average. While pupils' attainment is above average in mathematics and science, it is below average in English because of their relatively weak writing skills. This is because there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length and to practice their writing in a range of subjects. Pupils say how much they enjoy their work in mathematics and science lessons, particularly when doing practical investigations. For example, they had great fun soaking the headteacher when shooting their water-filled rocket into the sky. In contrast, relatively few like writing, and some of their work lacks sparkle.

Pupils really like being part of a small school where they know everyone so well and adults take such good care of them. They enjoy making a difference to their community, and recommendations by the school council have helped make playtimes more interesting. Pupils reflect deeply on issues, such as poverty in Africa, and have a good understanding of how their actions affect others. They have a good level of involvement in their local community and speak with authority on the diverse faiths and cultures in the immediate area and across the world.

Pupils enjoy school because teachers nearly always make learning fun. One pupil felt he knew why when commenting, 'They don't do it for the money; they just like teaching us!'. Teachers are good at explaining things clearly and give pupils the confidence to ask questions. Teaching assistants play an important part in lessons as they work effectively with small groups and support pupils who need extra help. Where the teaching is less successful, teachers spend over half the lesson talking to the whole class, and this means pupils of different ages and abilities are doing the same work for too long.

The curriculum provides a good balance between developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and enhancing their talents in the Arts. It teaches them how to keep safe and be aware of the hazards of smoking and drugs. The curriculum for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage provides a wide range of exciting activities, but makes too little use of the outside area to stimulate children's learning. A wide range of popular clubs at lunchtime and after school enriches the curriculum and hones pupils' skills in areas such as sport, science and gardening.

The headteacher juggles the role of leader and teacher well. She works closely with

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other leaders and governors to evaluate all aspects of the provision and set the school's priorities. Nevertheless, the school recognises the need to raise the bar higher, and to apply greater rigour to the evaluation of the teaching if standards are to be raised. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and has good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing by:
 - giving pupils more practise at writing at length;
 - ensuring that writing tasks grab pupils' attention and make them want to write;
 - including more opportunities for pupils to write in all subjects.
- Ensure consistently good teaching by:
 - making more regular evaluations of the teaching;
 - giving teachers a clear picture of their strengths and any way they could improve the rate of pupils' progress such as ensuring that pupils have sufficient time to work at their own level.
- Enhance the experiences of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - planning more activities outside;
 - providing more exciting equipment for them to enjoy and learn from.

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

The lessons observed during the inspection show that most pupils concentrate well, enjoy their work and make satisfactory progress. They nearly all behave well and show respect for the teacher and each other. Occasionally, however, a small minority of pupils miss the point of lessons because they talk when the teacher is talking or fiddle with pencils.

At Key Stage 1, pupils make satisfactory progress and standards are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. At Key Stage 2, standards are improving steadily in all subjects except writing. The results in the 2009 national tests at the end of Year 6 and pupils' current work show that standards in mathematics and science are above average, which reflects pupils' good progress. In lessons in these subjects, they learn new skills quickly and show a pride in their work. They develop a love of books, and their attainment in reading is average. In writing, pupils show less enthusiasm, and some lack confidence in their abilities. In recent years, girls' attainment has been higher than that of boys, particularly in English, but currently there is no significant difference. This is due to the good work done by the school to make reading and writing tasks more fun for boys.

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Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress. They are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants and grow in confidence as their skills improve. More able pupils do well in most subjects, but too few attain the high standards of which they are capable in writing.

Pupils are very proud of their small school and the really good friends they make. They feel safe, and are adamant that no-one gets bullied. Nearly all attend regularly. They have taken on board the recent initiatives introduced to help them adopt healthy lifestyles, and are proud to discuss how they now eat nutritious food, both at school and at home. Despite the shortcomings in writing, pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the future, and gain much from the mini-enterprise project linked with the local secondary school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	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?

Pupils are right to feel that teachers make learning fun. They make good use of resources to motivate pupils. In one lesson, for example, an interactive whiteboard was used to screen footage of the Second World War that gave pupils a real understanding of the horrors faced by people during the Blitz. The pace of lessons is usually brisk, and pupils enjoy moving quickly from one activity to another. However, there are occasional shortcomings in the teaching that affect pupils' learning. For example, sometimes teachers talk to the whole class for too long, and the work is not always well matched to pupils' needs at this point. Occasionally they allow the chatter of a few pupils to affect the concentration of others. Teachers' assessment 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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pupils' progress is satisfactory, and provides an accurate picture of their strengths and weaknesses.

The curriculum is planned well to meet the wide range of ages and abilities in the class. The literacy and numeracy provision is well organised, and there are some good opportunities for pupils to use their reading and number skills in all subjects. Opportunities for them to do long pieces of writing outside English lessons, however, are more limited. Pupils enjoy the broad themes in the curriculum, and their extensive work on China and the Second World War across a wide range of subjects shows how much they have learned.

The curriculum is full of ways to develop pupils' creativity, and some of their art and design work, done with the help of a local artist, is stunning. The well-planned personal, social and health education provision ensures that pupils gain a good awareness of health and safety issues and learn the importance of understanding other's feelings. A wide range of visits and visitors enriches the curriculum and gives pupils a real awareness of the outside world. For example, as a result of the school's links with Kenya, a Samburu warrior gave wide-eyed pupils a first hand account of his role in the tribe. The many extra-curricular clubs are popular with pupils and enhance their skills in areas like sport, gardening and the arts.

Parents are right to feel the 'hardworking and dedicated staff' care for their children well. They appreciate the high level of individual support that makes their children feel secure and valued. Vulnerable pupils and those with emotional and learning difficulties benefit from sensitive support and, both on a day-to-day basis and from the effective 'Nurture Groups'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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 leads with a clear vision and high expectations for the school. She is highly respected by pupils, staff and parents. She is supported well by other leaders who work well as a team to improve the provision. Their detailed analysis of standards and progress gives an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the progress of all groups of pupils. The leaders have many responsibilities, and they mostly fulfil all that is required of them. However, they recognise that the monitoring and evaluation of the teaching needs to be more regular and rigorous if the provision is to be improved further. The governing body is

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knowledgeable and fully supportive. Its members have an in-depth awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are not afraid to hold the leaders to account.

The school runs smoothly, and safeguarding systems are robust. The governors and leaders have forged strong links with parents, the community and organisations in China and Africa that add much to its effectiveness and the good promotion of community cohesion. The school has developed productive partnerships with other organisations that enhance provision for vulnerable pupils and enrich the curriculum in areas such as sport, computer technology and provision for gifted and talented pupils.

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	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	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

Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision is satisfactory. Children start school with skills below those typical for their age and, by the end of the Reception year, their attainments are average in all areas except reading and writing. They feel safe at school because all adults know them very well and take good care of them. Their personal and social skills develop well because the adults ensure they know the rules for good behaviour and the need to consider the needs of others in the class.

The adults work well as a team to make lessons fun. They plan carefully so that children enjoy lots of practical work and opportunities to explore things for themselves in class. They ensure the young children have work that is right for their stages of development while giving them good opportunities to learn with older

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pupils in the class. While the pace of children's learning is satisfactory, the adults sometimes let the more able ones answer all the questions while the others sit and let them.

The curriculum provides an interesting range of activities that provide a satisfactory balance of work and play. The outdoor area, used for a limited number of activities, is bleak and lacking in equipment to challenge and inspire children. The leaders are right to see the enhancement of this area as one of the school's priorities. The newly introduced assessment systems work well. They provide a clear picture of children's progress and help them begin to understand their own learning. Competent leadership and management ensure that staff evaluate the provision effectively and constantly seek ways to make improvements.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents' views are positive, and nearly all feel that the school gives children a good start to their education. They are particularly appreciative of the good pastoral support that staff give their children in this small school, and the way all adults respond to individual needs. They feel that behaviour is mostly good, but a few feel it could be better. Parents feel welcome at school and well-informed about their children's progress. They feel the headteacher is doing a good job. Parents' views reflect the inspection findings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thornsett 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 16 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 78 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	1	13%	7	88%	0	0%	0	0%
The school keeps my child safe	2	25%	4	50%	1	13%	0	0%
The school informs me about my child's progress	1	13%	5	63%	1	13%	0	0%
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	25%	5	63%	0	0%	0	0%
The teaching is good at this school	2	25%	6	75%	0	0%	0	0%
The school helps me to support my child's learning	2	25%	6	75%	0	0%	0	0%
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	38%	4	50%	1	13%	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)	3	38%	5	63%	0	0%	0	0%
The school meets my child's particular needs	2	25%	4	50%	0	0%	0	0%
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	1	13%	3	38%	4	50%	0	0%
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	25%	3	38%	1	13%	0	0%
The school is led and managed effectively	1	13%	5	63%	1	13%	0	0%
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	2	25%	5	63%	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 all 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

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 pupils' 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.



29 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thornsett Primary School, Birch Vale, SK22 1AT.

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed seeing you work so hard in lessons and play so happily outside. Those of you who were kind enough to speak to us showed how much you enjoy school. Your school is satisfactory. This means that some things are good, but others could be better.

What we found out about your school:

- You work hard and make satisfactory progress. Your standards are similar to those reached by children in other schools. You reach higher standards in mathematics and science. However, older pupils need to do better in writing.
- Your behaviour is good, and you help make the school a happy place.
- You live healthy lives and know how to stay safe.
- You think a lot about people who are not as fortunate as you.
- Your leaders run the school satisfactorily and help it run smoothly.
- The good curriculum makes learning fun for you, and you enjoy the clubs at lunchtime and after school that teach you important skills in things like science, gardening and sport.
- Your teachers are doing a satisfactory job. They work hard to plan interesting work and help you when you find things difficult.
- All staff at the school take good care of you and keep you safe.

What we would like the school to do now:

- Help you improve your writing. You can help by trying hard to write as much as you can in all subjects and making sure it is your very best work.
- Make sure that your leaders check on the quality of teaching more so that lessons are really good every time.
- Provide more opportunities for the youngest children to work and play outside.

Good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

Terry Elston
Lead inspector

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