

Thornton Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119907
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	339550
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Peter Clifton

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	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jacqui Price
Headteacher	Russell Williams
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2006
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Age group	4–10
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors spent the majority of their time looking at learning, visited 10 lessons and observed five teaching staff. Meetings were held with governors, staff and pupils. Inspectors talked to pupils in lessons and at break times. They observed the school's work and looked at school documentation, including development planning, recent monitoring reports, safeguarding procedures and pupils' books. They analysed 38 responses to the parents' questionnaire and took account of the views of parents with whom they talked during the inspection.

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

- the current picture of learning and progress for different groups of pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and more able pupils
- how well provision has been adapted to promote the higher levels in writing
- how effectively monitoring and evaluation are improving progress and attainment
- how well assessment information is used to help pupils learn better.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a separate Reception class which has its own outside-learning area. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is average. Most pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, and the majority of these have literacy and numeracy needs.

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

Children start school with knowledge and skills that are broadly in line with expectations, but below those expected in aspects of literacy and numeracy. Good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables the children to make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Progress in Years 1 to 5 is good so that by the time the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 5 their attainment is above average. In the lessons observed during the inspection, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities made good and sometimes outstanding progress in their learning, because of the high quality support provided. More able pupils make good progress because they are given challenging work. The positive way the pupils support each other in lessons and their exemplary behaviour are outstanding factors in their good achievement. There is a range of successful strategies in place to help pupils to reach higher levels in writing, a particular strength in the upper end of Key Stage 2.

Significant progress has been made in addressing the issues raised when the school was last inspected. The headteacher and other leaders work well together and have high expectations to secure improvement. Accurate school self-evaluation and action taken by leaders has enabled the school to improve on the previously reported satisfactory outcomes and demonstrates a good capacity for sustained development. Leaders have improved the way pupils' progress is monitored and tracked. This information is used regularly to ensure that pupils do as well as they can. Teachers and teaching assistants work exceptionally well together to ensure that pupils with particular needs receive the extra support they need. Lesson observation by leaders is rigorous and is helping to improve teaching and learning. As a result, the quality of teaching in a great majority of lessons is at least good and, sometimes, it is outstanding. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. A feature of most lessons is the exceptionally positive relationship between staff and pupils. Lessons include a good range of different approaches to capture the pupils' imagination and hold their interest. At the upper end of Key Stage 2, the way the pupils are supported to identify for themselves what they need to do to improve is a strong feature of lessons. However, there is not consistent practice across the school. On occasions, pupils' self-assessment is superficial and this limits their learning and independence.

The pupils are known exceptionally well as individuals and as a result they have a great deal of trust in the adults who look after them. Nearly all pupils say that they greatly enjoy school and feel safe. They are quick to respond to questions in lessons and eager to give their views. The school is a very cohesive community. The pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and older pupils set a very good example. The pupils have only a satisfactory understanding of others from different ethnic backgrounds and this

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reflects the school's limited success in promoting stronger links in the wider community.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' learning by widening opportunities for them to set their own targets for improvement through assessing their own and others' work.
 - Develop wider community links to improve pupils' understanding of people from different cultures and backgrounds within the United Kingdom.

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

Inspectors saw outstanding learning in just under a third of the lessons visited. Drama and role play are used well to help improve attainment in writing. In Year 1 for example, the pupils acted out stories taking on the roles of different characters. In mathematics, pupils demonstrated good mental strategies to solve addition problems. In Year 5, pupils made excellent progress in developing their understanding about data handling and measuring. The school's tracking information shows that all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making good progress and that attainment is rising. In Year 5 in 2009, pupils' reached above average levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science. The current pupils in Year 5 are on track to reach similar standards. Across the school, pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently to help them to learn. The pupils are well equipped for their move to their next school.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school at play times. They express a lot of confidence in the adults around them and say that the 'adults help us and are kind'. They enjoy the good range of additional sporting activities and comment that they are encouraged to have healthy foods in their lunch boxes. Older pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, for example, as sports leaders at lunchtimes. The school council provides a more formal voice for the pupils in the school and has some influence on decision making. There is scope to give pupils more responsibility to run this for themselves. Older pupils show a good awareness of the possible dangers of drugs, alcohol, and using the internet.

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	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
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?

The teachers have high expectations of pupils to work hard and succeed. They check the progress of the pupils well during lessons and are alert to any who might be in danger of falling behind. Discussion and questioning in lessons are strengths. Pupils are given time to respond to questions and develop their understanding through paired talk. Different subjects are used effectively to promote writing. For example, the pupils write letters linked to history and science work. Good access to computers in classrooms ensures that ICT is regularly used to support learning. Planning to meet the needs of different groups is detailed, particularly for those pupils who need additional support and encouragement. Learning in a few lessons slows because teachers talk for too long or do not take into account previous learning sufficiently well. Older pupils have some good opportunities to assess their own and others' work but this is not widespread. The pupils say that memorable experiences are provided through trips and visits and there is a good range of clubs and after-school activities. They particularly mention the residential opportunities and how much they enjoyed 'stream walking' and climbing. There are limited opportunities provided through the curriculum for the pupils to engage with others from different cultures and backgrounds.

There are a number of good initiatives in place to help families be more involved in their children's learning. The school can point to examples where it has made significant efforts to help and support pupils with particular needs, often with a great deal of sensitivity. The pupils' comments about their teachers reflect this. One commented, 'They never give up on you, they keep trying to help you until you succeed.'

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

There is a superb team spirit amongst staff and the governors to work together for the benefit of the pupils in the school. The headteacher has empowered the staff to take on responsibility for different subjects and welcomes challenge from the governors. The governors have a broad range of skills and expertise which are used well to promote improvement and change. They actively seek the views of parents through questionnaires and act on information collected. The school has strong links with the local high school to ensure there is smooth transition when the pupils leave. Safeguarding policies and child protection procedures are clear and effective. Risks are assessed thoroughly and site security is regularly reviewed. Provision to secure equal opportunities and tackle discrimination is good. Progress information is used effectively to target additional support to ensure that individual and groups of pupils do as well as they can. Links within the local community are strong. However, plans to promote community cohesion on a wider basis are at an early stage of development.

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
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	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

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision is matched well to the different needs of the children. The current children have made significant gains in their social development from the time they started school. During the inspection excellent teaching of letters and sounds enabled the children to develop their reading and writing skills. Several children wrote down questions to ask a visitor coming into the class, making sure they included the question mark. Modelling using cardboard is a popular activity. The children measured and cut materials accurately to make 'baskets' and 'lunchboxes'. There are strong relationships and the children work and play together confidently. Leaders provide a good range of activities to develop the children's understanding of all areas of learning both inside and in the outdoor area. Many activities promote talk well and generate a good deal of enjoyment and enthusiasm. The children's development is carefully tracked through the 'special books', which contain very detailed observations made by the staff. The quality of provision is regularly evaluated by leaders, who have a good understanding about what needs to be improved. For example, there are currently plans in place to develop the outdoor area to provide a 'road track' and gardening area to further extend the children's learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

The questionnaires reflect a highly positive relationship with nearly all parents and carers. Most comments made reflect considerable satisfaction. Parent and carers say that the school is 'close-knit' and that staff are friendly and supportive. A number also rightly comment positively about the support provided for the pupils who have particular needs. One parent commented, 'The attitude of staff is welcoming and there is a partnership with parents.' Governors are aware that a few parents and carers have concerns about communication from their own surveys, and are addressing these. Inspectors do not agree with the few parents and carers who have indicated that the school is not well led and managed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thornton Community Primary 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 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 100 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	71	8	21	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	74	10	26	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	63	13	34	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	50	16	42	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	63	13	34	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	55	15	39	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	63	14	37	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)	19	50	15	39	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	62	12	32	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	47	18	47	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	47	18	47	2	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	58	10	26	4	11	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	74	7	18	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

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.



26 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thornton Community School, Thornton LE67 1AH

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We thoroughly enjoyed looking at your work, seeing you in lessons and talking to so many of you. We were impressed by your friendliness and how clearly and confidently you expressed your opinions. You go to a good school. The teaching in your lessons is good. We were exceptionally impressed by your behaviour and the positive attitudes that you have to learning.

This is what we found.

You get off to a great start in Reception.

You make good or better progress in your lessons and reach above-average levels of attainment.

You are very helpful to each other and nearly all of you say that you are very happy in school.

Leaders in your school have made good improvements since the time you were last visited by inspectors.

Teachers make your lessons interesting and you have very good opportunities to answer questions and discuss your ideas with each other.

Adults keep a very close eye on how well you are doing so that you do not fall behind.

You are cared for exceptionally well and those of you with special needs are given extra support which is helping you a lot.

We have asked your headteacher and the other adults to do these two things so that you can do even better.

Give you more help in identifying learning targets by looking at your own and other people's work and then deciding what you need to do to improve.

Develop your understanding of people from different cultures and backgrounds in the United Kingdom.

Yours sincerely

Peter Clifton

Lead inspector

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