

Thistly Meadow Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119956
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	339566
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Marion Thompson

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	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Bailey
Headteacher	Karen Allen
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2006
School address	Hospital Lane Blaby Leicester
Telephone number	0116 2775648
Fax number	0116 2775648
Email address	office@thistlymeadow.leics.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
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Nineteen lessons and parts of lessons were seen and nine teachers and one learning assistant were observed leading lessons at least once. Informal discussions were held with a sample of parents and carers who brought their children to school. Meetings took place with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspection team observed the school's work, and looked at documentation, including that related to safeguarding, school planning, assessment information, curricular planning, samples of pupils' work and an audit undertaken by the school. Inspectors analysed the results of the 46 Ofsted questionnaires completed by parents and carers and took account of the views expressed in staff and pupil questionnaires.

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

- the progress pupils make in reading and science
- the progress made by the most able pupils
- the consistency of teaching and assessment throughout the school
- the impact of school self evaluation and monitoring on pupil progress.

Information about the school

This school is of average size and the vast majority of pupils are of White British origin. Recently a very small number of pupils of Gypsy Roma heritage have joined the school, but most were travelling at the time of the inspection. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average, including those with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status.

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

The school provides a satisfactory education. It is improving rapidly. Attainment, especially in reading, has risen over the past two years and is now above average, representing satisfactory progress and achievement for boys and girls of all ethnicities. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Good care, support and guidance help pupils surmount barriers to learning. Improvements have been strongly led by the headteacher, with support from governors, staff and the local authority. Not all decisions have been popular, but she has, rightly, kept her position. Sensible self-evaluation and carefully prioritised planning have led to:

- staff development which has ensured that teaching is now satisfactory
- careful tracking of progress so that work is matched to pupils' needs
- improvements to assessment which is resulting in more rapid progress
- an interesting curriculum that motivates pupils to learn
- effective systems which have raised attendance to the national average
- improved provision in the Reception Year where children now make good progress.

These improvements demonstrate that the school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement. However, progress throughout the school is uneven and is most rapid in the Reception class and Year 6 where most teaching is good and occasionally better. In a minority of satisfactory and the very small number of inadequate lessons the most able pupils, especially boys, do not make quite as much progress as they should, particularly in writing and mathematics. This is typically due to a lack of pace and challenge in these lessons. The development of pupils' scientific skills is slower than other skills. This is because occasionally teacher's subject knowledge is not fully developed. Although pupils have clear targets teachers do not consistently refer to them to enable pupils to improve their work.

Pupils' good academic skills in literacy, numeracy, information communication technology, together with their strong moral social and spiritual development prepare them well for the next stage of their lives. Pupils have a good understanding of the diversity of contemporary society, but have more limited experience of different cultures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2011, improve progress, particularly of the most able boys, in writing and mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - lessons consistently provide pupils' with a good level of challenge and are conducted at a brisk pace

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- teachers check that pupils are using their targets to help them improve their work.
- By July 2011, improve progress in science by ensuring teachers' subject knowledge is enhanced where necessary.
- 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 introduction of phonics (letter sounds) and guided reading has accelerated progress in reading, particularly for younger pupils. Writing and mathematics skills develop well, except at the higher levels where progress is slower, especially for more able boys. Standards in science are broadly average and pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils' knowledge about science is secure, but skills such as prediction develop more slowly. The rate of progress across the school is inconsistent and is linked to the quality of teaching. It is slowest in the very small number of inadequate lessons. It is accelerating as teaching improves. The small numbers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, because their specific needs are addressed, especially when they receive specialist support. Pupils of Gypsy Roma origin make the same progress as their peers.

Pupils enjoy their work, have positive attitudes and behaviour and relish challenge. For example in a Year 6 lesson, pupils responded confidently to demanding questions about the effect of certain grammatical features on a text, producing high quality responses. Even in less successful lessons most pupils worked hard, collaborating with each other productively, although boys occasionally lost a little focus when allowed to.

Pupils feel safe in school because staff take good care of them. Older pupils feel that the difficult behaviour of a very small minority of pupils is handled well. They adopt healthy lifestyles, eating a balanced diet and taking plenty of exercise. A number of boys and girls are keen athletes and this year, the school has come first in a local athletics competition. Pupils attend regularly and make a good contribution to the school and, to a lesser extent, local community. Members of the Trust Team are proud of their work in sorting out minor incidents with younger pupils. The school council confidently leads on initiatives such as raising money for charity. Pupils enjoy performing, such as singing for the community.

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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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Lessons have clear learning objectives so that pupils know what they will learn. Relationships between adults and pupils are respectful, motivating pupils to learn. Most lessons proceed at a brisk pace, providing pupils with a good level of challenge. For example in a Year 2 lesson, challenging questioning enabled pupils to empathise with and describe accurately how a character felt. Ongoing assessment is used increasingly well to judge, for example, when pupils need further support. However, teachers do not always ensure that pupils use their targets to improve their work. In a minority of satisfactory lessons and occasional inadequate lessons the pace is slower and there is insufficient challenge for the most able pupils. Subject knowledge in science is not always secure.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of most pupils well. The school is working successfully to find exciting activities, in conjunction with local partners, to motivate pupils to write. For example pupils 'found' a box of 'suspicious liquids' reported missing by the police, causing great excitement and resulting in good quality research and writing. Extra curricular provision in sport and music is good for older pupils. It is more limited in other areas and for younger pupils.

Care for pupils in vulnerable situations is effective in helping them to overcome barriers to learning. Good arrangements are in place to ensure pupils new to the school settle well and arrangements for transition are sensitive to pupils' needs. Satisfactory systems are in place to support the work of pupils of Gypsy Roma origin when travelling. Effective partnerships with other agencies enhance the health and well being of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Persistent

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absentees are firmly challenged and attendance has risen to broadly average.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong leadership for the school, especially in improving the quality of teaching. Most lessons are now good, a minority are satisfactory and inadequate teaching is rare. Pupils' progress is more closely monitored, forming a sound basis for self evaluation and planning. Subject leadership is satisfactory. It is successfully improving progress in English and mathematics which are priorities, but is not quite as effective elsewhere. The governing body provides good support to the school but monitoring and challenge are not yet as well developed. Duties in relation to safeguarding are performed well and arrangements for child protection and staff recruitment are extremely thorough. The school's engagement with parents and carers and other partners, such as the local authority are good and enhance pupils' academic and personal development.

The school encourages positive views about diversity and works hard to prevent discrimination on the few occasions when it occurs. However, more able boys do not make quite as much progress as others so equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall. Shared values are effectively promoted and good provision is made to meet the needs of the school and local community. Pupils respect and appreciate differences in people and plans are in place to increase their experience of different communities. The school audit of the contribution it makes to community cohesion has correctly established that pupils' understanding of national and international issues is at the early stages. Plans are in place to address this.

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	2
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

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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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of skills that are broadly as expected. They make good progress and most reach or exceed their early learning goals on entry to Year 1. Children settle quickly and are confident and happy because arrangements for starting school are sensitive to their needs and they are well known to staff. Productive links are formed with parents, which support children's learning well. In the main, the programme of activities is based on careful assessment and is well matched to children's needs. Occasionally, however, the most able boys do not make quite as much progress as they could, especially in writing. There is a good balance between activities directed by adults and those chosen by children, which help them to develop independence. Interventions by adults are skilful, especially in developing speaking and listening skills. Children learn to talk confidently to others, to listen attentively and are prepared well for learning. They share and take turns and learn about healthy eating, enjoying helping themselves to snacks of fruit and vegetables when they feel hungry. The outdoor area is well resourced and effectively used. These improvements have been brought about by good leadership and management.

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 inspection team endorses the positive views held by the majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire. Parents and carers feel that their children are kept safe and are helped to lead a healthy lifestyle. They also feel that the school helps them to support children's learning. Six parents and carers do not feel that the

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school is led and managed effectively. The inspection team found that the headteacher provides good leadership which has helped the school to improve in many areas. A small number of parents and carers felt that their views and concerns were not listened to, but the larger number interviewed were pleased with this aspect of the school's work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thistly Meadow 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 46 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 209 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	59	15	33	4	9	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	67	15	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	39	24	52	4	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	57	16	35	1	2	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	30	65	12	26	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	57	17	37	3	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	46	22	48	2	4	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)	23	50	20	43	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	57	16	35	2	4	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	33	26	57	3	7	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	41	22	48	2	4	3	7
The school is led and managed effectively	25	54	16	35	3	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	59	15	33	4	9	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

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



9 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thistly Meadow Primary School, Leicester LE8 4FE

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. Your views and those of your parents and carers helped us to decide what we thought of the school and were much appreciated. Your school provides you with a satisfactory education and you make satisfactory progress. You children get off to a good start in your Reception class and settle quickly because staff take good care of you and know you well. Across the school we were impressed with:

- the improved progress you are making in mathematics, reading and writing
- your good behaviour and attitudes that support your learning. Keep it up
- your understanding of how to be healthy and the sensible choices you make about what you eat and how often you exercise
- how well you know how to keep safe
- the good care the school provides for you when you are worried or upset
- the improving teaching and interesting activities the school provides for you
- the strong leadership of your headteacher and the help of staff who are working hard to make sure things continue to improve.

We want the school to make certain that work is pitched at the right level for you and makes you think hard, especially if you are a quick learner, by planning activities that provide you with a challenge. This is especially the case for boys when you are writing and in mathematics lessons. You like a challenge, don't you? We would also like lessons to be brisk, so you can make rapid progress. We have asked teachers to remind you to use your targets to help you to improve your work. We have also asked teachers to help you develop better skills in science, especially when you are doing investigations.

Yours sincerely

Marion Thompson

Lead Inspector

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