

# Thorpe Acre Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119957
<b>Local Authority</b>	Leicestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	339567
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 January 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Tim Bristow HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	160
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Hallett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Jo Beaumont
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 October 2006
<b>School address</b>	Alan Moss Road Loughborough LE11 4SQ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors spent the very large majority of the time that pupils were in lessons observing learning. They observed all teachers and visited 15 lessons. They held meetings with the governors, staff, groups of pupils, parents, a representative from the local authority and representatives from partner agencies. They observed the school's work, and looked at: the school development plan, monitoring and evaluation documents, assessment information, lesson plans, school policies and 43 parental questionnaires.

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

- the attainment of pupils and the quality of learning in lessons
- the consistency and quality of teaching
- whether school leaders and governors demonstrate that they have the ambition and capacity to drive school improvement
- the behaviour of pupils.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average and there are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are supported with a statement of special educational needs are above average. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is above average. More pupils than is usual arrive and depart from the school outside of the normal admission dates. The headteacher has been in post for a year.

**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?**

**4**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

### Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing less well than in all the circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to achievement and teaching.

Achievement is inadequate because the attainment of pupils across the school is too low. The progress they make is uneven, but satisfactory overall. This is insufficient, however, to drive up standards, particularly for average and more-able pupils. Consequently, by the time they leave Year 6, attainment is significantly below average overall, and reflected in test results in English and mathematics. The reason for this low achievement is that there is too much teaching that is inadequate or just satisfactory. The headteacher, with the effective support of the local authority has successfully reduced the proportion of inadequate teaching considerably over the last year. At the time of the inspection, the quality and consistency of teaching were insufficient to accelerate progress rapidly enough to raise attainment.

While there are significant weaknesses, the school, which is ably led by the headteacher, has improved in the last year. Attendance that was below average is now average. Behaviour has improved considerably so that it is satisfactory overall. The numbers of incidents of misbehaviour and exclusions have dropped sharply. In consequence, pupils are now better prepared for learning. An improvement in the teaching of writing has led to better-quality work from pupils and attainment is starting to rise. The large majority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effectiveness of additional support they receive from teaching assistants. The school has therefore demonstrated that it has satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

Most pupils are polite and behave appropriately in a range of situations. Occasionally, behaviour is outstanding. For example, it was excellent in a very good assembly about perseverance. Not only did pupils listen attentively, but they participated eagerly and very sensibly, valuing the contributions made by their friends. The highly inclusive practice of the governing body and staff mean that they have very recently admitted a few pupils whose behaviour is challenging. The school has adequate procedures to support these pupils, but at the time of the inspection, as their needs were assessed, there were incidences of unacceptable behaviour. A few parents have been rightly concerned about this misbehaviour and a minority of pupils report that they find it unacceptable.

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While the curriculum and the care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory in general, there are some notable strengths. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the good range of enriching activities - such as the Egyptian day. Pastoral care is good. Many pupils reported how much they like their teachers and other adults because of the help they receive. As one pupil reported, representing the views of many, 'Teachers are very kind and helpful.'

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise attainment in the key subjects by:
  - improving achievement in reading and mathematics by taking a similar approach to the steps taken to improve writing
  - introducing many more opportunities for problem solving and investigation in mathematics lessons
  - challenging teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - working with the local authority to share good practice.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by:
  - ensuring that work is pitched accurately to meet the needs of all pupils
  - developing the teachers' ability to check pupils' learning in lessons
  - using performance-management procedures to hold teachers to account for the quality of their work
  - sharpening up the procedures for checking the quality of lessons so that they are specifically focussed on the aspects of teaching and learning in greatest need of improvement.
- Improve the care, guidance and support for pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour in school by:
  - working with the local authority and other partners to identify additional resources and procedures that can be utilised to support these pupils
  - developing some procedures to nurture these pupils so that they are better prepared for learning
  - improving relationships with other pupils by minimising the impact of occasional incidences of unacceptable behaviour.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****4**

While the progress pupils make over time is satisfactory, the quality of learning observed in lessons varies widely. In too many lessons, more-able pupils and those of average ability were not sufficiently engaged in their work and learning was limited. There were a few good lessons in which pupils were engaged well in activities that were accurately pitched to meet their needs. For example, in one lesson, a group of more-able pupils thoroughly enjoyed a mathematical investigation about polygons. They

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demonstrated skills of independence, problem solving and teamwork that are developing well. The recent improvements to writing and pupils' personal targets are beginning to bear fruit. Progress is accelerating at a faster rate than in other subjects. Pupils in Year 4 were observed eagerly producing complex and interesting sentences in preparation for longer written pieces. In the majority of lessons, pupils with special educational needs, who find English and mathematics difficult, were making good progress and sometimes produced work of better quality than that of their peers because they benefited from close supervision by teaching assistants. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups makes progress that is similar to their peers.

Pupils enjoy taking exercise and many take part in sports clubs. A small minority have been successfully encouraged to cycle to school. The demand to cycle is growing and the school is improving its facilities to enable more to participate. Pupils report that they understand the benefits of a healthy diet, but some admit that often they or their friends prefer to take the unhealthy option. The very large majority of pupils report that they feel safe in school. While they are aware that bullying does occasionally occur, they are confident that the adults in school will deal with it effectively. The school is aware that pupils could be provided with more opportunities to contribute to the wider local community and to develop a greater appreciation of the diversity of cultures in the United Kingdom.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3

<sup>1</sup> 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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<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>
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### How effective is the provision?

There are common strengths in teaching and assessment throughout the school. For example, relationships between pupils and adults are productive and interactive whiteboards are used well to add interest to lessons. Assessment information is used successfully to track the progress of pupils and to identify those that need extra help.

There are too many important aspects of teaching that are not sufficiently embedded in all lessons because some teachers are not yet fully proficient in their use. Teachers use assessment information adequately to group pupils by ability, but sometimes insufficient use is made of this information to pitch work at the correct level for the majority of pupils in these groups. Consequently, more-able pupils often receive work that lacks challenge. The tasks are mundane because the expectations of what these pupils can achieve are too low. In the majority of lessons, techniques for checking what pupils have learnt are not exploited so that it is often unclear whether they have made the progress that they should.

The curriculum provides adequate coverage of all subjects. Some pupils report that they particularly enjoy their French lessons and would like to do them more often. The school has correctly started to establish links between different subjects so that pupils can practise and apply their literacy and numeracy skills, but at the time of the inspection there was little impact on attainment. A good feature of the curriculum is the lessons that teach pupils about e-safety. Older pupils were able to demonstrate the steps they need to take to stay safe when using a computer or mobile phone.

The pupils appreciate the caring environment successfully established by the school. For example, pupils receive a warm welcome when they arrive at school. They happily chat to staff who wait to greet them. Partnerships are well established so that vulnerable pupils are well cared for. Procedures to improve attendance have been very successful. The proportion of pupils who take a holiday in term time has reduced considerably, and those who were persistently absent now come to school more regularly. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good, explaining the good progress that most of them make.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>3</b>

### How effective are leadership and management?

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The headteacher shows a robust determination to make the necessary improvements. She is supported by an enthusiastic team of school leaders that recognise the need to enhance their leadership skills. The school improvement plan is accurate in identifying priorities, and provides a useful framework for school improvement. The leaders' regular checks on the school's work led to last year's improvements. Procedures for checking work in lessons are not sufficiently rigorous to hold teachers to account and bring about the rapid improvements necessary.

Governors demonstrate good knowledge of, and support for, the school. School records show examples where the governors have questioned the work of the school and made it account for its performance. They recognise that their systems are not structured rigorously enough to support and challenge the school to make more rapid improvement. The school has satisfactory procedures to ensure pupils' safety and equality of opportunity. Governors conscientiously carry out their statutory duties. The very large majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire consider that their children are safe in school.

The good plan for promoting community cohesion identifies key areas for development. The school has had some success in engaging with the parents who in the past have been hard to reach. For example, individual parents now trust the school enough to ask its advice. School leaders have rightly identified the need to further promote and celebrate the diversity of culture in the United Kingdom to its pupils. The school takes its responsibilities to the local community very seriously. For example, it has enrolled a few vulnerable pupils who have experienced difficulties in other schools to give them a second chance of education.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>4</b>



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## **Views of parents and carers**

Almost all parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire think that their children enjoy school. Their comments show that parents appreciate the recent improvements made by the headteacher. None of the 13 questions attracted strong disagreement. A few parents rightly voice concerns about progress and behaviour. A very small minority of parents were concerned that the special educational needs of their children were not met. This was investigated and there were no apparent weaknesses in the school's procedures. A few are concerned about the teaching their children receive when regular class teachers are carrying out other duties. This was pointed out to the headteacher and governors, who will investigate the issue.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thorpe Acre Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspector received 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 160 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	56	17	40	2	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	18	42	23	53	2	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	30	27	63	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	30	23	53	7	16	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	37	24	56	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	35	22	51	6	14	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	33	28	65	1	2	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)	12	28	25	58	4	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	30	20	47	8	19	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	23	24	56	8	19	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	23	29	67	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	40	20	47	3	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	45	21	45	3	6	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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



21 January 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Thorpe Acre Junior School, Loughborough, LE11 4SQ

Thank you for the help you gave us when we visited your school. If you remember, we came to look at all the work that you were doing and to talk to you and your teachers. We enjoyed meeting you and thought that most of you were very friendly and well behaved. You are helpful and kind to each other. We were pleased to find that the attendance of some of you is improving. You like school and enjoy taking part in exciting activities like healthy-eating week. We really enjoyed listening to your lovely singing in assembly.

The headteacher and other adults provide you a caring environment. They are trying hard to improve your education, but we think that they must do more to make sure that you do better in your work, particularly in English and mathematics.

These are some of the improvements we have asked your school to make.

Make sure that you do better in English and mathematics.

Improve less successful lessons and make your work more interesting and challenging.

Improve the help that some of you need in order to behave better.

Inspectors will be visiting again to see how the school is dealing with these things. I am sure you can all do really well if you receive this help.

Please remember to continue to come to school every day and carry on behaving well so that you get the most out of your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow

Her Majesty's Inspector

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