

Thurnby Lodge Primary School and Speech and Language Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120057
Local Authority	Leicester
Inspection number	339584
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Christopher Parker

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Oldfield
Headteacher	Mrs Sheila Driver
Date of previous school inspection	0 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The majority of the inspectors' time was spent in lessons observing learning. Twenty-two lessons, taught by nine teachers, were observed. Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher and senior leadership team, teachers and representatives of the governing body. Brief discussions were held with visiting specialists. The inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation and a sample of the pupils' work. Questionnaire responses from pupils, staff and 81 parents were analysed.

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

- the effectiveness of the steps being taken by the school to improve attainment in writing
- the progress of pupils with statements of special educational needs
- how well the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are developing their skills and abilities.

Information about the school

The school is an average size primary school. Pupils from many minority ethnic groups and pupils who speak a language other than English as their first language make up an increasing proportion of the school population. There is considerable movement of pupils in and out of the school throughout the school year. There are 28 pupils with statements of special educational needs. Twenty-four of these pupils are taught in the speech and language unit, which serves both Leicester City and Leicestershire.

There is a children's centre located on the same site. There is also a playgroup which was inspected separately.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for the pupils. Under the determined leadership of the headteacher, it has made marked inroads into a pattern of stubbornly low attainment. The school has been successful in raising attainment in science and mathematics, but improvements have been slower in writing. Nevertheless, results of national tests in English in 2009 were closer to the national average than at any time in the recent past. There is now a trend of improving progress and attainment that is evident in many lessons.

The excellent quality of the care, guidance and support that is provided by the school is one of the main reasons for the improvement. Not only in attainment, but also in their behaviour and confidence, pupils feel safe and concentrate well in lessons. The pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, notably those who attend the speech and language unit, do well. This is because the teaching is carefully tailored to their needs, and because the school works effectively with parents and agencies to remove barriers to learning. Strong partnerships and rigorous procedures have helped to reduce absence. The great majority of pupils have very good levels of attendance, but a very few pupils still do not attend regularly.

While the quality of teaching in some lessons is good, there are inconsistencies which make it satisfactory overall. There are variations in approaches to marking, and in some lessons resources are not used as effectively as they should be to help the pupils to improve their writing. Approaches to the teaching of calculation and problem-solving are more consistent, and therefore progress in mathematics lessons is accelerating. In all subjects there is a wave of improvement through the school that is overcoming earlier shortcomings. This is also evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where an increasing proportion of the children are reaching a secure level of development by the time they move into Year 1.

The headteacher and senior leadership team have secured many improvements through rigorous monitoring and evaluation and addressing areas of weakness through a comprehensive school improvement plan. However, the plan does not have a sufficiently sharp focus on improving the detail of the teaching and learning to accelerate the rate of improvement in pupils' writing. The governors play a key role in directing the work of the school, and contribute strongly to a realistic evaluation of its performance. The school has demonstrated a good capacity to improve by raising attainment, notably in mathematics and science, and by strengthening the care, guidance and support that it provides, so that potentially vulnerable pupils can feel safe and enjoy learning.

The school is a harmonious community that celebrates its cultural diversity. The

progress and well-being of all groups is carefully monitored and there is no discernible difference in performance between groups in lessons. Pupils who join the school when they are at an early stage of learning English are well supported.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing, to be in line with the national average by 2012, by ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good. Take steps to provide pupils with:
 - interesting, well-resourced and well-supported opportunities to write
 - marking that consistently helps them to improve the quality of their writing
 - opportunities to develop and use a wider vocabulary.
- Ensure that the school improvement plan has a sharper and more detailed focus on improving the teaching and learning of writing.
- Take all possible steps to reduce the absence of the very few pupils who do not attend school regularly.
- 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 pupils make at least satisfactory progress in lessons. Planning, success criteria and marking are generally used well, but are not consistently sharply defined enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Currently, progress is faster in mathematics than in writing because there is a consistent approach to practising skills and developing strategies for problem-solving. This was clearly illustrated in a Year 5 lesson where pupils were challenged with a series of mathematical puzzles that required considerable thought and reasoning to solve. The teacher's well-judged interventions helped the pupils to do well. Progress in writing is not as consistent, because resources and support are not always used to full effect. Nevertheless, progress in writing in lessons and in the pupils' work is at least satisfactory.

The school carefully tracks the progress of every pupil. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, particularly those with statements of special educational needs, do well because the school is very effective in removing barriers to learning, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils. As a result they have positive attitudes. Their attainment in English exceeds that of pupils with special educational needs nationally by a considerable margin.

Last year, in most classes, the pupils made at least the expected progress in writing, but it was not sufficient to constitute a significant step towards reaching the national average. Attainment in English has improved considerably over the last three years, but remains below average. In mathematics and science, the faster momentum of improvement resulted in broadly average standards in the national tests. There is no

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

noticeable variation in the progress made by pupils from different backgrounds. Many outcomes for pupils are good because of the opportunities and enrichment they receive. They have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and make healthy choices at lunchtimes. Pupils make an effective contribution to the school and the local community. The great majority of pupils behave well and respond well to teachers. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are not tolerated and are dealt with unequivocally. The pupils say they feel safe at school, and have a comprehensive understanding of staying safe in a range of situations.

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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The school has responded positively to many initiatives and programmes of support to improve teaching over the last few years. These have brought a range of approaches and practices but they are not implemented consistently. For example, there are good examples of teachers' marking that identifies what pupils need to do next to improve their work, whereas others assess the progress made but are not precise about the next step in learning.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Relationships are strong and most pupils respond well to their teachers, who seek to make lessons interesting and lively. Interactive whiteboards are used well to engage pupils, but on occasions pupils are not given sufficient opportunity or resources to generate the vocabulary that they need in order to benefit fully from writing tasks. This was the case when pupils in Year 2 were describing monsters, and in Year 4 when they were challenged to create an advertisement for washing powder.

The school has modified its curriculum to meet the diverse needs and backgrounds of the pupils. Tasks are adapted with a view to engaging boys and celebrating the diversity of the school and local community. The curriculum is thoughtfully adjusted to meet the needs of those pupils who have specific speech and language difficulties. These pupils are well taught and effectively supported. Liaison between home and school is very effective.

Outstanding support for pupils who experience difficulties is very carefully targeted to help them have access to all that the school offers. Excellent care and support within the school - for example, for those at the early stages of speaking English - is combined with support from a range of external agencies. Rigorous procedures to encourage good attendance have reduced the level of absence, but there are a very few pupils who still do not attend regularly.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Over the last three years, the headteacher has been very successful in leading improvements that have transformed the previously entrenched pattern of low attainment. The senior team have demonstrated considerable determination to provide all of the pupils with excellent care and interesting opportunities to do well at school. Improvements have been incremental and sustained, at each stage laying firm foundations for further improvement. The effective governing body, led by a knowledgeable chair, has provided considerable support, assistance and direction. Senior leaders and governors have a very realistic view of the school's performance and know where further improvements are needed. They are acutely aware of the need to maintain the relentless drive to improve attainment in writing. The school improvement plan is comprehensive, but it is not focused sharply enough on the detail of teaching and learning in such a way as to ensure that progress in writing accelerates, and attainment rises, at the same rate as in science and mathematics.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

The headteacher has generated an ethos that celebrates the diversity of the school and local community, and allows pupils to feel safe. The school has developed a good approach to promoting community cohesion. As a result, the school is harmonious and pupils get on very well together. All groups of pupils are equally well supported. The pupils' progress is carefully analysed, both with reference to that of individuals and in terms of the diverse groups that make up the school community.

Rigorous procedures keep pupils safe. Strong partnerships with a range of agencies which the school uses very well to help pupils' learning and progress. The school works well with parents to help them to support their children. There are particularly good arrangements to keep the parents of pupils in the speech and language unit well informed, as many live some distance from the school. During the inspection, a phonics workshop was well attended by parents of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

An analysis of the performance of the children in the Reception class last year shows that they made good progress having entered the school with skills and abilities that are not as well developed as expected for their age. Fewer children than usual reach a secure level of development, but the proportion is increasing and was considerably closer to the national average in 2009 than in previous years. The school's programme to develop speaking skills has had a marked impact on improving language for communication and thinking.

The children who entered school this year are making a good start. This is because of

the smooth transition and induction arrangements that result from the strong ties with the children's centre adjacent to the school. Productive partnerships with parents are established early on as parents join their children in the classroom and support their children's learning. Support for those children who enter school speaking little or no English is very effective. The children are cared for with great sensitivity.

Lively teaching ensures that activities are vibrant. The teachers provide well-resourced opportunities for the children to explore the world around them, to develop their language and number skills, and to extend their personal development. As a result children enjoy learning, and their curiosity, independence and concentration are developed well. Activities flow freely from indoors to outdoors. The adults encourage the children's learning and monitor the children's choices carefully. When the children were using photographs to locate places in the outdoor area, they were encouraged to talk about what they had found and to take digital photographs. Although they were given opportunities to write, not as much emphasis was given to this activity.

The children have a good understanding of the daily routines. They play and work well together, and many are happy to pursue their learning interests independently, using the wide range of activities planned for them.

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 overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire hold very positive views about the school. A minority of parents made additional written comments praising the care and support that the school provides. One parent wrote, 'I can't speak highly enough of the skill, dedication and care that all the staff, teaching and non-teaching, put into their work. Nothing is too much trouble.' A few parents of pupils speaking very little English were pleased with the support for their children and the help they received to work with their child at home. Some of the parents of pupils with statements of special educational needs expressed their support for the speech and language unit. One wrote, 'The school could not have worked harder to ensure my child is learning to the best of their ability.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thurnby Lodge Primary School and Speech and Language Unit 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 81 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 206 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	70	22	27	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	58	72	21	26	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	57	70	24	30	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	55	68	26	32	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	60	74	18	22	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	52	64	28	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	72	21	26	2	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)	49	60	28	35	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	56	69	23	28	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	52	64	23	28	3	4	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	56	69	18	22	3	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	53	65	24	30	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	60	74	19	23	2	2	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.



20 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thurnby Lodge Primary School and Speech and Language Unit, Leicester, LE5 2EG

This letter is to tell you about the findings of the recent inspection and to thank you for taking the time to talk to me and my colleague. You are able to learn in a very friendly atmosphere where the adults care for you extremely well. You behave well, and work and play together very sensibly. The teachers make many lessons interesting, but sometimes you do not have the aids that you need to take full advantage of the lesson. Similarly, the teachers mark your work in some detail and make comments on it.

Sometimes they tell how you can improve. We would like them to do this all the time

You are making satisfactory progress. Your progress in science and mathematics is better than in English. We have asked the school to help you to do better in writing - we would like to see you all making good progress in writing. This is also the aim of the headteacher and teachers, who have made many improvements in the last few years. We have asked the headteacher to look closely at the school's plans and set out exactly how the teachers can help you to make faster progress in writing.

The school provides a wide range of opportunities, both in and after school. Your involvement in many of these activities, and the excellent care and support that the school provides are helping you to do really well in many aspects of your personal development. You have a clear understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, and feel safe in school.

The school has good links with your parents and carers. Your parents are kept well informed and they work together with school to help you do as well as possible. A very few pupils do not attend school regularly. We have asked the school to do all it can to make sure these pupils come to school regularly because they are missing out on important things that happen at school.

We enjoyed being in your school, and hope that in the future it is even more successful in helping you to do as well as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker

Lead inspector

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