

Thurlaston Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120201
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	339631
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Bob Roberts

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Harrison
Headteacher	Gavin Beetham
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eleven lessons were observed and four teachers were seen teaching. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the minutes of meetings, records of monitoring and evaluation, school policy and planning documents and 41 replies to the parents' and carers' questionnaire, and other questionnaires completed by staff and pupils.

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

- the progress that is being made by pupils in order to evaluate the school's own judgement
- the quality of teaching, with particular reference to the issues raised at the last inspection: challenge for more able pupils, guidance on next steps, and the use of assessment information to generate challenging targets and monitor progress
- the quality of care, guidance and support in order to confirm the school's judgement that this has improved since the last inspection
- the quality of Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

Information about the school

Thurlaston is smaller than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. There are four classes, all containing pupils from more than one year group. The great majority of pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportions of pupils who find learning difficult or have a statement of special educational needs are well below average. Since the last inspection there have been a number of staff changes.

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

This is a satisfactory school which provides a supportive environment for its pupils. Personal development is good in all respects. Since the last inspection provision has improved in significant areas but this has not yet had sufficient time to improve pupils' achievement, which remains satisfactory.

There are areas of significant strength. The quality of education and care in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding, providing children with an excellent start to their school careers. After a period during which the school accepts that the quality of teaching was patchy, the headteacher has taken effective steps to ensure improvement in teaching. Good quality care, guidance and support mean that pupils enjoy school and flourish. The curriculum is satisfactory and helps pupils enjoy their learning. However, better planning is needed to ensure that the skills, knowledge and understanding of the various subjects are developed in concert.

After making rapid progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Over recent years this good progress has not been sustained in Years 3 to 6. Past results show that attainment at the end of Year 6 has usually been broadly average. Given their starting points, the overall achievement of pupils is satisfactory. In particular, standards of writing are not good enough. This is an issue that the school has identified and which the good teaching is addressing. In other respects pupils develop well and, in this caring environment, they grow in confidence. They are clearly happy and secure at school, and enjoy their lessons. They have very good attitudes to learning and behave well. Levels of attendance are high.

In its own evaluation, the school was generally accurate, with a good understanding of its strengths and areas for further development. The headteacher has the confidence of pupils, staff and parents and has been instrumental in leading significant improvements since the last inspection. Even so, there is still more to do to improve standards, and in this small school responsibilities fall on a small number of staff. Other leaders in the school make a positive contribution, but the role of subject leaders in planning and evaluating the curriculum is under-developed. The promotion of community cohesion is in its early stages. The governing body supports the school well in many ways. However, in identifying priorities and monitoring the work of the school, particularly pupils' progress, their role needs to be strengthened. Taking account of all these factors, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards by:

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- improving pupils' writing skills
- building on improvements already seen in Key Stage 2 to ensure that rates of progress are consistently good throughout the school.
- Improve leadership and management by :
 - involving the governing body in more rigorous scrutiny of progress and attainment, and in identifying priorities for development
 - developing more thorough strategies for promoting community cohesion and evaluating the impact of this work.
- Improve curriculum provision by:
 - ensuring that lesson plans include the skills, knowledge and understanding required in all subjects of the curriculum
 - developing the role of subject leaders in contributing to curriculum planning and evaluation.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Children start Reception with skills and knowledge that are broadly average for their age, although with small numbers this varies from year to year. They make outstanding progress in all the areas of learning. Progress is best in areas of communication, language and literacy and creative development. By the time children leave this class their skills are above average. In Years 1 and 2 they continue to make good progress and by the end of Key Stage 1 levels of attainment are consistently above average. This rate of progress has not been sustained in recent years as pupils have moved through Key Stage 2. However, there are signs of improvement in pupils' learning, and results in the national tests in 2009 were above average. Even so, standards in writing are not yet improving sufficiently. The school's tracking of progress for the current Year 6 pupils indicates that despite recent improvement in the teaching attainment is broadly average. Overall, pupils at the school, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the more able, are making satisfactory progress from their starting points and achievement is satisfactory.

Pupils' personal and social development is good. They are very keen to participate and contribute to lessons. Behaviour is good, both in and out of the classroom. Pupils are friendly and welcoming, showing pride in their achievements. They enjoy school a great deal, as reflected in their high levels of attendance. Pupils understand how to live healthily. Pupils told inspectors, for example, how they had been influenced to spend less time at home on computer games. They act safely and feel secure in this cohesive school community. Pupils respond well to opportunities to take responsibility and the school council is active in its contribution to developments in school and within the local community. In this church school, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

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development is good. Pupils enjoy learning about other peoples and countries, for example, through a recent project on different rivers around the world. Pupils initiated an appeal for the victims of the Haitian earthquake. Overall, pupils develop attitudes and skills that will serve them well in their lives.

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	3
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Inspectors agreed with the school's own evaluation that, after a period of time when the quality of teaching was very mixed, it is now good. Teachers have very good relations with pupils, and classrooms are positive working environments. Enjoyable experiences are provided through the creative use of resources and there are good opportunities for pupils to apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills to extend their learning. Teachers plan carefully and use assessment information well as the basis for further work. The marking of pupils' work is excellent, as it is very clear about the next steps that pupils should take, and engenders pride in their work. Just occasionally tasks are insufficiently clear and in some lessons there is a lack of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils.

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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The curriculum meets statutory requirements. For the most part pupils have literacy and numeracy in the mornings and other subjects or topic work in the afternoons. The planning of the work that takes place in the afternoons does not sufficiently link other subjects to basic skills. Topic work promotes pupils' interest and enthusiasm and provides good learning opportunities for research, the use of ICT and independent learning. However, the topics are not planned or evaluated sufficiently well to ensure that they provide the skills, knowledge and understanding of all the different subjects they cover. There is a suitable range of enrichment activities.

The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils has improved. Good arrangements are now in place to support and care for pupils and to help them develop and learn. There is effective additional support for those who need extra help, which pupils appreciate. A range of strategies, for example, the provision of sessions on topics such as e-safety, has led to good links with parents, demonstrated by the very high attendance at parents' evenings. There are effective links with a range of specialist services, such as behaviour support. The school is effective at managing transition arrangements, as pupils join the school and when they leave for their secondary schools. The clear knowledge that they are being cared for in this supportive school is an undoubted factor in the pupils' high attendance rates.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has worked successfully to improve provision. The quality of teaching and the care and support that pupils receive are both now good. Following a period of change amongst the teaching staff, there is now greater stability. Teachers and other staff are working hard to improve provision further and there is a shared sense of commitment and ambition. More needs to be done to improve progress in writing. In this small school, there is some sharing of leadership responsibilities but the role of subject leaders is under-developed with regard to the planning and evaluation of the curriculum.

The ethos of the school is one in which all pupils are valued equally. This ensures that any discrimination is speedily tackled and that pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. The school works well with partners through, for example, the strong family of schools network, and with parents. The progress of pupils is monitored carefully. All safeguarding duties are met. Arrangements and policies are in line with government

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requirements and are systematically reviewed. Pupils who are most at risk are identified at an early stage and steps are taken to provide support. The school has identified steps to better promote community cohesion but these developments are at an early stage. The governing body has good arrangements for visiting the school and reporting on their links with particular subjects or aspects of the work. However, governors have only limited involvement in monitoring progress and attainment, and in identifying priorities for 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	3
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	3
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 settle into school life very quickly and start learning straight away because of the school's very close links with parents. Resources are freely available and appealing to children, encouraging independent learning extremely well. For example, there are several role-play areas, computers and a wide variety of materials for children to use when they want to. Children rapidly become aware of themselves as individuals, learn to share and take turns in using the learning resources with excellent consideration for others.

Teaching is outstanding and this ensures that children make very rapid progress. Teachers and their assistants work very closely together to ensure that learning is exciting, continuous and purposeful. Teachers promote independence very well by encouraging children to move around the learning areas freely. An excellent lesson about King Neptune's kingdom provided indoor and outdoor learning opportunities of the highest order in many areas of learning. Children thoroughly enjoyed the chances to learn through reading, writing, role play, singing and painting. They made stunning

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models of underwater worlds using many materials to excellent effect. The outdoor learning environment is very stimulating.

The school is aware that although opportunities for physical development are good, more space is needed to improve the good physical development to outstanding. Clear plans are in place to address this. The curriculum is adapted very sensitively to meet children's needs and is outstanding. Assessment procedures are very good and the information gathered is used very effectively to ensure that the curriculum meets pupils' needs. Systems to ensure the welfare of children are excellent and safety matters are given top priority. The effectiveness of leadership and management can be seen in the outstanding outcomes and quality of provisions achieved.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are very positive in their support of the school. A good proportion of parents returned the questionnaire. There were very few concerns expressed. A very small minority expressed concern about the effectiveness with which the school manages unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors considered this issue very carefully and judged the school's approach to be suitable and reasonable. Governors at the school are aware of the behaviour concerns and support the approach of the school leaders.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thurlaston Church of England 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 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 103 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	83	7	17	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	78	7	17	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	51	20	49	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	54	18	44	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	71	12	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	51	19	46	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	49	20	49	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)	18	44	19	46	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	56	17	41	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	34	19	46	5	12	3	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	49	17	41	4	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	14	34	24	59	2	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	59	14	34	2	5	1	2

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

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



17 May 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Thurlaston Church of England Primary School, Leicester, LE9 7TE

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help when we visited your school recently. We were pleased to see how much you enjoy school and what you told us helped us in our work. You were a credit to the school.

Thurlaston is giving you a satisfactory education and, by time you leave, most of you reach the standards that are normally expected. Your personal development is good. You all showed very good attitudes to working and playing together. You feel safe and secure in this caring environment. You behave very well, and your attendance at school is very good. You are learning to live healthily. Many of you are making a good contribution to the life of the school and the surrounding community. You are developing the skills, habits and attitudes that will serve you well in later life. Both you and your parents said how much they like the school.

There are some things that we feel the school needs to do to improve. We have asked the headteacher and all the adults who look after you to do several things:

- help you make better progress in each year at school, particularly in your writing skills
- involve school governors more in checking your progress and planning for the future
- plan more ways to develop your understanding of the different communities in this country and the wider world
- improve the way teachers work together in planning the curriculum and ensure that it covers all that you need to know and understand.

I am sure you will continue to play your part in the life of the school and we wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Bob Roberts

Lead inspector

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