

Thorpe Lea Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125072
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	340712
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Thrussell

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	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Thompson
Headteacher	Peter Smyth
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and a group of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documents including the school improvement plan, policies, monitoring records, governors' minutes, tracking data, local authority reports, and questionnaires completed by 52 parents and carers, 19 pupils and 19 members of staff.

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

- pupils' attainment and their progress, and how well teaching contributes to their learning, particularly for the more able and for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the effectiveness and use of assessment and the support systems to drive improvement
- the role of leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, in securing and sustaining improvements
- the provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

Thorpe Lea is a one-form entry primary school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are catered for in the Reception class and half-day nursery sessions. There have been many staff changes in recent years, culminating in an entirely new leadership team this term. This includes an interim headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher. The majority of pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. An above average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the main need being moderate learning difficulties. The school has gained a number of awards including Eco-Schools and Activemark.

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

Thorpe Lea Primary is a satisfactory school. The new leadership team, under the experienced guidance of the interim headteacher, shares a common purpose and ambition for wanting the school to do better. This is recognised by parents, one of whom comments on leaders' 'good commitment to the school'. As part of the school's self-evaluation process, the leadership team has very quickly identified appropriate areas for improvement, set out in a new school improvement plan. This plan has yet to be more specific in how improvements are to be brought about, and how they are to be monitored and evaluated for their effectiveness, especially in relation to raising achievement and attainment. Initiatives taken by the previous leadership team were effective in remodelling the school and adding extra accommodation. Pupils are now taught in spacious classrooms and have the use of a well-resourced computer suite. Throughout this time of considerable change, a good quality of care, guidance and support for pupils has been maintained.

The key areas for improvement relate to raising attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by improving the quality of teaching and making better use of assessment. Although in recent years attainment at the end of Year 6 has been broadly average in English, mathematics and science, it dipped in 2009, particularly in mathematics. In previous years, Year 6 pupils received well-focused teaching in smaller groups so that their progress was accelerated. A move away from this arrangement in the last year, along with staff changes, contributed to this fall in attainment. Good teaching was observed in Year 6 during the inspection, showing that pupils are now making good progress towards the statutory targets that have been set for them. The latest assessments for Key Stage 1 show that pupils here, both boys and girls, are also making good progress as a result of an effective team of teachers and teaching assistants. Nevertheless, the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. The main weakness is that teachers have yet to become fully skilled in making assessments and using them to match work more closely to pupils' different abilities and styles of learning. Consequently, at times the work is too difficult for some pupils and too easy for others so that progress slows.

Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities around the school. They are very keen to take on jobs, such as manning the telephone at lunchtime, and are good advocates for ecology, recognised in a national award. The school council is actively involved in charity fund raising and contributed its ideas for playground improvements. However, less encouragement is given to pupils to take responsibility for their own learning by showing them how they could do better. Although some pupils recall their individual literacy and numeracy targets and recognise their purpose in helping them to improve

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their work, the use of such targets is inconsistent. Likewise, the marking of work, although recognising pupils' efforts, does not always provide constructive comments to help move their learning forward.

Good, improved leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is resulting in satisfactory but improving outcomes for children in their learning and personal development. Along with other signs of good progress elsewhere and a leadership team focused on school improvement, the school has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the planned actions for school improvement are made more specific and show how their success is to be monitored and evaluated
- Improve the progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - developing teachers' skills in assessment
 - using assessment to match work accurately to pupils' different levels of ability and styles of learning
 - showing pupils how to improve their learning through the more effective use of targets and marking.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The quality of learning observed in lessons during the inspection was satisfactory overall for all groups of pupils, but inconsistent. Where lessons are managed well and pupils are clear about what they have to do, learning is more effective. This was seen in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, where good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning helped pupils to make good progress in using strategies for multiplication. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, a practical activity along with a good use of questioning by a skilled teaching assistant meant that lower attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs, enjoyed their learning and made good progress in understanding block graphs. In other lessons, pupils are not always as fully engaged in their learning. Consequently, behaviour sometimes slips a little as some pupils start to lose concentration, chatter and fidget. Similar variations in behaviour was also observed in assemblies, showing that behaviour overall is satisfactory.

Although the school works hard to improve attendance, it remains just below average and continues to be a focus for school improvement. Ill health remains a key factor. Despite good opportunities for physical exercise and sport, and positive encouragement to eat healthily, pupils' recognition of the importance of these in maintaining a healthy lifestyle is satisfactory. Pupils generally feel safe in school and know who to turn to if they have any concerns. They expressed concerns to inspectors about scraps at playtimes and how they are sometimes hit by balls. An inspector observed these issues. Although they are mostly dealt with effectively by staff and supervisors, it leaves some pupils feeling a little unsafe. One reason is that much of the structured playground area

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is grassed and cannot be used in the wet weather, so limiting the space for play. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their awareness of cultures and communities beyond their own, particularly within the United Kingdom, is satisfactory. Given the progress made in their learning and their acquisition of academic and personal skills, pupils are adequately prepared for their future life and learning.

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	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Assessment is not always accurate enough to provide fully secure starting points on which to base pupils' learning. As a result, less able pupils, including those with special educational needs, sometimes find tasks too complex and more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged, at times having to complete simpler, basic tasks before moving on to more challenging extension work. Nevertheless, lessons are generally planned well, showing clear learning objectives, which are shared with pupils, and include activities for different ability groups. Lesson plans are not always fully implemented, especially where introductions are too long and teachers talk too much, leaving insufficient time for pupils to complete activities and reflect on how well they have done.

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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In better lessons, introductions provide a good range of questioning that helps develop pupils' ideas and understanding, making good use of interactive whiteboards to enliven learning. Pupils are often encouraged to discuss their learning in pairs, but opportunities for whole-class discussion are sometimes missed, so limiting the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills.

The curriculum has a strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills and satisfactorily meets the learning needs of different groups of pupils. Some links have been made between subjects that encourage pupils to use and develop their different skills in relevant and interesting settings. This is especially evident at Key Stage 1, where more creative learning opportunities effectively contribute to pupils' good progress.

Improved provision for information and communication technology is starting to enable these skills to be developed and used more effectively. Good provision for sport and physical activity, including 'activate' sessions at the start of the day, have been recognised in a national award. With many staff changes, the provision of enrichment opportunities, especially after-school clubs that are currently few in number, have suffered. To an extent this restricts opportunities for pupils' personal and social development.

The care arrangements for all pupils are good and well organised. Staff, including those who are new to the school, know pupils well. Vulnerable pupils and their families are well supported, drawing on the skills of a home/school link worker. Additional support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very good and well focused, enabling these pupils to make good progress towards the learning and personal targets specifically set for them.

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 latest evaluation of pupils' progress have benefited from more guidance on moderating assessments, although there is more work to be done on this to provide a more secure picture on which to base future planning. A limited number of lesson observations have been carried out, which has been sufficient to gain an accurate view of the quality of teaching, but has yet to provide clear development points for individual teachers. The governing body is supportive of the work of the school. It depends very much on performance information provided by the school rather than developing its own

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monitoring role in order to provide greater challenge. Policies and procedures for safeguarding are fully in place and are systematically reviewed by the governing body. They are understood by staff, but recent changes in leadership have meant that a few minor omissions, although identified and addressed, have not been acted upon with necessary speed.

The school generally works hard to ensure that pupils have equal opportunities to succeed and do not suffer from discrimination. A policy for community cohesion has only recently been put in place and the school is at an early stage of evaluating how well this is being promoted. Parents and carers effectively support the work of the school through fund raising events. Encouragement for them to be involved in their children's learning is being further promoted through regular curriculum newsletters, which are greatly appreciated. Links with a local confederation of schools and a nearby children's centre provide some additional support for pupils' learning and development.

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	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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

Although the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving, outcomes and provision are both currently satisfactory. Children enter the Nursery with knowledge, skills and understanding below those expected for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy, and personal and social development. A large proportion of them have a very limited use of English. Their vocabulary and articulation are both relatively poor. Children are safe, happy and fairly well behaved. The satisfactory progress which they all make is largely due to the range of activities they

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take part in, both in the Nursery and in Reception. The new coordinator has made several improvements that are already raising the quality of provision and outcomes. These include Reception children's daily visits to the Nursery garden, which are improving continuity between the two classes and enhancing opportunities for children to extend their learning and physical development outside. Other improvements are seen in the planning for activities in Reception, the progress children are now making in the different areas of learning, and the growing understanding which all staff have of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Resources are satisfactory. Some are attractive and inspiring but others rather jaded and worn. Accommodation in the Nursery is good but not as effectively organised outside as it could be. The space for children to use wheeled toys is relatively small and restricted. Accommodation in Reception is spacious and well organised indoors but fairly limited outside.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Just over a fifth of parents and carers completed the inspection questionnaire. From this relatively small return, most are positive about all aspects of the school. They are happy with their children's experiences at this school and that they are making enough progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thorpe Lea 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 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 235 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	65	15	29	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	62	18	35	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	56	20	38	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	62	17	33	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	56	21	40	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	52	21	42	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	52	21	40	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)	27	52	17	33	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	56	20	38	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	52	20	38	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	44	24	46	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	52	22	42	1	2	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	63	17	33	1	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.



27 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thorpe Lea Primary School, Egham, TW20 8DY

Thank you for taking part in the inspection. We spoke with some of you during our visit and you were interesting to talk to, polite and helpful. You spoke quite enthusiastically about enjoying school and all the things you take part in. Thorpe Lea Primary is a satisfactory school, which means that some things are good but some things need to be improved.

These are the things that the school does well.

- The school looks after you well and provides good care and support for those who find learning difficult.
- Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities and to do jobs around school.
- The school encourages you to keep fit.
- You now have spacious classrooms to work in and a new computer suite. We're sure you will make good use of these.
- All of the staff that lead your school are new to their posts. They work well together, are keen to do their best and want you all to do well in your learning.

We have asked the school to work on the following things.

- Leaders have plans to improve the school and to ensure that you all do as well as possible. They must look at these plans carefully and check that they are working.
- Many of you need to do better in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers must keep a careful check on how well you are doing, and use this information to plan work that is just right for each one of you, not too difficult and not too easy. This will help all of you to make better progress. They must also give each of you targets to aim for so that you know what you have to do to improve your work. Marking also needs to show you how you can do better.

Thank you again for your help. You can do your bit to help by working hard in lessons and enjoying all that you do in school.

Yours sincerely

Peter Thrussell

Lead inspector

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