

Thongsley Fields Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133699
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	360572
Inspection dates	28–29 March 2011
Reporting inspector	David Shepherd

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	310
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	June Housego
Headteacher	Rachel Myer
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who observed 21 lessons led by 13 different teachers. Meetings were held with the senior staff, a group of pupils and four members of the governing body, including the chair. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at safeguarding documentation and the school's analysis of its data. Questionnaires from 139 parents and carers, 20 staff and 131 pupils were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Why do girls in Year 6 appear to attain lower levels than boys in English and mathematics?
- Why does attainment in English in Year 6 appear to be much lower than in mathematics?
- How consistent are teaching and assessment throughout the school?
- What is the impact on progress and attainment of the monitoring carried out by senior and middle leaders?

Information about the school

This school is larger than most primary schools, and draws its pupils from the local area. A large majority of pupils are from a White British background, with a very small minority of pupils from other White backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average as is the proportion speaking English as an additional language. An above average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their main needs are moderate learning difficulties and behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. The proportion of pupils, who have statements of special educational needs, is above average. Higher than average proportions of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The numbers of pupils leaving or joining the school during the year is above average. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two Nursery classes and three Reception classes. The school has gained Healthy Schools' status and the Activemark award.

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

Thongsley Fields Primary and Nursery School provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. Pupils make satisfactory progress because teaching is satisfactory overall. There are some good features in the school's work and, in particular, good care, guidance and support mean that pupils enjoy school, feel safe, behave well, get on well together, lead healthy lifestyles and play a significant part in enabling the school to run smoothly.

Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average but higher in mathematics and reading than in writing. This is because teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to consolidate and extend their writing skills in different subjects. In 2010, girls in Year 6 did not perform as well as boys in English and mathematics but this is not the case throughout the school where in some year groups girls outperform boys. Inspectors found that pupils do not make sufficient progress because teachers do not plan the learning in each lesson well enough for pupils at different levels of ability. This is why progress is only satisfactory and not good.

A notable feature of lessons is the consistently good relationships between pupils and adults. As a result, pupils try hard to please staff. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good guidance and support for pupils in their groups during lessons. Teachers ask probing questions that encourage pupils to think carefully and develop independence in their learning. Marking is encouraging but does not always provide enough guidance for pupils, or explain where next steps are indicated, pupils are not always given enough time to respond to suggestions made. The curriculum is enriched by a wide variety of visitors to the school and visits to places of interest.

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which is shared by the assistant headteachers and senior staff. Senior staff and middle leaders, some of whom have taken on their roles quite recently, are developing the skills necessary to carry out their roles but have not yet had a strong enough impact on learning. Links with parents and carers are good and these help to promote community cohesion well. The governing body is keen and supportive but has not been successful in providing the school with the challenge necessary to aid improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate and appropriate priorities for development are identified. This underpins the school's satisfactory capacity to sustain further improvement. However, planning is too detailed to give a clear focus on the key actions that need to be taken to raise attainment.

Up to 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.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2012, raise attainment in writing to expected levels by providing pupils with regular opportunities to consolidate and extend their writing skills in different subjects.
- By October 2011, improve the quality and consistency of teaching and assessment so that at least 80% of lessons are judged good by:
 - identifying what pupils of different abilities are to learn in lessons
 - ensuring that marking indicates the next steps in learning, and providing pupils with opportunities to correct their mistakes.
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation by senior and middle leaders lead to accelerating progress and rising attainment across the curriculum by:
 - training staff new to their roles in the skills of monitoring and evaluation
 - devising and implementing plans that focus on the key actions to raise attainment.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, given that they start school with skills that are broadly in line with national expectations and progress to the point where results as well as standards seen in lessons and books by inspectors are broadly average. Pupils settle down quickly to their work. For example, in Year 6 pupils were captivated by the topical content of the literacy lesson on the tsunami. They worked enthusiastically in developing their skills of scanning from this stimulus. Pupils in Year 5 enjoyed creating their own characters using a series of leading questions to prompt their thinking. In a Year 1/2 class pupils learnt to tell the time in a practical and fun way out in the playground. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress because they have considerable support to help them succeed.

Pupils know about healthy foods and the importance of exercise. They enjoy physical activities in lessons as well as at playtimes and lunchtimes. The responses on these topics in pupils' questionnaires indicate the positive impact of achieving Healthy Schools' status and the Activemark. Pupils behaved well in the lessons seen, and sometimes their behaviour was exemplary. However, a small minority of pupils indicated in their questionnaires that this is not always the case. Pupils make good contributions to the school and local communities. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils conduct a 'Happy Surgery' to which pupils come if they have friendship issues and they think their peers can help them. All Year 6 pupils are trained as 'Young Leaders' in charge of playground games. Pupils also act as 'Eco Warriors', 'Junior Wardens' and 'Shed Friends'. They have raised money for a range of charities at home and abroad. Elected pupils represent their peers on the school council. Spiritual and moral development are good. Pupils reflect thoughtfully upon some of the broader issues in life, such as being there when someone needs help. They have a good sense of fairness and know the correct way to behave. They learn about aspects of a range of cultures including those represented by their classmates.

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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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' planning and classroom organisation are effective in enabling lessons to flow smoothly and the purposes of lessons are generally made clear to pupils; however, on occasions pupils at different levels of ability do not know how well they have done because expectations of their learning have not been explained to them. Teachers and teaching assistants support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language satisfactorily on an individual and/or group basis and this helps them in their understanding of particular aspects of their work. This additional teaching helps pupils to make satisfactory progress. On occasions, the pace of learning is too slow because introductions for lessons take too long and this does not leave pupils with enough time to carry out the tasks set for them. The content of lessons is often very interesting and this encourages pupils to work hard, although their work is sometimes untidy.

Provision to promote pupils' personal development is included effectively throughout the curriculum. Enrichment activities are varied and visits to places of interest and visitors to the school are popular with pupils. Information and communication technology is used effectively to support learning. However, pupils' writing skills are not reinforced regularly enough in learning across the curriculum in subjects such as history, geography and religious education, and this prevents pupils from making quicker progress. The school

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runs a large, free breakfast club that provides pupils with a wide range of interesting activities that are popular with pupils and gives them an enjoyable start to the day.

Good arrangements for pupils joining the school ensure that they settle quickly. In replies to their questionnaire, most pupils responded that they were looked after well by staff. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified appropriately and suitable provision is allocated to meet their needs. As one parent and carer wrote, 'The school has helped my child with speech therapy. I am very pleased they have noticed his difficulties'. Procedures for promoting attendance are good. Transition arrangements are good from the Reception classes into Year 1 and from Year 6 to secondary school. All pupils visit their secondary schools for a day and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities visit on additional occasions. This is to ensure that they settle in quickly with their new teachers and support staff.

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?

Morale is high because staff feel that their contributions to school are valued by the headteacher and senior leaders. There is a strong sense of teamwork where everyone is pulling together to achieve goals. However, a number of staff have taken over subject responsibilities during the current academic year. They are developing their skills of monitoring and evaluation but have not yet had time to identify the impact of their roles on pupils' progress and attainment. The school identifies appropriately the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning and incorporates the areas for development into plans of action. However, plans do not focus on pupil outcomes regularly enough and this makes it difficult to identify their impact on pupils' learning, and so limits their effectiveness.

The school has a positive relationship with parents and carers. As one parent wrote, 'I am very happy with the school's headteacher and teachers. We always get greeted with a smile and everyone is very friendly and helpful'. Initiatives such as family learning, learning workshops and home-school books all help to promote these positive relationships. Parents and carers are invited into school on a number of occasions, such as for parents' and carers consultation evenings, class assemblies and school productions.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is ambitious for the school to do well, is supportive and shows high levels of commitment to the school. However, it does not provide enough challenge about pupils' progress and attainment to enable it to make a significant contribution to improvements. Safeguarding procedures are good. The site is safe and secure, and all staff are rigorously vetted and trained regularly in child protection

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procedures. Links with the local authority, medical services and local schools help to promote effectively the personal development and well-being of pupils. They contribute to improving provision, but their impact on learning has not been evaluated.

The school tackles any racist behaviour and discrimination effectively. It provides appropriate support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Community cohesion is good. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of their local community and the wider national and international communities. They are introduced to words and phrases from different languages as well as cultural practices of pupils from a range of ethnic backgrounds, and this helps to promote their understanding of the global nature of their local community.

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	2
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	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

Children receive a satisfactory start to their schooling. They make satisfactory progress overall, but it is fastest in physical development and creative development and slowest in writing.

Children enjoy their learning and work well independently. They are looked after well and are kept safe. They are given good opportunities to chat to adults about what they are doing. They practise the sounds letters make, read, write, count and play with toys and other equipment. Behaviour is good and children get on well with each other and adults. The learning environment is stimulating and well organised inside and outside. It provides children with an enjoyable range of activities. Staff work well together as a team and are developing a good understanding about early years provision. Children's progress is monitored and recorded systematically. However, teacher's planning does not focus enough on tackling the weaknesses in writing that are reflected in pupils' work further up the school, and opportunities to increase children's rate of progress are missed. Links with

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parents and carers are good. Induction procedures are good and children quickly settle into school routines.

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	3

Views of parents and carers

The response rate from parents and carers to the questionnaire was average. Their views were largely positive. Approximately one tenth of the questionnaires returned included written comments, most of which were positive. Parents and carers feel that their children enjoy school and the school keeps their children safe. The school helps children to lead a healthy lifestyle and keeps them informed about progress. One parent wrote, 'The team at Thongsley Fields are always there to help with any situation. I can't express how much my family and I are happy and settled with the school'.

A few parents and carers wrote that behaviour is not managed well enough. There were concerns also about the school not taking the suggestions of parents and carers into account. Inspectors found that behaviour was managed well during the inspection. The school pointed out that suggestions from parents and carers are always welcome and considered carefully, although sometimes they are not acted on for carefully considered reasons.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thongsley Fields Primary and Nursery 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 139 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 310 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	75	54	56	40	5	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	73	53	57	41	6	4	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	74	53	55	40	9	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	62	45	72	52	4	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	67	48	67	48	3	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	72	52	57	41	8	6	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	61	44	67	48	6	4	3	2
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)	57	41	69	50	6	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	53	38	76	55	6	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	57	41	62	45	10	7	7	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	52	37	68	49	10	7	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	61	44	66	47	4	3	6	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	69	50	57	41	10	7	3	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 all 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



30 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thongsley Fields Primary and Nursery School, Huntingdon, PE29 1PE

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you. You go to a satisfactory school where adults work hard to prepare you for the future. Here are some of the best things we found.

You enjoy school and get on really well with each other.

You feel safe and know the importance of eating healthy foods and taking exercise.

You particularly like the breakfast club.

You like your teachers and teaching assistants and try your best to please them.

You are well behaved and make a good contribution to the school.

Your teachers and teaching assistants look after you well.

We have asked your headteacher, teachers and the governing body to do three things to make your school better.

Provide you with more opportunities to write in different subjects to help you improve your writing.

Let you know what you are expected to learn by the end of each lesson, how well you have done and give you time to carry out the improvements suggested in marking.

Check on how well you are learning in all lessons and make plans to help you learn even quicker.

All of you can help by continuing to work very hard.

Yours sincerely

David Shepherd

Lead inspector

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