

# Thelwall Community Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111000
<b>Local authority</b>	Warrington
<b>Inspection number</b>	378211
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Denise Shields

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	148
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Geoffrey Weston
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Robinson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 March 2007
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Denise Shields

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed seven teachers teaching ten lessons or part-lessons, including short visits to a few support lessons where specialist help is provided by a teacher. The inspector listened to pupils read from a range of different ages and abilities. Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, four members of the governing body and school staff, including senior and middle managers. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's strategic development plan, safeguarding documentation and minutes of governing body meetings. The inspector analysed 75 parents' and carers' questionnaires and questionnaires completed by pupils and staff.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller than average sized primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The school meets the current floor standards, which are minimum standards for attainment and progress expected by the government.

Since the previous inspection, several new teachers have joined the school and a new headteacher was appointed in January 2011.

The school holds Healthy School status and the Eco School bronze 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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because, although teaching is good overall, there are some inconsistencies in its quality. Furthermore, whilst leadership and management are good, systems to record the outcomes from monitoring and evaluation are unwieldy and success criteria are not defined sharply enough in the school development plan.
- The school’s main strengths are high levels of care and guidance and an outstanding curriculum that foster pupils’ excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and their extremely positive attitudes and enjoyment of learning; this is reflected by consistently high levels of attendance.
- Teaching is consistently good and with examples of outstanding practice. Consequently, all groups of pupils make progress that is at least good and sometimes rapid. By the end of Year 6, attainment is well above average in English and mathematics. More pupils than average attain the higher levels in these subjects. As a result, from their typically average starting points when they join the school, achievement for all groups of pupils is good.
- Without exception, pupils say they feel safe and secure in the school, a view endorsed by every parent and carer, in the well above average response to the inspection questionnaire. Behaviour over time is exemplary; consequently, in lessons learning is not disrupted. Pupils have superb relationships with adults, are very considerate of others and frequently help and support each other, enhancing the school’s very supportive, friendly ‘family’ ethos.
- Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, are effective. They have an accurate understanding of the school’s strengths and weaknesses, based on a robust evaluation of its performance; improvement has been driven at a good pace. Performance is managed effectively. Leaders have successfully led improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils’ performance, and have significantly enhanced the curriculum.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that far more of it is outstanding by ensuring that:
  - the outstanding practice that already exists in the school is shared, for example, through supportive coaching
  - all teachers use questioning that challenges pupils to think more deeply about their learning
  - the conclusions of lessons are used more effectively to re-enforce key teaching points.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - the current system to record the outcome of monitoring and evaluation is refined so that it is more manageable
  - the school development plan has precise success criteria, so that the impact of actions taken can be measured to provide a clearer overview of the school's performance.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Overwhelmingly, parents and carers state that their children make good progress and the school meets their child's particular needs. This is supported by inspection findings. Achievement is good. Pupils have lots of opportunities to practise their reading, writing and information and communication technology (ICT) skills and increasing chances to use their numeracy skills because the curriculum is rich, very varied and stimulates pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Progress for all groups of pupils is better than their peers nationally in English and mathematics because basic skills are taught extremely well. The performance of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is nearly always better than that of similar pupils nationally, reflecting the high-quality care and well-targeted guidance they receive. From their start points on entry, the school successfully narrows the gap in the performance of boys and girls. By the end of Year 6, attainment is well-above average in English and mathematics. Almost all pupils comment that they enjoy reading. Most read with confidence, accurately and show high levels of inference and deduction. Pupils' attainment in reading by the time they leave Year 6 is well-above average and more pupils than average attain the higher levels.

In lessons, pupils demonstrate great enjoyment for learning. This is because teachers are skilled at adapting the curriculum to spark pupils' interest and enthusiasm. 'We have an excellent selection of activities; lessons are not boring, we enjoy them, they're huge fun!' is a view that typifies that of most pupils. By the end of Year 6 pupils are articulate, confident and independent learners. Almost all pupils try their best at all times and concentrate and listen carefully. They work well in small groups or with a partner and readily take responsibility for their own learning. This was apparent in a short 'spelling blast' lesson for the oldest pupils; they successfully worked in pairs within a team, to think of and correctly spell words

following the spelling rules of 'ing' and 'lly'. They collaborated and helped each other superbly and rose to the challenge set by their teacher. Against the clock, with the minimum of fuss and lots of humour, pupils recorded their results on the whiteboard; progress was rapid as they evaluated the efforts of their peers, celebrating their success and learning from the errors sometimes made.

### **Quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is consistently good with some that is outstanding. This judgement reflects the views of virtually all pupils and their parents and carers. A key strength in all classes is that teachers consistently make careful use of detailed assessment information and so lessons are pitched correctly to meet everyone's needs. Marking and pupils' learning targets have a positive impact on pupils' learning in all lessons; this is confirmed in discussions with different groups of pupils. As one pupil commented, 'targets help you learn new things so you can improve'. Teachers are adept at using short, fun sessions to extend pupils' basic reading, writing, mathematical and communication skills; these skills are also taught extremely well either to the whole class or during short withdrawal sessions. Throughout the school relationships are exceptionally strong so pupils are not afraid to ask for help if they should need it. Praise is used well to raise pupils' confidence and esteem. Curriculum planning makes an excellent contribution to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness; the class 'morning meeting' sets the tone for the day and the wide range of topics covered, often generated by pupils themselves, makes a significant contribution to this aspect.

In the best lessons, time is used well and the pace is lively. Ample opportunities are provided for pupils to talk in pairs and small groups or take part in role play activities: these very successfully promote their speaking, listening and co-operation skills. The endings of many lessons are used extremely effectively to consolidate the main teaching focus, often through effective use of the interactive whiteboard. However, this is not consistent practice in all classes and when the endings are less effective, progress slows. At its very best, skilful, well-targeted questioning such as 'why', 'how do you know' and 'can you explain' deepens pupils' learning quickly. However, questioning is not always so successful in all classes, resulting in missed opportunities to push progress on at an even faster pace. Frequent, practical activities and visual resources capture pupils' interest and bring learning to life. This was observed during a religious education lesson, where pupils worked in small groups to investigate different religious artefacts. They handled the resources with respect, discussed their varying use and meaning well in order to produce a short presentation for their peers. The resources captivated the pupils' attention helping them to successfully build their religious and cultural knowledge. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to supporting all pupils and especially disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This adds to the quality of learning for all pupils.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Nearly all pupils and their parents and carers are highly satisfied with behaviour and safety. The inspection findings show that behaviour over time is frequently exemplary in lessons and during lunch and playtimes, and that disruptive behaviour

is extremely rare. Pupils understand and accept the need for rules because their views are sought when these are drawn up. Pupils are exceptionally courteous, respectful and helpful. This reflects clearly a class rule 'we respect ourselves and others'. Almost all pupils develop high levels of self-confidence and discipline and frequently help and encourage each other. Their attitudes and engagement are excellent because the curriculum is exciting and precisely tailored to their needs; as one pupil commented, 'there are so many interesting things to do sometimes it's difficult to know what to choose!' All these positive qualities have a very marked impact on pupils' achievement.

Without exception, pupils express the view that they feel safe in school and there is an adult they can turn to for help if they are troubled or sad. Overwhelmingly, pupils say that everyone gets on with each other and instances of bullying in any form are extremely rare. This is confirmed by the school's records. The very few recorded incidents have been dealt with to the satisfaction of everyone involved. In conversation pupils demonstrate they have an excellent understanding of the need to respect others' values and beliefs and for racial tolerance. 'We are one big happy family, everyone is treated equally' is a comment that sums up the pupils' views.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher provides clear leadership. She has an ambitious vision for the school which is shared by all staff. Morale is high. She is supported well by staff at all levels who contribute effectively to helping drive improvement at a good rate. Members of the governing body know the school well, monitor its work carefully and are fully involved in determining its strategic direction. A regular cycle to evaluate the school's strengths and areas to improve is well-established, but the system to record the outcomes is cumbersome and so it is sometimes difficult to pinpoint key findings. Nevertheless, school improvement planning reflects the outcomes of monitoring well and is used effectively to move the school forward. However, success criteria for measuring how well the school is doing are not sufficiently precise. Professional development is closely aligned to school priorities; it is appreciated highly by all staff. However, opportunities to share outstanding practice in teaching widely with colleagues across the school, for example, through supportive coaching, are not always fully exploited. Strong partnerships have been established with other local schools and organisations. This enables the school to access a greater range of experiences for pupils to broaden their horizons and to secure improvements in teaching and learning.

Pupils benefit from an extremely caring and supportive environment in which everyone is encouraged to succeed. The curriculum is outstanding because it is very varied and caters for the needs and interests of all groups of pupils exceptionally well. An extensive range of memorable experiences, such as Fair Trade and Enterprise weeks and whole-school themes, such as 'the Olympics' contribute greatly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and have a significant impact on their attitudes, behaviour and achievement. The school promotes equality of opportunity effectively and tackles discrimination well by narrowing gaps in achievement and ensuring that the school is a harmonious and very happy community. Extremely comprehensive systems track the progress made by pupils over time. Careful attention is given to provide the support required to improve the

achievement of individuals and also particular groups who might be in danger of falling behind their targets. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.

## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



7 May 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Thelwall Community Junior School, Warrington, WA4 2HX**

Thank you for the wonderful welcome you gave me when I inspected your school. A particular 'thank you' to those of you who filled in the questionnaires, were keen to talk with me and welcomed me to your lessons. Please thank your parents and carers who also filled in our questionnaires.

I saw how proud you are of your school and you are right to be so, as yours is a good school. Good and sometimes outstanding teaching helps you all to achieve well, to make at least good progress and to attain standards in English and mathematics that are well above average. Your lessons are fun and interesting and you told me how much you like learning. The huge range of other activities, such as the many visits and visitors and themed events and the 'Thelwall's Got Talent Competition', all help to build your self-confidence. All of you benefit from high levels of care, which is one reason why your behaviour is excellent. Your parents and carers like the school as well and are very happy with it. I am pleased that you feel extremely safe and say that bullying of any kind is very rare. Your headteacher, other staff and the governing body know the school well and they are good at finding ways to make your school even better.

These are some things I think will help your school to improve further. I think that teaching could be even better by: sharing the best practice; ensuring teachers always ask you questions that make you think hard; and by making better use of the time at the end of lessons. I have also asked your school to find an easier way to record what they find when they check the school's work and to improve the big plan that they make for the school each year, by putting more details in it about how they are going to measure how well the school is doing.

You can all play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to work hard. The very best of luck to everyone in the final of 'Thelwall's Got Talent' I thoroughly enjoyed watching some of the auditions.

Yours sincerely

Denise Shields  
Lead Inspector

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