

Thwaites School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112166
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	378437
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2012
Lead inspector	Naomi Taylor

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	57
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ruth Cullen
Headteacher	Jane Patton
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed three teachers and visited 10 lessons. Discussions were held with school staff, groups of pupils, a representative of the local authority and members of the governing body. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding documents, the school's self-evaluation and development plan, local authority evaluations, records of pupils' attainment and progress, and pupils' work. The responses in questionnaires from 27 parents and carers and those completed by pupils and staff were also analysed.

Information about the school

Thwaites is a much smaller than average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The headteacher has a substantial teaching commitment in addition to senior management responsibilities. For part of the week, pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes. One class comprises Reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2. The other class comprises Years 3, 4, 5, and 6. However, for English and mathematics, Key Stage 2 pupils are taught in two separate ability classes. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

The school has Healthy School status and holds the Sing-Up gold award. Since the previous inspection there has been an increase in the number of pupils joining the school during Key Stages 1 and 2.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Thwaites is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because although teaching is good there are aspects to improve, and attainment in writing is not as high as other subjects. Nevertheless, the school is highly valued by all pupils, parents and carers who describe their school as 'wonderful'.
- Achievement is good. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and experience which are below those expected for their age. Throughout the school they make good progress and leave Year 6 having attained above the national average in English and mathematics. Reading is well above average and writing, broadly average. Pupils do not always use punctuation correctly.
- Teaching is good. Pupils have excellent attitudes towards their work and clearly enjoy a wide range of learning opportunities both in the classroom and outdoors. Occasionally, teachers identify how to improve writing but this is not always followed up to ensure pupils learn from their errors. Pupils do not consistently apply their writing skills, particularly punctuation, across all subjects.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Pupils are extremely respectful towards each other and the adults around them. Teachers have very high expectations and help pupils, including those who are new to the school, to reflect on and consider the consequences of their behaviour on others. This results in an extremely safe school community which is a view shared by all pupils, parents and carers.
- The headteacher, staff and governing body show drive and determination in continually focusing on pupils' academic achievement alongside personal development. The leadership of teaching and management of performance are effective although variations remain, especially in writing. The curriculum provides a raft of opportunities to broaden pupils' horizons leading to outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching to accelerate further improvements especially in writing by:
 - ensuring pupils consistently apply and assess their writing skills across all subjects
 - giving more attention to the teaching of punctuation
 - ensuring that in all subjects, pupils are given time to correct mistakes and improve their work in response to teachers' marking.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that vary but are generally below those expected for their age. Achievement is good and attainment as pupils leave school is above average. Children develop an eagerness to learn and achieve well throughout Reception. Pupils grow in confidence throughout Key Stage 1 and make good progress. Attainment is broadly average in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Writing is below average although improving. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make good progress and by the time they leave school their attainment in mathematics is above average and reading is well above average. Writing is improving and most make good progress in writing imaginatively but less so in their use of punctuation and overall attainment in writing is average.

All groups of pupils make good progress. In lessons in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, learning is effective in reading as a result of changes to the teaching of letters and their sounds. For these sessions, pupils are taught effectively in ability groups across Reception and Key Stage 1. One group demonstrated a real sense of learning being fun as they independently played tricky word bingo while another group working with a teaching assistant were screeching with excitement as they played a game based on compound words. The more-able Reception children joined older pupils in practising individually writing sentences. They showed real concentration in using their understanding of linking letters and sounds to work out spellings. While the teacher praised their efforts and showed them the sentences, too little time was given to allow them to thoroughly check the accuracy of their work and correct their spellings. Good progress is sustained in Key Stage 2, especially in reading. Pupils get great enjoyment from reading because they are introduced to books which capture their imaginations and this encourages them to read every day. In mathematics, learning is effective because of the focus on practical skills that pupils can apply to real life. Although in writing, pupils demonstrate creativity and use their imagination, their accurate use of punctuation across all subjects is not consistent.

Since the previous inspection, the school has introduced gender specific projects to effectively narrow the gaps between girls' progress in mathematics and boys' progress in English. Those who are disabled or who have a special educational need, many of whom join the school during Key Stages 1 and 2 make good, and some, outstanding progress. The school has a strong ethos of treating pupils as individuals and this is evident in how teachers and highly skilled teaching assistants accurately assess, monitor and implement interventions to meet the particular needs of all pupils. One parent, whose child had moved from another school, referred to how the school, 'has helped my child come on in leaps and bounds in her education'. This echoes parents' and carers' views that progress is good.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is consistently good with examples of outstanding teaching. This reflects the positive views of pupils, parents and carers. When teaching is outstanding, tasks are matched skilfully to meet pupils' individual needs. The pace of learning is rapid as the teacher and teaching assistant use precise questions to challenge pupils to work independently and accelerate their learning. This was seen in an English lesson where pupils were working on a Titanic project. Worksheets prompted pupils to put themselves in the position of a range of characters who would have been on board the ship. They used their imaginations to describe their feelings and this led to highly descriptive writing that promoted most effectively their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There were opportunities for pupils to share and compare each other's work and discuss how to improve their work. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a good balance of teacher-led and child initiated activities. Children are encouraged to develop their independence using both the classroom and outdoor areas. Regular assessments by the teacher and teaching assistants ensure progress is closely monitored.

Mathematics is taught effectively as was observed when pupils worked on a range of activities linked to plotting and positioning using grids. Excellent use of information and communication technology enabled pupils to work independently while others worked in pairs or small groups and tested the accuracy of their work. Pupils clearly enjoyed the challenge. Disabled pupils and those who have a special educational need were extremely well supported with one to one help at points in the lesson but equally demonstrating how well they worked independently with a partner at other times. This is reflective of the effective teaching provided for these pupils throughout the school.

Occasionally, when teaching is good rather than outstanding, not enough time is allocated for pupils to respond to the teachers' marking of work. This leads to mistakes not being consistently corrected by pupils and sometimes suggestions by the teacher to develop their work are not always followed up. In writing, teachers provide a variety of experiences so that pupils learn how to write, for example, letters and reports, but the skills of punctuation are not thoroughly consolidated. Across all subjects little time is spent in lessons on teachers recapping these skills and ensuring pupils develop independence in checking their own work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All parents and carers who returned the questionnaires judged behaviour to be at least good. The inspector found it to be outstanding and discussions with pupils identify that this is typical. It is a real strength of the school and makes a tremendous contribution to effective learning in lessons. Pupils are extremely polite and show exceptionally high levels of respect towards each other and the adults around them. This has a very positive impact on pupils who join school at different times of the year. This is very much a community school as is seen by Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils who are engaged in a project which develops skills for life. Every Monday, a group of 10 pupils prepare lunch for the whole school. They plan healthy menus, find recipes, take orders and then, using their numeracy skills to budget, plan the amount of food they will need.

Parents, carers and pupils overwhelmingly believe that school is a very safe place. Pupils are extremely well cared for by all staff. They emphasise strongly that bullying just does not happen but if they had a concern they could turn to any adult for help. The curriculum helps them to understand how to stay safe both in school, the local community and when they go on trips and residential visits. They demonstrated to the inspector that they are well informed on different types of bullying and how to stay safe when using the internet. Attendance is average and those who move from other schools having had attendance issues start to improve based on the enjoyment experienced at Thwaites.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is relentless in her drive to improve all aspects of the school. She has developed a whole-school team approach to making decisions. Systems to monitor teaching and learning are effective with relatively few shortcomings remaining. Support, training and performance management are matched closely to identified need. Success is evident in the rise in reading reflecting the new approach to teaching letters and sounds. Pupils' progress is tracked and interventions put in place when a need arises. This has improved the promotion of equality of opportunity and the school has eradicated previous difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Although attainment in writing is not as high as in other subjects, the school is clear about how to improve. Self-evaluation is accurate and capacity to improve is good.

The highly supportive governing body has an informed picture of what is happening in school and ensures decisions are challenged. Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements. They ensure there is no harassment and this is a happy school.

The curriculum is well-balanced. To ensure it meets pupils' needs, those in Key Stage 2 are now taught in two separate ability classes for English and mathematics. Improvement in the school premises, including a sports hall and outdoor areas, enhances the richness of the curriculum. Examples of Forest School activities, including the Reception children's Gruffalo, show imaginative experiences. The residential visit to London and link to the school in Ghana provide further examples of how effectively the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Parents and carers are very appreciative of all the school offers.

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).

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.



13 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thwaites School, Millom, LA18 5HP

One of your parents or carers wrote a comment on the inspection questionnaire describing Thwaites as, 'friendly, warm and welcoming', and I completely agree. You all made me feel very welcome and it was interesting to hear how much you enjoy and value your school. You behave exceptionally well in lessons and around school, showing great respect for each other, the staff and visitors to the school. You are keen to learn new things and your teachers and teaching assistants give you many opportunities to engage in interesting activities both in class, outdoors and beyond school. You each participate in a range of activities after school which help you to learn new skills. The sports day demonstrated great team spirit and just how much you enjoy your sport and music.

Yours is a good school where you all make good progress. Teaching is good and this ensures you are well prepared for secondary school. Staff ensure that you are safe in school and you develop life skills which also help you learn to stay safe beyond the school environment.

To improve your school further, we have asked that your teachers continue to help you to improve, especially your writing, by:

- increasing the opportunities for you to apply and assess your skills in writing across different subjects
- checking that enough attention is given to teaching you how to use punctuation marks correctly
- ensuring that in all subjects you are given time to correct mistakes and improve your work further in response to teachers' marking.

You can help by continuing to attend school regularly and working as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor
Lead inspector

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