



Thornton Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103268
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286614
Inspection date 20 September 2006
Reporting inspector Mark Mumby HMI

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Thornton Road
School category	Community		Ward End
Age range of pupils	7-11		Birmingham B8 2LQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 3270824
Number on roll (school)	483	Fax number	0121 3270690
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	D J Cowley
		Headteacher	Linda Webster
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Thornton is a larger than average junior school. It serves a disadvantaged area of Birmingham. Virtually all of the pupils come from minority ethnic groups and most do not speak English as their first language. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is very high. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is similar to that found nationally, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is high. The school has a specialist behaviour unit.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Each pupil is a highly valued member of the school family and the care they receive is outstanding. It is a very happy school because, in the words of a pupil, 'the children in the school are kind and caring'. They are given important responsibilities such as being 'playground marshals' and 'school mentors' as well as contributing to decision making through the school council and the 'ideas box'.

The caring environment and good teaching ensure that pupils make good progress. Standards in English, mathematics and science are above average by the time pupils leave the school. They want to do well, presenting their work with care and they are proud of what they achieve. Pupils with learning difficulties do particularly well and the 'Lodge' provides good support for those pupils who need it. These pupils are valued members of the school community and they are carefully integrated into the school family. As one of their parents said, 'Thornton Junior is one big family who looks out for each other and helps each other whenever they can'.

The personal development of pupils is outstanding. They are highly cooperative and very polite. Routines in school are clearly established and there is a high level of respect for other people and for the school. Pupils know extremely well how to stay safe and have a good understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

The school has planned its curriculum well, carefully considering the many different cultures of its pupils. Topics have been chosen to reflect their interests; for example learning about life in a village in Pakistan. The pupils thoroughly enjoy the variety of interesting visits made to enrich the work done in school. They particularly like the exciting whole school visits such as when they chartered a train to go to the seaside. Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have been improved with the creation of the new ICT suite. However, this is not yet used as effectively as it could be as most ICT lessons focus on skills and there is very limited use of ICT in other subject areas.

Work is carefully marked and pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work. Targets are used effectively to help pupils understand the next steps in their learning. However, some of these are not sufficiently challenging to ensure that the most able pupils make as much progress as they could, particularly in English.

The staff work effectively together as a team under the caring guidance of the very supportive headteacher. The school has good systems in place to monitor its work and to track the progress of each pupil. These have helped the school to make significant improvements since the last inspection, particularly in raising standards in mathematics and science. However, analysis of pupils' work is not sufficiently detailed to enable precise targets for improvement to be set for the school and the most able pupils, especially in English. Measures to improve attendance have been very effective in bringing levels above the national average. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make self-evaluation more incisive in order to pinpoint what individuals and groups of pupils, especially the most able, need to do to make the best possible progress in English.
- Extend pupils' use of computers in all subjects across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The majority of pupils enter the school with standards in line with the national average and they make good progress by the time they leave. By the end of Year 6 most pupils have attained standards above the national average in English, mathematics and science. The school rigorously monitors the progress of all of the pupils and uses this information to ensure that each of them makes at least good progress. Many of the pupils with learning difficulties make even better progress than those of average ability. However, a significant proportion of the more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently in their work to enable them to make the very good progress that they are capable of, especially in English. Standards in ICT are low because pupils are not given enough opportunity to practise their ICT skills in different subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school has very high expectations of its pupils and their social and moral skills are outstanding. The school successfully integrates the many different cultural backgrounds of its pupils and ensures that they all gain a good understanding of our culturally diverse world. Pupils sat in awe as they listened to a very moving story in assembly, demonstrating their very good spiritual development.

As a result of the school's high priority for pupils' well-being, they have an extremely good understanding of how to stay safe and keep healthy. However, too many pupils still choose to have less healthy snacks at break time. They make an outstanding contribution to both the school and the local community. Impressive amounts of money have been raised for both local charities and international disasters. Pupils contribute exceptionally well to the orderly family environment of the school through the responsibilities they are given and the school council. They are well prepared for their future lives through a good foundation in literacy and numeracy skills as well as enterprise projects. However, ICT skills are less well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good because teachers have high expectations and pupils respond enthusiastically to their work. They clearly enjoy learning and present their work to a high standard. Pupils complete large amounts of work because lessons are lively and brisk. Questioning is used effectively to extend their thinking. Opportunities for pupils to discuss their work with each other are used well to enable them to develop their understanding further.

Most work is carefully matched to the pupils' abilities. However, the most able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently, especially in English. There are insufficient opportunities for these pupils to extend their learning and develop their advanced writing skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good because it has been designed with the pupils' interests at its heart. Topics have been chosen to complement the experiences the pupils have in their community. Visits are planned to provide opportunities that many pupils may not normally have, such as going to the seaside or seeing a live performance at the theatre. Good use is made of the local environment to learn about the natural world and conservation from real experiences. Pupils enjoy the 'multiplication clubs' which help them to learn their tables quickly. They like attending the wide range of clubs available, and members of the art club were proud to have been commissioned to provide the illustrations for a book.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school's caring family ethos pervades all of its activities and every pupil feels safe and valued. In this highly supportive environment, they are able to make good progress. All aspects of health and safety are handled rigorously ensuring that the school takes the best possible care of its pupils. Record keeping is meticulous and teachers are fully informed about the needs of each pupil.

Work is marked carefully and pupils have a good understanding of how to improve. Pupils know what they are aiming for because they are given clear targets for improvement. Although these targets are helpful, those set for the most able pupils in English are not always sufficiently challenging.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good because the headteacher provides a clear educational direction and ensures that all of the governors and staff fully understand her high expectations. The headteacher carefully considers the views of pupils, parents and governors so that the needs of every individual pupil are paramount in all decision making. The strong sense of teamwork and the hard work of all of the staff result in the success that the school makes of all that it does. The school has very successfully raised standards in mathematics and science as well as significantly improving attendance since the last inspection.

Detailed procedures, involving all staff, are in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. However, these are not always sufficiently focused on pupils' learning. The school knows what it wants to improve: for example raising standards in English, but does not always have a sufficiently detailed understanding of the particular issue. Consequently planned actions to bring about improvements are not always precise enough to enable the school to improve pupils' learning as much as it could. For example, the progress of the more able pupils in English is not as good as it could be because their work is not always planned to challenge them to reach their potential.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making Mrs Weston and me so welcome when we visited your school. We felt privileged to be part of your school family for the day.

Your school is a good school and you are all very fortunate to be part of such a caring school family. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and the way you all get on so well with each other. Your teachers make your lessons interesting and expect you to work hard - which you do! We were very pleased to see how much care you take to make your work neat and tidy. The way your work is marked and the targets you are set help you to make good progress in your work, but some of you can do even better. We have asked all of your teachers to help you with this by setting you even harder targets in English, especially those of you who find it a bit easier than others.

The adults in school are very good at making sure you are always safe and well cared for. You are good at this too and many of you told us about how to keep healthy and safe. However, we were surprised to see so many of you eating unhealthy snacks at break. This is something that you can change to make your school even better.

Many of you told us about all the different and exciting activities that you do at school. We thought that chartering a train to go to the seaside must have been great fun. No wonder you enjoyed it so much! Some of you told us that you did not use your new computer suite as much as you would like. It is good that you have got such a lot of new computers and we have asked your teachers to use them more. I wonder how many ways you can think of using them in your different lessons.

Good luck and keep up all that good work!