

Thelwall Community Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111000
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	288823
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	145
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr G Weston
Headteacher	Mrs Cynthia Morgan
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002
School address	Thelwall New Road Thelwall Warrington Cheshire WA4 2HX
Telephone number	01925 263365
Fax number	01925 268445

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Pupils at this smaller than average sized junior school come from a wide variety of social and economic backgrounds. The vast majority is of White British heritage, with a very small number speaking English as an additional language. A higher proportion has learning difficulties and/or disabilities than is normally found. The school has an Activemark in recognition of its work in physical education.

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 that provides good value for money. It succeeds in its aim to 'promote an atmosphere of happiness, security and confidence within which effective learning will take place and children will be helped to become independent and responsible members of society.'

Pupils achieve well. They attain well above average standards in national tests. This is due to overall good quality teaching, some of which is outstanding, that interests and challenges pupils. In English, the quality of marking and the opportunities for pupils to measure their own work against clear criteria for success is a considerable strength. There is not the same degree of rigour of assessment in other subjects. The above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well catered for. The provision for these pupils is well managed, their individual education plans finely tuned and the teaching and support they receive is well focused. This enables most of them to achieve as well as other pupils and in the case of those with more complex difficulties, better. Although more able pupils do well in English overall, the gap between their performance in writing and in reading is greater than that found nationally.

The school is a very pleasant place in which to learn and to work because the high expectations senior managers and classroom teachers have of pupils' conduct and attitudes are met well. Classrooms are orderly, relationships strong and pupils are extremely well cared for. Pupils take a pride in being effective young citizens, eagerly adopting healthy lifestyles, caring deeply about others less fortunate than themselves and willingly taking responsibility for other pupils and for their own learning. In contrast, the expectations teachers have of pupils' presentation and the pride that pupils take in presenting their work well are too low. As a result, too much of their written work is untidy and reflects poor handwriting.

Pupils enjoy a rich curriculum. Good links are made between subjects, out of school learning is effective and the wide range of clubs offered is well attended. These all provide pupils with opportunities to exercise and to develop interests that enhance their personal development.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and deputy headteacher set a very positive tone, complement each others' strengths very well and constantly seek to improve all aspects of the school's work and provision. Parents very much appreciate how approachable the senior management team and other adults are, especially in addressing any concerns they have about their children. The many comments on letters and in questionnaires attest to the close and positive partnership the school has forged with parents and carers which is particularly effective in ensuring the good achievements of more vulnerable pupils. This was aptly summarised in a written comment that, 'My child has been very happy at Thelwall, being challenged and well prepared for secondary school.' The standards of manners, uniform and behaviour equip children very well for adult life.

The school knows itself well. In most areas, its judgement of its effectiveness matches those of the inspection. It is in the areas of pupils' personal development and in the quality of care, support and guidance it provides that the school slightly overestimated its provision. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection and together with the effectiveness of the school's leadership and of its development planning indicate good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the performance of more able pupils in writing so that the gap between their achievement in this subject and that in reading narrows to at least that found nationally.
- Raise teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' presentation and of their handwriting.
- Extend the often very good assessment practice used in English, particularly in target-setting and in the quality of marking, to mathematics and science initially and to all subjects in the longer term.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school with average standards. Most make good progress throughout the school as a result of good quality teaching. Over the last five years, the performance of Year 6 pupils in national tests has been significantly above average, with the best progress in English. The above average proportion of pupils with more complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities make particularly good progress. The school sets challenging targets for its performance and regularly either meets or exceeds them. More able pupils do not reach the same high standards in writing as they do in reading.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They respect each other, their environment and the different viewpoints and beliefs of those pupils of other backgrounds and/or faiths. An outstanding aspect of pupils' personal development is their positive attitude to school. They want to succeed and take great pride in their achievements and contributions. For example, members of the school council count amongst their proudest achievements, promoting healthier school meals, providing 'playground pals' and effecting changes to playtime rotas. Pupils accept that rights come with responsibilities and they develop good work habits and acquire effective basic skills by attending regularly, being punctual and arriving at decisions through consensus. They work and play safely and relate very well to each other and adults. Many of the positive attributes they develop contribute significantly to their good academic achievements.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Common strengths in lessons are warm relationships, tight planning, good opportunities for pupils to discuss and cooperate and the effective use of teaching assistants. In the best lessons, the fast pace, high expectations and very clear criteria provided for pupils against which to measure the success of their learning contribute to excellent achievement. Occasionally, pupils are not set work that matches their needs throughout the whole lesson and, consequently, their learning is only satisfactory.

Teachers mark pupils' work in English assiduously, provide analytical assessments and very helpful pointers about how they can improve. This is less so in other subjects and as a result, pupils' achievements are not as high as in English. The very competent way in which teaching

assistants support the learning of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has a big impact on their confidence and quality of their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements and pupils' needs, promotes their basic skills well and provides a wide range of enriching experiences. Pupils respond enthusiastically to their 'interesting lessons that are fun' and to the after school clubs on offer. Some of these are provided by external specialists and enhance pupils' awareness of and expertise in a range of sporting and aesthetic pursuits. The curriculum prepares pupils well for their future life. The effective programme for personal, health, social and citizenship education (PHSCE) includes many opportunities for pupils to discuss sensitive issues, to share problems and to learn to give and receive constructive criticism. The programme contributes well to the outstanding elements of their personal development. Older pupils have an opportunity to learn French and German that contributes well to their understanding of other cultures. The way in which pupils apply their information and communication technology skills to support their learning in a range of subjects stands them in good stead for the next steps in their education and for future employment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are very well cared for and supported through any personal or learning difficulty. Parents and pupils are very fulsome in their praise for this aspect of the school's work, particularly citing the influence and sensitivity of the headteacher and deputy headteacher in ironing out any problems and reassuring pupils and their families. Policies and procedures to protect and safeguard pupils are fully in place and rigorous risk assessments are carried out. The arrangements to support vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effective and ensure their good achievements and positive personal development. The latter was summed up aptly by a pupil, who in response to the question 'what would you tell a child who was considering coming to this school?' replied, 'I would tell my own story. Before I moved here, I went home from school unhappy every evening. Since I moved here, I am a changed person.' The well thought out and administered systems to ensure good behaviour and attendance and to track academic progress contribute well to pupils' personal development and achievement. Less well embedded in whole-school practice are aspects of assessment which have quite recently been introduced.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work closely and successfully as a team. Together they ensure very effective care and parents have huge confidence in their ability to look after the academic and personal needs of their children. Because senior leaders manage performance tightly and promote staff training so well, the quality of teaching and learning continues to improve. Rigorous checking on pupils' progress and on the standards they achieve underpins senior managers' ability to focus resources on raising achievement. Close partnerships with a network of local schools and with other external agencies and providers have resulted in improvements in management, teaching and learning, in the curriculum and in the quality of

academic guidance. There is very effective leadership of literacy but overall, subject coordinators focus too much on improving provision rather than on how these improvements will impact on pupils' better learning. Governors are supportive and actively involved in committee work but acknowledge that they need further training to enable them to more effectively monitor the school's academic performance.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	2

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.

Annex A

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	3
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 me so welcome during the days I spent in your school. I very much enjoyed my visit. Your school provides you with a good education.

What impressed me most about your school:

- How well you get on with each other.
- You obviously enjoy school so much.
- The good teaching you have that helps you do well in your work, especially in reading.
- How well looked after you are and that both you and your parents appreciate this a great deal.
- The adults who run the school know just what needs to be done to make it even better.

For the school to help you to do even better I have asked your headteacher to:

- help those who find learning easier than most to do better with their writing
- make sure that you all take more care when you present your work and improve your handwriting
- give you all a chance, in all subjects, to have a better idea of exactly how you can improve your work.

Thank you for helping me with the inspection of your school. I hope that you continue to really enjoy school and work hard.